

How does the Chinese Communist Party legitimise its approach to terrorism?

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own work and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This thesis explores how China's narratives of legitimacy and history condition the ways in which the state frames and approaches "real" and perceived terrorism challenges. Rooted in the Chinese political context and historical continuities, China's counter-terrorism agenda prioritises the concept of national unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. This agenda is justified through the narratives of the Century of Humiliation, and is underpinned by the friend/enemy division that was inherited from the Mao era. Anxious about the impact of democratisation on regime stability, Chinese political elites and scholars are highly sensitive to the sympathy of the international community towards dissident groups that have a separatist agenda. To ensure political conformity, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has established a regime of "truth" by controlling the framing and discourse of counter-terrorism. To maintain its legitimacy and mobilise the public, the CCP has complemented the highly centralised counter-terrorism system with a revival of the Mass Line strategy which was central to Mao's governance but faded from view for much of the post-Mao era. The desire to maintain control has resulted in various problems in counter-terrorism policy and practice, which raise questions about – or even threaten to undermine – the government's ability to demonstrate the legitimacy and efficacy of its counter-terrorism strategy.

In exploring the peculiar characteristics of China's counter-terrorism approach, this thesis makes original contributions in five respects: 1) it draws on a wide range of Chinese-language sources that have been under-explored in the study of China's perception of its security threats. Introducing these sources, this thesis brings forwards domestic "insider" debates to a wider non-Chinese-speaking audience interested in the concept of security, unity, separatism, and terrorism in China. 2) It provides an in-depth analysis of China's usage and manoeuvring of the frames, narratives, and labels in the construction of its counter-terrorism discourse, which offers an interesting insight into how the Chinese state and security apparatus works. 3) It analyses the evolution of the friend/enemy distinction in the Chinese political discourse and how it is embedded in the counter-terrorism discourse. 4) It contributes to terrorism research by examining the under-studied case of China, which is often neglected in mainstream "Western" terrorism research. 5) Finally, the thesis contributes to China studies by investigating how China responds to "real" and perceived terrorist threats.

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A note on translation

Most of the quotes from Chinese texts are translated by the author of this thesis. In these cases, the title in Chinese is provided in the bibliography. In some cases, the translation of official documents is provided by the Chinese state media or scholars, and the translators are credited at the end of the quotes.

For Chinese names, surnames are written before the first names.

In terms of the Romanisation of Mandarin Chinese, the entire thesis uses *Hanyu Pinyin*, the official Romanisation system used in mainland China, to transliterate Chinese names, geographical names, slogans, and documents. Nouns that are already known by the international audience in alternative spelling, such as Sun Yat-sen and Urumqi will be spelt in their well-known form. To maintain consistency with original texts, names of Uyghurs from Chinese text will be transliterated from Mandarin Chinese, rather than Uyghur language, except those already known in other forms, such as Ilham Tohti and Dolkun Isa. There are different ways (Uyghur, Uighur, and Ughur) in use to refer to the Uyghur groups in modern documents, and this thesis adopts "Uyghur". In addition, "Turkistan" is used instead of alternatives such as "Turkestan". The exceptions of these spellings are where alternative spellings appear in quotes and the names of organisations. Some articles published in Chinese journals also have their own translation of the titles.

In addition, the author has attempted to be sensitive to the political connotations attached to the labelling of certain incidents. In order to avoid the appearance of political judgment, the thesis chooses relatively neutral terms to address controversial incidents, for example, the Tian'anmen Square Protest, rather than "Tian'anmen massacre", the "2009 Urumqi Riot" rather than "Urumqi Massacre".

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Contextualising China's approach to terrorism

Why does China seek to legitimise its counter-terrorism discourse, policy and practice? The discourse of terrorism constructed through China's historical narratives is embedded in its counter-terrorism policy at multiple levels. China's counter-terrorism approach manifests a strong presence of the role of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the construction of the counter-terrorism discourse as a source of legitimacy for its counter-terrorism practice. As a regime that is characterised by a high level of control and limited political freedoms, the CCP is seldom constrained by the need to justify its accountability and commitment to the rule of law. Why, then, does the CCP consider it necessary to legitimise its counter-terrorism policies and discourse?

Putting this question into a wider context, China's counter-terrorism approach is an important part of its overall strategy to maintain social control in the context of the greater challenges that have accompanied its "rise", and the importance of national consolidation and unity. Considering other ambitious national programmes, such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the CCP's ever-increasing assertiveness – both in terms of more active participation in international affairs and the efforts to prevent external interference in its domestic affairs – have caused some to speculate that China desires and has the capacity to challenge the established world order. Indeed, the shift in Chinese foreign policy from "keeping a low profile" towards "striving for achievements" (X. Yan 2014) seems to have provided some ground for such speculation.

In this context, it is important to understand China's behaviour by examining its security mindset. Constructed as one of the major security threats that requires a "people's war", "terrorism" provides a case that could generate important insights into China's quest for legitimacy in its security policy. China's approach to terrorism highlights its desire to maintain regime stability and demonstrates a tendency towards stronger control in response to real and perceived threats that are often contextualised in the political discourse of friend and enemy. This thesis reveals important aspects of how the country functions by highlighting the linkages between China's approach to terrorism and its quest for legitimacy through frames, assumptions, narratives and labels.

The question that arises is how political elites perceive, frame, and respond to terrorism. More specifically, how do Chinese political elites and scholars perceive “unity” and “separatism”? How does the CCP frame, define, and deal with “terrorism”? How does the CCP respond to the Xinjiang political violence?

Categorised as an authoritarian regime, the CCP, like its democratic counterparts, seeks to justify its actions and maintain its legitimacy. As Holbig (2013, 63) points out, “any exercise of power”, regardless of regime type, “requires legitimation”. It is generally considered that economic growth has been one of the sources for the CCP’s legitimacy (Holbig and Gilley 2010, 396). However, it also brings China a “performance dilemma” (Holbig 2009, 43) – a variation of Samuel Huntington’s “king’s dilemma” (1970, 177). In this scenario, in which the power of the CCP may be undermined, reforms improve economic performance and thus breed demands for political participation and democratic freedom, which are not met. The focus on economic performance also involves a potential contradiction between the CCP’s claim of an ultimate communist goal and its quasi-capitalist economic policies (Zeng 2016, 8). This contradiction, in addition to the fact that the economic growth is losing its momentum, forced the CCP to seek legitimation from other sources.

Since the drafting of the Anti-Terrorism Law in 2014, China’s counter-terrorism has entered a new stage. The escalation of violence in 2014 prompted political leaders to describe the Xinjiang problem in the context of “new circumstances” (Klimeš 2018).¹ Entering into Xi’s second term, the new regime is increasingly characterised by tightened control over religious and ethnic affairs domestically, and an increasing presence in the international arena, exemplified by the Belt and Road Initiative, the Asian Development Bank and China’s involvement in international peace building. China’s increasing power and the accompanying responsibility make it no longer appropriate for China to ignore conflicts, civil wars and regime changes in another part of the world (Donyan Li 2010). The stringent control by the government creates a political climate where the dissemination of anti-government materials is closely monitored. Given the curtailment of civil liberties, China’s counter-terrorism approach is categorised as typically authoritarian (Pokalova 2013a). Recent reports on huge expenditure on public security (Buckley 2011), mass surveillance (Associated Press 2011), increased police presence (Zenz and Leibold 2017), and biodata collection from Uyghurs have further demonstrated the authoritarian characteristics of China’s counter-terrorism approach.

¹ new circumstances: 新形势

To justify its heavy-handed approach, the CCP embeds its counter-terrorism discourse, policy and practice in narratives that prioritise unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The CCP itself has based its legitimacy on history and developmentalism (Ruan 2015). In addition to economic development, scholars have identified ideology, nationalism, and a certain degree of tolerance in regard to social and economic freedom (Holbig 2013; Harding 1987). Zeng Jinghan (2016) criticises the argument that ideology is obsolete, emphasising its role in the legitimisation of the CCP. Chu Yun-han's (2013, 23) empirical analysis indicates that although factors such as economic performance, provision of social stability, and nationalist sentiment are significant, "their explanatory power is not as strong as many Western China watchers would expect". Chu's research highlights the importance of traditional values as sources of legitimacy, including "a belief in the priority of the state ... over individual rights and interests". This research goes further and examines how this belief is indoctrinated through the framing of the counter-terrorism discourse in the first place.

Analysing the ideas and the process of production of meanings through frames, narratives, assumptions, and labels, this thesis reveals that the indoctrination of the "correct" ideas plays an important role in China's quest for legitimacy. Contrary to Fukuyama's prediction (1989, xi) of the "end point of mankind's ideological evolution", China is witnessing a firm hold of ideology as a source of legitimacy.

Facing the challenge of legitimisation, China seeks to strike the right balance between state security and civil liberties in different ways. David Beetham's (2013, xv) categorisation of legitimating elements captures some key elements of China's approach to terrorism – the form of Anti-Terrorism Law is a codification of collective will, that is, the collective interests of national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity; the source of authority comes from the CCP's monopoly of truth and representation, which is evident throughout this thesis in the CCP's efforts to maintain the "correct" ideas and views of the history, ethnicity and the state; the mode of public affirmation is characterised by mass mobilisation, which is evident from the implementation of the Mass Line strategy.

As the following chapters will demonstrate, the CCP is concerned about legitimacy in order to create a stable environment, which it sees as essential to sustain its rule. It seeks to embed its counter-terrorism discourse, policy and practice in historical narratives which provide legitimacy for its claims regarding national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The discourse of terrorism derived from historical continuities of the Century of Humiliation, making it distinctively underwritten by the CCP's accounts of morality – the "imperialist them" are evil, and the "socialist us" are the innocent victim of their evil conduct. Throughout contemporary history, the targets

that have defined “them” have changed a number of times, from “bourgeois liberalists” and “hostile forces” to “three forces” and “East Turkistan forces”, but this underlying friend/enemy distinction remains central to China’s security outlook.

This thesis provides an alternative approach to understanding China’s rationale for counter-terrorism. It does not directly focus on the human rights implications or controversies that often accompany the discussion of China’s counter-terrorism approach. Instead, it focuses on the way that state behaviour is conditioned by the quest for legitimacy. Reconceptualising China’s counter-terrorism approach in the context of the CCP’s quest for legitimacy, this thesis presents China’s approach to terrorism as part of its growing assertiveness in the international community. As China’s increasing engagement in international affairs accompanies its commitment as a “responsible power” (F. Gao 2018), counter-terrorism could be an important area for possible international cooperation, especially considering that the official Anti-Terrorism Law (2015) has given the state the power to respond to attacks overseas militarily. However, because of the divergence of attitude on issues such as human rights and separatism between China and many liberal democracies, such cooperation has not gained momentum. The exception of the cooperation within the framework of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation contributes to, rather than reduces the dichotomy between the West and the rest because it stresses the shared interest in targeting separatist organisations that are not usually designated as terrorism in the West.

1.2 Background

China is a unitary state in which a strong central government and administrative divisions exercise power on its behalf. The central government of China is divided among the legislative branch, the executive branch, the military branch, the supervisory branch, and the judicial branch (National People’s Congress 2004). The division of these state organs emphasises the differentiation of responsibilities, rather than the separation of powers (People’s Congress 2007). The Communist Party holds the ruling position, and another eight democratic parties participate in consultation through the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (The State Council Information Office 2007). In the late 1970s, Deng Xiaoping put forward the notion of separation between Party and government, but since Xi took over, the CCP has begun to criticise this notion and re-emphasise the leadership of the CCP in almost everything (Gao 2017). The institutional restructuring in recent years signals the further concentration of power by the Party under Xi Jinping (Xinhua 2017; Xinhua 2018a).

The increased ability of the CCP to control the central government has enabled it to monopolise the discourse of terrorism. As this thesis will demonstrate, the central government is struggling to share power with the judicial branch and local government in terrorism designation, but after several rounds of deliberation, officials in the executive branch are still the de facto decision-makers. Challenging the “correct” ideas put forward by the CCP is considered “betrayal”. The reports on “terrorist” incidents must be aligned with the state media, and Uyghur separatist narratives are inaccessible because of censorship and self-censorship.

The central government delegates political power to local governments through devolution. The central government appoints the governors of China’s provinces and autonomous regions. An autonomous region has the power to enact regulations in the light of the local conditions with the approval of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (National People’s Congress 2004). Since the establishment of Xinjiang as an autonomous region in 1955, political elites of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) have always been loyal to the Party, despite infighting and their alliance with different leaders. It is worth mentioning that although the Chairman of the XUAR government has always been a Uyghur, the person who has actual power – the Party Secretary – has always been a Han Chinese. Three Party Secretaries, Wang Lequan, Zhang Chunxian and Chen Quanguo are known for their heavy-handed measures to maintain Xinjiang’s stability. The absolute loyalty of the governor of the XUAR enables Beijing to consolidate its control over a region 2,500 kilometres away.

Xinjiang is home to 11.27 million Uyghurs (Statistic Bureau of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region 2016), Turkic-speaking Muslims who identify with the Turkic culture. Bordering Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, Xinjiang is located at the crucial Eurasian frontier, and is of strategic importance to China’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative. Despite the fact that the association between Xinjiang and “terrorism” is a recent creation, Uyghurs’ resentment towards the CCP’s rule has always been one of the major concerns for political elites in Beijing. The growing number of terrorist incidents since 2008 has further attracted the attention of Chinese political elites.

A major cause of the ethno-separatist sentiments among Uyghurs since 1949 is associated with demographic changes. The Sino-Soviet split in 1962 drove some Uyghur farmers to flee in fear. To consolidate the border defence against the Soviet Union and strengthen control in remote farms that had been left idle, the central government began to send Han Chinese from other provinces to cultivate the farms. As a result, Xinjiang saw a rapid increase in Han during 1953 and 1964 (Ma 2000).

According to the white paper on the Xinjiang Production Construction Corps (XPCC), its population increased from 175,500 in 1954 to 1,485,4000 in 1966 (State Council Information Office 2014). By 2013, the XPCC's population accounted for 11.9% of Xinjiang's population (State Council Information Office 2014). At the time, Xinjiang's total Han population reached 37.94% (Statistic Bureau of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Reigon 2015). According to the most recent Census, Uyghurs account for 45.21% of the population in Xinjiang (National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China 2010). Although its activities have caused widespread resentment, the CCP was reluctant to dismantle it. As the XPCC "has serves as a symbol of the PRC's imagined beneficence to the Uighurs, so dismantling it would be tantamount to revising the official history of PRC policies there" (Nathan and Gilley 2003, 222).



Figure 3 China, with Xinjiang in the northwest

The change in Xinjiang's demographics had a tremendous impact on its ethnic relations. In line with the developmental approach to security, the CCP encouraged Han migration in the hope that economic development would improve its leadership in Xinjiang and reduce Uyghur dissent (Mackerras 2004; Sautman 1998; Boehm 2009, 86). Indeed, Xinjiang's GDP soared from 39.07 billion in 1978 to 10920.09 billion in

2017 (Statistic Bureau of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region 2016; T. Sun and Gu 2018).

With rapid economic development comes heightened inequality. Many Uyghurs were discontented with the unequal job opportunities brought by large-scale development projects. Wiemer (2004, 188) and Becquelin (2000) observes that jobs created by construction have largely gone to Han immigrants rather than local minorities due to low wages and discrimination.

Uyghur nationalism grew as Uyghurs felt that their culture, language, and identity were under threat. Rebiya Kadeer, a Uyghur activist designated as a terrorist by the CCP, said that

Uighurs have suffered for decades under a regime that seeks to eliminate a unique culture to placate paranoid leaders in Beijing. Our religion, a moderate form of Sunni Islam vital to Uighur ethnic identity, has been fiercely repressed. The Uighur language is disappearing from East Turkestan's schools. Hundreds of thousands of government-sponsored Han Chinese migrants are brought to East Turkestan, while locals struggle with unemployment and poverty (Kadeer 2008).

Considered the “spiritual mother” of Uyghurs by many Uyghur dissidents abroad, her words represent their concerns regarding the elimination of Uyghur identity under the CCP.

The history and discussion surrounding Uyghur separatism and “terrorism” is highly politicised. Different sources have very different assessments of the nature and scope of “terrorism” in China. As Bovingdon (2013) argues, the Uyghurs’ claims that they have always been distinct from the Chinese must be scrutinised as much as the CCP’s claims that Xinjiang has been part of China since ancient times. The assessments of “terrorism” in China by different sources are inevitably fused with their own political agenda. Therefore, it is imperative to lay out major sources that have reported and commented on “terrorism” in China.

According to different types of political agenda, these sources can be divided into three groups. Chinese official sources generally agree that terrorism is a considerable threat, but it is under control because of the efforts of the CCP in regard to stability maintenance; when it is not under control, it is because external enemies are masterminding the attacks outside China. The second type of sources is Western media and human rights groups. Despite their diverse interests and political agendas, they share an assumption that “terrorism” is controllable for now, but the heavy-handed counter-measures and human rights abuse will exacerbate the problem. Some media, such as CNN and BBC, seek to present themselves as unbiased sources, even though their selection of information reflects an underlying bias that projects a

morality in which the Western model of democracy is a better form of government. Other media such as Radio Free Asia have a more critical stance against the CCP due to their legacy of anti-communist propaganda in the 1960s. The third type of sources is Uyghur dissidents. In their attempts to achieve independence, they often work with human rights organisations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. The stated goal is to improve the human rights situation of the Uyghurs, but many of these groups call Xinjiang “East Turkistan” which implies their disapproval of the CCP’s sovereignty over the region. These groups see terrorism as a result of the CCP’s repression. The 2009 Urumqi Riots, which are designated as terrorist attacks by the CCP, were believed to be a “genocide” against Uyghurs by these dissidents (Kadeer 2009). As the discussion on the number of foreign fighters demonstrates, some Uyghur dissidents frame terrorism as a considerable threat due to the suppression of the CCP, while others frame it as an imagined threat that is constructed by the CCP to justify its suppression.

Despite the “ontological instability” (Jackson 2011, 119) exemplified by the above sources and their different assessments of the scope of “terrorism” in China, there have been some efforts to evaluate the problem in comparison to other countries.

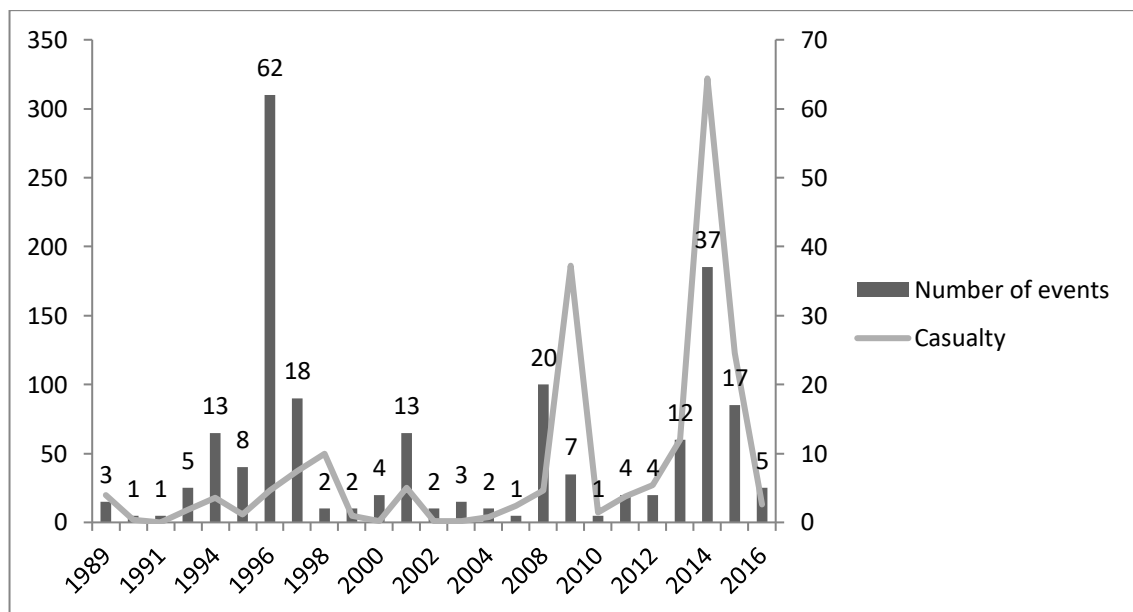


Figure 1 Number of terrorist events and casualties from 1989 to 2016 in China. Source: Global Terrorism Database

Maintained by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism at the University of Maryland, College Park in the US, the Global Terrorism Database provides a relatively “objective” description of the scope of terrorism in China between 1989 and 2016. After the Tian’anmen protest in 1989, there was an increase in the number of terrorist events until a series of separatist incidents broke

out in Yining (also known as Ghulja). The number of events increased in 2001 and 2008, coinciding with the 9/11 attacks and the Beijing Olympic Games respectively. The most recent spike is seen between 2013 and 2015 which coincided with Xi's power grab.

Considering factors including the number of incidents, fatalities and injuries, and the amount of property damage as a result of terrorist incidents, the Global Terrorism Index provides more evidenced for this trend. In 2017, China scores 5.543, meaning the country experienced a medium-high impact from terrorism. In comparison, Iraq was the most impacted country, with a score of 10. China ranks 31 out of 163 countries.

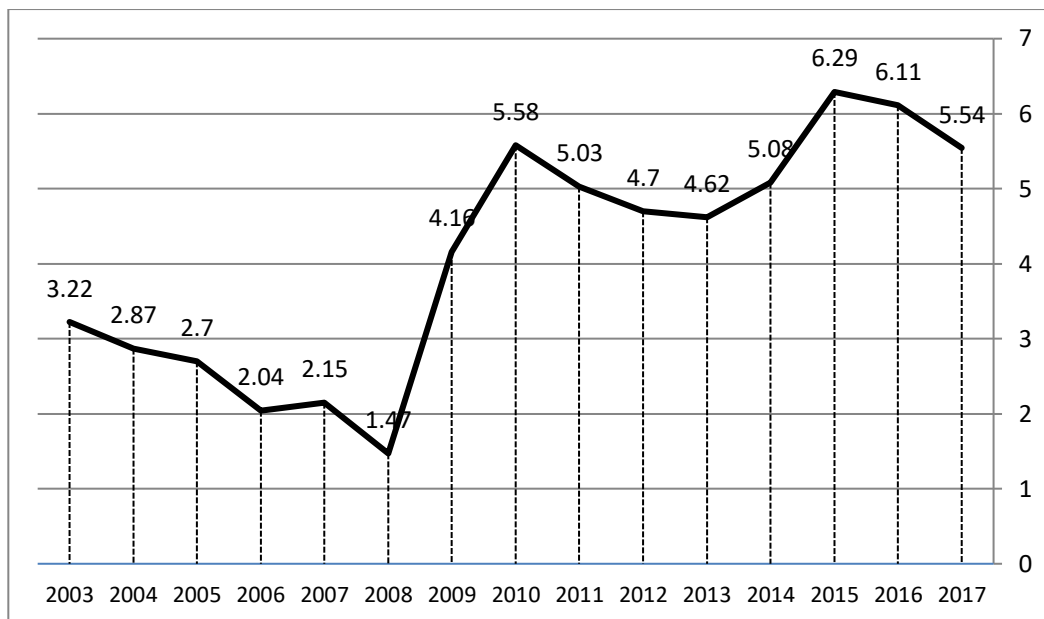


Figure 2 China's Global Terrorism Index score from 2003 to 2017. Source: Vision of Humanity

The above statistics provide a relatively "objective" representation of the terrorism threat. However, such a representation alone does not explain China's attitude towards terrorism, how it navigates competing security priorities, how its behaviour is embedded in its political narratives of legitimacy and historical continuities, and the relationship between the growing "terrorist" threat and state violence. "Terrorism" could be the reason for the repressive response by the state; it could also be the result of long-term repression. Therefore, the number of terrorist attacks alone does not directly lead to a conclusion about the state in which they take place.

In addition, the different ways in which events are framed reveals the difference in contextualising violent events in different cultural contexts. An example is that the US was reluctant to frame the attacks in Kunming 1 March 2014 as "terrorism" (Tiezzi 2015), while the White House did not hesitate to frame the Boston Marathon

bombing as an act of terrorism before a full round of investigations into the attack (CNN Library 2018).

This difference highlights the importance of this thesis – a state’s approach to terrorism must be understood in the political context of the country in question. Without the information on how the discourse and framing of terrorism are constructed in the political context and historical continuities, even the most basic concept – terrorism itself – is uncertain. This “ontological instability”, as Jackson (2011, 119) describes it, can only be mitigated by placing terrorism and counter-terrorism in a broader context of political discourse, and approaching “terrorism” as a socially constructed concept, rather than a given fact.

1.3 Originality and contribution

This thesis contributes to the understanding of states’ responses to real and perceived terrorist threats beyond the West. Self-defined as a socialist country “with Chinese characteristics”, China developed its security outlook from a complex political context and historical continuities. The simplistic generalisation of China as an authoritarian state and the assumptions following from this fall short of explaining the complicated reality of its counter-terrorism approach. Specifically, the contribution of this thesis is in the following five aspects.

Examining a distinctively non-West counter-terrorism approach, this thesis presents original data from Chinese official and academic sources. Using original official documents and scholarly works, this thesis reveals how China’s counter-terrorism policy and practice are embedded in the framing and discourse of counter-terrorism approach. The Chinese-language sources help to understand the friend/enemy grouping and the use of concepts such as national unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity in the legitimisation of its counter-terrorism. In addition, this data provides in-depth information on how the CCP perceives “terrorist” threats, and how it frames the threat and appropriates labels such as “hostile forces”, “three forces” and “East Turkistan forces” to maintain legitimacy. This thesis also draws on empirical evidence from Chinese official and academic sources to present a clear outline of how Chinese officials and intellectuals manipulate the friend/enemy distinction to serve its counter-terrorism agenda. The data contributes to build a picture of how the perception of the “enemy” among political elites, local officials, and scholars has evolved since the Mao era. While the data is publicly available, there has been little in-depth exploration of the data to explain the CCP’s counter-terrorism approach.

In order to understand the quest for legitimacy that underpins its counter-terrorism approach, this thesis uses a large number of Chinese-language official documents and

scholarly works. While some of the important official documents have been translated into English, the Chinese-language versions are irreplaceable for two reasons. First, words containing cultural connotations might be compromised in order for the content to make sense in English translations. As the CCP became more active in promoting its image through the medium of English, it began to adjust the tone of its language to cater for the English-speaking audience. Second, symbols and labels have different cultural connotations in different cultural contexts. For example, the metaphor of terrorists as “rats” makes more sense in the cultural context in which individuals have experienced the “Eliminating the Four Pests” campaign.²

The concept of terrorism is central to the understanding of China’s counter-terrorism approach. Alex Schmid (2011, 39) summarises some similar attributes from over 250 definitions of terrorism. These attributes include the use of violence, political goals, and civilian targets. However, despite the ostensible similarity in the definitions of terrorism in use, governments vary greatly in terms of the ways in which they make and justify counter-terrorism policies. Because “terrorism” has been used, officially or unofficially, in so many ways and contexts, the definition of terrorism has been appropriated so that it no longer has the defining power that can provide a clear-cut answer for the designation of terrorist individuals and organisations. As “terrorism” becomes a label, a “rhetorical device” (A. P. Schmid 2011, 40), it is problematic to uncritically accept a particular definition of terrorism without interrogating the underlying political dynamics. It undermines the understanding of the issue of terrorism and counter-terrorism and reproduces a discourse that is constructed by the defining agency for its own political agenda.

Acknowledging “terrorism” as a rhetorical device that serves a particular political agenda, this thesis highlights the importance of situating the study of counter-terrorism within the political context in which a line between “friends” and “enemies” had already been drawn. Political violence and separatist movements have been framed in a manner in which one cannot conjecture who the “terrorists” are without the prior knowledge of the friend/enemy grouping in the Chinese political discourse. This thesis contributes to the conceptualisation of terrorism as a rhetorical device embedded in China’s political discourse in which the notion of “terrorism” has been appropriated and used as a label to justify China’s counter-terrorism agenda. The notion of “terrorism” as a rhetorical device is central to the understanding of China’s discourse and framing of terrorism and counter-terrorism challenges in its political context. Labels such as “hostile forces”, “three forces” and “East Turkistan forces” are strategically deployed in order to maintain greater legitimacy. The manipulation of the

² Eliminating the Four Pests: 除四害

existing discourse of the enemy shifts the boundary between “us and them” in order to gain more support from the public.

This thesis contributes to the understanding of terrorism by examining the usage of “terrorism” as a rhetorical device in Chinese counter-terrorism discourse, policy, and practice. It demonstrates not only how China’s counter-terrorism rhetoric is influenced by its quest for legitimacy, which prioritises national unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, but also the extent to which the frames of counter-terrorism discourse and the underlying friend/enemy grouping are manipulated by the CCP in order to consolidate power.

A key theme running throughout the development of China’s counter-terrorism approach is its friend/enemy grouping. While the “us and them” dichotomy has been studied extensively in the discourse of terrorism, particularly in regard to the War on Terror waged by the US and its allies, there has been little in-depth analysis of the friend/enemy distinction in the context of China’s counter-terrorism approach. This thesis presents the underlying friend/enemy distinction in a non-Western context. It discusses the ways in which the Chinese officials and intellectuals define the “friends” and “enemies” through accounts of historical events, law-making, policy-making, attribution of blames, counter-narratives and mass mobilisation. Carl Schmitt’s (2006, 96) friend/enemy distinction is often seen in Chinese politics, be it the mobilisation against the imperialist invasion since the First Opium War, or the fight against the bourgeoisie during the Cultural Revolution. This thesis highlights the continual use of the friend/enemy grouping in Chinese politics over time. The historical continuities that have propelled the evolution of the friend/enemy distinction capture the key difference between it and a non-Western counter-terrorism discourse.

The contribution to terrorism research has two dimensions. First, this thesis contributes to the relationship between authoritarian states and terrorism. The relationship between democracy and terrorism has been studied in great detail. Some believe that the lack of constraints to state power, legal norms and complex institutions allows authoritarian regimes to crackdown on terrorist activities more effectively with little regard for the consequences of using extraordinary methods. However, empirical evidence from non-democratic regimes is relatively less explored, with a few exceptions (Aksoy, Carter, and Wright 2012; Pokalova 2013a; Wilson and Piazza 2013; Ogden 2005). This thesis presents China’s counter-terrorism as an example of a non-Western counter-terrorism approach. It contributes to this debate by demonstrating China’s efforts to maintain the stability of the regime which reflects Gerschewski’s (2013) “three pillars of stability” in sustaining autocratic regimes. The case of China provides an important addition to the understanding of counter-

terrorism beyond the West. As the following chapters of this thesis will demonstrate, China shares the concerns for due process in legitimating its counter-terrorism practice to some extent, but these concerns are deemed secondary compared to the priority of national unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. In depicting China's struggle between effective counter-terrorism measures and individual freedom, this thesis deepens our understanding of an important non-Western counter-terrorism approach.

Second, this thesis contributes to the debate on the "critical" and "orthodox" schools of terrorism research. The debate surrounding Critical Terrorism Studies provides an important critical lens through which to examine the problems facing the terrorism research field. Although some of the criticisms levelled at the so-called "orthodox terrorism studies" are debatable, the critical reflection of the terrorism research field provides a useful approach to identify the problems of the terrorism research field in the context of China's counter-terrorism discourse, policy, and practice.

This thesis seeks to address four critiques put forward by Richard Jackson (2007) as its main contribution to terrorism research. First, to tackle the methodological and analytical shortcomings, the argumentation of this thesis is built upon empirical evidence obtained from publicly available Chinese sources, as well as interview data. The empirical data demonstrate in detail the ways in which the counter-terrorism rationale is linked with the recurring theme of "friends and enemies" in political history.

Second, to counteract the state-centric approach of "orthodox terrorism studies", this thesis reconceptualises "terrorism", and the related "hostile forces" and "East Turkistan forces" as rhetorical devices that can help uncover the power relations and political agenda underlying China's official counter-terrorism discourse. Treated as rhetorical devices, these labels reveal how China's political discourse prioritises national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity over other democratic values such as due process, human rights, and the rule of law.

Third, the state and academia are largely inter-linked in China due to the recent re-emphasis upon, and increasingly stronger state control over, ideology since Hu Jintao (Holbig 2009). This thesis challenges the status quo in which some scholars take the official designation of terrorism for granted, and highlights the similarity between the terrorism studies in Chinese and the state's discourse and framing of terrorism. It also highlights the fact that some scholars avoid addressing the difficult questions regarding the political dynamics from which Uyghur separatist sentiments emerged, as well as their uncritical acceptance of the conflation of separatism and terrorism.

Fourth, this thesis acknowledges the limitations of “problem-solving theory” (Cox 1981, 129) and aims to challenge the status quo that aggravates the “problem of terrorism” through the examination of the power relations between the executive and the judiciary, and between the state and community. Section 5.6 will explain how preferential policies in education and language policy that aim to solve the “problem” of ethnic tensions result in further segregation and estrangement. Chapter 7 will demonstrate how the officials’ understanding of the lack of education as a cause of radicalisation is translated into policies that might worsen anti-Han sentiment and entrench existing divisions, such as “re-education camps”.

This thesis contributes to the scholarship of China studies in five aspects. Firstly, it provides empirical evidence that helps to explain the ways in which Chinese officials and scholars perceive the issue of terrorism in China’s political discourse. Extant literature provides a detailed explanation of the various causes of, and implications for political violence in Xinjiang. However, recent developments in the policies aiming at strengthening internet control raise new questions regarding the ways in which the counter-terrorism propaganda competes with the ethno-separatist discourse.

Secondly, it indirectly addresses the link between development policies and the counter-terrorism agenda by providing empirical evidence that highlights the counter-terrorism rationale underlying development policies. There have been some attempts to explain the link between development policies and the security agenda (Mackerras 2004; Sautman 1998), but the political context in which the link is embedded has yet to be fully explored, in order to understand the ways in which counter-terrorism propaganda makes meaning.

Thirdly, it provides new insights into the ways in which Chinese political elites and intellectuals frame ethnic and social integration. As Chapter 4 will demonstrate, their understanding of the Chinese integration model is crucial to understanding their perception of, and response to the threats to unity. However, this has been omitted in the extant literature on integration and terrorism research. The relationship between integration models and counter-terrorism has been studied in some depth (Horvat 2010, 11; Palumbo-Liu 2006, 11; Abbas 2007; McGhee 2008; Modood 2005, 7). The lack of evidence from China becomes an impediment to the understanding of the non-Western counter-terrorism rationale as China emerges as an increasingly important player with a large Muslim population.

Fourthly, this thesis identifies the Mass Line strategy as a key tenet running throughout China’s security discourse. Emphasising the reliance on the masses as a principal source of legitimacy, the current leadership has facilitated a revival of this approach, which was central to Mao’s governance. The inclusion of the Mass Line

principles in Anti-Terrorism Law and de-radicalisation policies demonstrates how this old notion is used to temper the new security policies. Embedding the Mass Line approach in its counter-terrorism policy, China seeks to transform its citizens from passive beneficiaries of security to active participants of counter-terrorism practice.

Lastly, this thesis also contributes to the understanding of China's response to terrorism in terms of hard and soft approaches. In the Chinese political context, the hard and soft approaches correspond with Mao's theory of two types of contradictions. According to this theory (as Section 4.3.1 will explain), the state should differentiate between "enemies" and "friends" when fighting against terrorism. The "enemies" can be treated with a hard approach, while the "friends" who are usually deceived or forced to join terrorist groups should be educated, persuaded and supported in order to re-integrate into society. As will be discussed in Section 6.4.1, the CCP believes that only a very small group of individuals hiding among the general population can be classified as the "enemies", while a large percentage of those who are radicalised follow the "enemies" blindly because of a lack of education and unemployment. This explains the CCP's developmental approach to security, which aims at improving the living standard, education level and employment for the majority of the local population in Xinjiang. However, at the same time, these "soft" measures also cause problems because they are rooted in China's political discourse in which only the official ideology is considered "correct". In this context, the commitment of Muslims to their identity and their culture becomes a source of the wider anxiety in terms of the regime's security.

1.4 Chapter outline

Chapter 2 will start with a discussion of the conceptual questions that are central to this thesis. It will explain how the analysis in this thesis contributes to and identifies connections between two fields – terrorism research and China studies. The disambiguation of the definition of terrorism tackles the first obstacle to a rigorous understanding of the issue of terrorism. The discussion of the definitional problem will help to understand the function of "terrorism" and other labels such as "hostile forces" as "rhetorical devices" in the following chapters. It will also highlight the importance of placing "terrorism" and other labels in the political discourse and historical continuities. Engaging in the debate over the "orthodox" and "critical" terrorism studies and Richard Jackson's four critiques of "orthodox terrorism studies", this chapter will explain the critical lens that puts China's counter-terrorism discourse, policy, and practice under scrutiny.

In the field of China studies, this chapter focuses on three issues – political violence in Xinjiang, development policy and the Chinese integration model. It draws on the works of “China experts” working outside China regarding the causes and the impact of political violence in Xinjiang. As the discussion on the intimate ties between the Chinese scholarship and state power demonstrates, the discussion of this subject in China is inevitably value-laden. Therefore, the Chinese-language scholarship will be studied as part of the political rhetoric in pursuit of greater legitimacy in the following chapters. In this section, English-language scholarship will be used as a point of reference against which the Chinese-language sources can be examined.

Chapter 3 will focus on the methodology. It will explain the application of frame analysis and discuss the analytical model used in this thesis in the examination of the discourse of the Century of Humiliation as a master frame, and a series of assumptions and labels that derive from the master frame. These ready-made assumptions and labels have enabled the CCP to reproduce the friend/enemy distinction without explicitly providing information on the identity of the “enemy”. Derived from the frame-theories of Snow, Benford (Snow et al. 1986; Benford and Snow 2000) and Gamson (1989, 157), the analytical model provides a framework for a structured understanding of the relationship between concepts such as unity, separatism, and the friend/enemy distinction. This chapter also provides detailed information on the research methods and fieldwork, and considerations of the limitations of the research design.

Chapter 4 will provide a foundation of China’s political context and demonstrate how its legacy conditions the contemporary security policy. Highlighting the homogeneity of the friend/enemy distinction in history, this chapter will illustrate the links between the political ideas used in ancient and modern China and the current security policy. It will explain the evolution of the concept of “unity” in China’s political discourse, how it has been intertwined with the history of humiliation and how it enables scholars such as Fei Xiaotong to envision the integration model that prioritises “unity” over “diversity”. The concept of “unity” is essential as it provides information about how “separatism” is conceived in China’s political discourse. It is within this context that the CCP justifies its legitimacy based on its commitment to safeguarding national unity.

Linked with “unity”, the state has developed its understanding of “enemies” – those who undermine China’s national unity. Termed “hostile forces”, the notion of the “enemy” is an important part of the political discourse in contemporary history. Despite slight changes in the specific meaning of “enemies”, each generation of leadership has used the notion of the “enemy” to justify the legitimacy of their

security policies. Underpinned by the underlying assumptions of “unity” and the notion of the “enemy”, the CCP has developed a series of untold assumptions about the “correct outlook” on history, ethnicity, and the state (*CPC News* 2015). These assumptions will be analysed against Edward Herman and Gerry O’Sullivan’s (1989, 37–38) criticisms of the state bias in the counter-terrorism discourse.

Chapter 5 will delve into the overall counter-terrorism strategy to find connections between counter-terrorism discourse, policy and practice, and China’s quest for legitimacy. Guided by the Overall Security Outlook, China’s security policy is highly state-centric. The discourse of counter-terrorism is embedded in a series of ready-made assumptions that antagonise the “West”. The legal framework serves to ensure the power of the state in designating terrorism with more emphasis on the role of the executive over the judiciary. In its implantation, the vagueness of the definition causes local officials to target a broad range of expressions and activities as radical. The discussion on the domestic and international actors involved in China’s counter-terrorism policy will further highlight the state-centric nature of China’s counter-terrorism institution and the underlying friend/enemy distinction in China’s cooperation within the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation framework.

This chapter will also demonstrate how development and religious policies are affected by the concerns for security. The measures that aim to assimilate – or in the words of the CCP, to “sinicise” – Muslims, contribute to a dilemma in which the implementation of these measures might lead to the consolidation of the Uyghur identity, and the same result might be inevitable if the CCP does not do so.

Chapter 6 will focus on the evolution of the Mass Line approach in China’s quest for legitimacy and the application of the Mass Line principles in counter-terrorism. Drawing support from the masses, the current leadership sought to gain support from and mobilise both the Han and Uyghurs. It will also demonstrate how the CCP has encouraged young people to go out into the local communities to spread the “facts” about terrorist incidents.

Chapter 7 will discuss the de-radicalisation discourse, policy and practice that are underpinned by the Mas Line principles. It will demonstrate how the CCP legitimises its de-radicalisation approach by embedding the official views in various channels of propaganda. In doing so, it has sought to facilitate political conformity and ensure the dominance of the “correct” ideology in Chinese society. It will also highlight the CCP’s failed attempts to differentiate between hard and soft approaches, which are exemplified in the light of recent reports on “re-education camps”. The intolerance towards diversity and the promotion of elites’ narrow understanding of the Uyghurs

reflect the monopoly of the state on the discourse of counter-terrorism, and the heavy-handed measures that have followed at the local level.

Chapter 2 Conceptual framework

This chapter will discuss some conceptual questions that underpin this thesis. This thesis examines concepts and issues that sit across two overlapping disciplines, terrorism research and China studies. The chapter is therefore divided into two main sections. The discussion of key conceptual questions in both terrorism research and China studies will help us to situate the analysis of this thesis in a broader body of literature in regard to political violence. The concepts that will be discussed in this chapter, including terrorism, authoritarianism, legitimacy and radicalisation provide the foundation to analyse China's approach to terrorism. The extant literature on China's separatist movements, development policy and integration model highlights a gap that forestalls a more comprehensive understanding of the context in which Chinese political elites and intellectuals perceive, frame, and respond to terrorism.

The discussion in the first section is structured around four questions. First, in what way does the difficulty in defining terrorism highlight the context-contingent nature of the concept of terrorism? Second, how does this thesis address the criticisms levelled at the traditional terrorism research field? Third, how do authoritarian states respond to terrorism? Fourth, how can the categorisation of hard and soft approaches and previous studies on radicalisation help to understand China's response to terrorism? The answer to these questions will highlight the challenge of balancing efficacy and legitimacy regardless of regime type, and China's response to this challenge, which is characterised by authoritarianism.

The second section will focus on the research in China studies on political violence in Xinjiang, development policy and the Chinese integration model. It will provide the point of reference for the analysis of the empirical evidence in the following chapters. Scholars' (mostly Western) understanding of the history, causes and implications of political violence will be introduced. Then, their observations can be examined against the Chinese officials and intellectuals' perception. The impact of development policy on ethnic tensions has been studied, but the rationale for the developmental approach to security has yet to be explored in the context of China's counter-terrorism strategy. The relationship between the integration model and the counter-terrorism effect has been studied in detail in the West, but the case of China remains under-explored.

This section will focus on scholarly works that are largely produced outside China. As a result of the language barrier, ideological differences and distinctive academic ethos, the communication between academia within and outside China is insufficient – especially on this topic, which is so controversial that even the very definition of the subject matter is in question. Consequently, there has been an inevitable gap in the

body of knowledge delineated along the language line. This section functions to establish the knowledge outside of Chinese-language academia as an object of reference, which helps to situate China's counter-terrorism approach in the following chapters.

2.1 Terrorism research

2.1.1 Definition of "terrorism"

The focus on counter-terrorism means that this study draws on studies relating to the response of the state to perceived and real terrorist threats; the ways in which the state responds to, and intervenes in, the process of radicalisation, instead of the motivations, organisation or tactics of the individuals or groups that resort to violence in an attempt to achieve a political goal. However, to understand counter-terrorism, some basic concepts in terrorism studies need to be clarified. A state's attitude towards these concepts forms the basis for its response to terrorism. For example, the ways in which the definition of terrorism is formulated may affect terrorism designation and proscription, and more directly, the legitimacy of a particular organisation. The problem of the definition is amplified when considered in the context of counter-terrorism practice. The violence that a state uses could turn counter-terrorism measures into a form of state terrorism, as Jarvis and Lister have discussed in their criticism of the denial of state terrorism (2014, 44).

Alex Schmid (2011, 39) has examined 250 definitions of terrorism and identifies a number of patterns in the use of the term around the actors, targets, and motivations of perpetrators. Terrorism usually refers to an act that uses violence as a means to launch attacks against non-combatant targets. An act of terrorism could be provocative. The direct victim may not be the intended target, as the fear generated by the killing of a few can be spread to influence wider audiences. In the information age, the dissemination of the message of terror has been made particularly effective by the decentralisation of the media. The ability of ordinary citizens to post information on social media means that it is increasingly costly for governments to control the discourse and they must compete with its opponents for legitimacy and the credibility of their narratives.

States behave differently in the face of terrorist threats, despite the similar definitions they adopt. The reason for the divergence goes beyond the list of attributes of terrorism that are written in legal and policy documents. Because official definitions of terrorism reflect the political agenda of a certain government, the definition of terrorism cannot be studied in isolation. Those who do the defining set the political agenda by ascribing right or wrong (Sederberg 1989, 3). The term "terrorism" has

been used in so many different contexts, to the extent that its usage has become blurred (English 2009b, 2), and simply rendered meaningless. The term is no longer the sum total of the attributes of terrorism, but a convenient word given to a group of meanings underwritten by a set of peculiar assumptions in a certain political context, in an attempt to serve a political purpose. "Terrorism" is used to refer to different ideologies or activities, depending on the agenda of the defining agency, as will be discussed in the following chapters. In these cases, "terrorism" is used as a moral judgement and a label (A. P. Schmid 2011, 40), in order to give meaning to a counter-terrorism policy that is otherwise less likely to be accepted by the public.

The term has thus become a "rhetorical device" (A. P. Schmid 2011, 40) that is used to justify the morality of the defining agency. The definition of terrorism ironically lacks defining power, as the list of attributes of terrorism provided in the definition of terrorism does not lead the public to an informed judgement on the nature of "terrorist" individuals or organisations, and subsequently on the legitimacy of the corresponding measures taken by the government. The lack of defining power of the term, or using Jackson's words, the "ontological instability" of terrorism, means that in spite of the over-abundance of definitions, different defining agencies label events differently to suit their own interests based on unwritten assumptions. Therefore, uncritically accepting the label of terrorism without considering its political context amounts to reproducing the discourse that the defining agency has constructed for its own political agenda.

The contestation between different defining agencies is particularly salient in the case of the separatist movements in Xinjiang. Competing for public support, both the CCP and the Uyghur community in exile provide their own accounts of the violent incidents that have taken place in Xinjiang. Whether or not an incident can be defined as a "terrorist attack" is contingent upon the interests of the defining agencies. For example, the CCP framed the Urumqi Riots in July 2009 as a "premeditated, organised violent crime", which was "instigated, masterminded and directed by the World Uyghur Congress headed by Rebiya" (Liao, Xu, and Li 2009); while Rebiya Kadeer framed the incident as an initially "peaceful demonstration" that reflected the Uyghurs' long-suppressed anger and frustration with regard to the CCP (Kadeer 2009). The former narrative prevails in the Chinese media, while the latter gained some popularity outside of China. Labelling the incident as a terrorist attack allowed the CCP to justify putting the World Uyghur Congress on its counter-terrorism agenda. Combining the ensuing Special Action against Online Terrorist Audio and Video and

the Great Firewall³ to defend China's "cyber sovereignty", the CCP has created an environment in which the public has little access to alternative accounts provided by its opponents. In doing so, the CCP has been able to justify to its domestic audiences the use of extraordinary measures to reduce the alleged threat posed by the separatist movements against the stability of the regime.

The position of the state is replicated in Chinese academia. The close ties between academia and the state in China prevent the latter from engaging in a discussion that might potentially be seen as hostile by government officials. Due to the self-alignment with the party line, Chinese scholars seldom challenge the state definition of terrorism. Even those who set out to re-examine the definition of terrorism do not go as far as to challenge the designation of the "East Turkistan forces" as terrorists (Mo and Ye 2005; Zhanjun Li 2003). The scholarly works written in the Chinese language are largely prescriptive based on the established assumption that the "East Turkistan" separatist forces are terrorists (Jie Zhang 2005; G. Pan 2004; Benxian Li and Mei 2015). Scholars' self-alignment with the Party line makes Chinese scholarship on terrorism a good example of Robert Cox's "problem solving theory" (Cox 1981, 129). They take the situation as they find it, and work to make the established relationships and institutions work smoothly by offering specific suggestions on how to deal with "terrorism" without considering the underlying political implications of labelling.

The unsolved problems with the definition affect terrorism designation. The latter translates an intangible discourse of terrorism into documents that have legal ramifications. As the following chapter will demonstrate, China adopts a "double-track" system of terrorism designation which relies on the executive more heavily than the judiciary. The flexibility that the Anti-Terrorism Law provides to the executive is a typical example of the malleable nature of the concept of terrorism, and the ways in which it is used to suit the political agenda of the defining agency.

This thesis acknowledges the complicatedness of the definition of terrorism and explore the concept of terrorism not as a given fact, but as a rhetorical device, a label that ascribes right or wrong, an instrument that reinforces or shifts the existing boundary between "friends" and "enemies". This assumption allows the researcher to examine China's counter-terrorism approach in its quest for legitimacy and historical continuities. It reveals the commonality among states in politicising the discourse of terrorism, and the distinctive ways in which China embeds the discourse of terrorism in its quest for legitimacy and historical continuities.

³ The Great Firewall of China combines a series of legislative actions and technologies to strengthen control over public opinions online within China.

2.1.2 Critical Terrorism Studies

This thesis draws on Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) to examine the existing power relations embedded within the Chinese discourse on terrorism. The criticisms of CTS in regard to what it calls the “orthodox terrorism studies” offer some useful insights to uncover the interaction between the ways in which terrorism is framed in official and academic settings and the security agenda of the CCP. Terrorism-related information in the official and academic discourse is carefully selected and organised to represent a reality that is conducive to the CCP maintaining political stability. Although some of CTS’s claims are described as “overstated” (Horgan and Boyle 2008), the series of critiques offered by the CTS can help examine the status of the terrorism research field in the context of China’s counter-terrorism discourse, policy and practice.

Richard Jackson (2007) lays out four main critiques of what he and other CTS scholars call “orthodox terrorism studies” (Jackson, Smyth, and Gunning 2009, 1). First, there is a series of methodological and analytical shortcomings in the traditional terrorism studies (Jackson 2007). Some of these shortcomings are particularly pertinent to the study of terrorism in China. The over-reliance on secondary data, as Zulaika and Douglass (1996, 149–50) and Silke (2004) point out, is also prevalent in the Chinese scholarship. The wording and information regarding terrorist individuals and organisations in the academic literature can be traced to official documents, such as “‘East Turkistan’ Terrorist Forces Cannot Get Away with Impunity” (State Council Information Office 2002a) and the *Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China 2001). Relevant research is highly repetitive; the same body of historical research is used as the source for the analysis of the historical roots of the violence in Xinjiang (Xiaoxiao Liu 2004; W. Xie and Wang 2002; Yuemin and Lifang 2004; Bin Xu and Pu 2002). Only a few scholarly works involve actual primary research. An example is a Doctoral thesis on the Islamic movement in China (W. Yan 2006). Several Chinese scholars indicated to the researcher that there might be a large number of studies conducted by researchers at several counter-terrorism research centres across China, but most of that research is not open to the public due to the confidentiality of the primary data they have accessed. This observation was further confirmed in an interview with two researchers at the Peking University and the Counter-terrorism Research Centre at the Northwest University of Political Science and Law.

In this thesis the researcher did not seek to access classified information on counter-terrorism. Instead, publicly available information was used as the primary data with which to examine China’s counter-terrorism discourse, policy and practice. Because a discourse must be conveyed to the public in order to serve its political purpose, the

lack of classified information does not constitute an impediment to the understanding of the discourse.

Second, according to Jackson (2007, 245), the traditional approach to terrorism studies is limited by state-centric priorities. Such priorities result from the root of terrorism research in traditional security studies and counter-insurgency studies, where there is an established paradigm to study the nature and causes of political violence, and the response of the state. In this paradigm, “knowledge” is little more than a reproduction of the discourse of “terrorism” made up of myths (Jackson 2007, 245). Some of these myths, as summarised by Stohl (2008), are highly relevant to the study of terrorism in China. The terrorism discourse in China assumes that political violence in Xinjiang is the activity of non-governmental actors. Terrorists are “evil” criminals. All terrorist attacks involve support from “external hostile forces”. The myths about terrorism in China and its ties to external supporters are rooted in its quest for legitimacy and historical continuities, as the following chapters will demonstrate. The ties between domestic terrorism and external supporters are not entirely imagined given the incapability of domestic individuals to launch attacks due to the stringent social control. However, it is difficult to convince those who do not live in China that the real threat is caused by others. As Debata (2010) points out, considering the increasingly important role that China plays in the international community, very few countries would be willing to confront China in regard to its internal affairs. Upon critical examination of these myths, this thesis highlights the affinity between the “knowledge” of terrorism and the official terrorism discourse in China. The cases of religious and education policy in Chapter 5 demonstrate how the reproduction of the terrorism discourse in academia in turn feeds into policy-making.

Third, Jackson (2007, 245) points out that the boundary between the scholarship and state-linked policy studies is blurred due to the close ties between the terrorism researchers and state institutions. This criticism is particularly pertinent when studying China’s counter-terrorism approach. All of the counter-terrorism research centres in China are affiliated with public universities, which are funded by the state. One of the major think tanks, the China Institute of International Studies, is under the direct leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As discussed earlier, the official position on the “East Turkistan forces” is often replicated in scholarly works published in China. Because of the alignment with the official position, scholars take the state’s terrorism designation for granted, and seldom question the political context from which the separatist sentiments emerged. Some scholars treat “East Turkistan forces” as if this grouping were self-evident, requiring no further efforts to discern “terrorism” from separatism (see Yuemin and Lifang 2004; Xuewu Liu 2013). As Schmid and Jongman (1988, 1) suggest, the “we-know-it-when-we-see-it” attitude of many

authors could easily lead to double standards, which feed into bad science and bad policies. In China, the close ties between academics and the state have resulted in a bias among Chinese scholars; they avoid some key issues related to the negative impact of counter-terrorism measures and, in doing so, they avoid challenging the legitimacy of China's counter-terrorism policy. Considering the implications of scholarship on the legitimacy of these state policies, many Chinese scholars tend to replicate the state discourse of terrorism, portraying China as an innocent victim of terrorism, and avoid framing the CCP or its policy as escalating factors for ethnic tensions (see W. Xie and Wang 2002; Yuemin and Lifang 2004; Bin Xu and Pu 2002).

Fourth, borrowing Robert Cox's criticism of "problem-solving theory", Jackson (2007, 245) questions the ways in which traditional terrorism studies treat the hierarchies and operation of power that are implicated in the "problem" of terrorism. CTS thus advocates the challenge against the status quo that contributes to the "problem of terrorism" (Gunning 2007, 370). Like early terrorism research in the West, relevant studies in China are highly policy-oriented. The self-alignment and self-censorship limit these studies so that they function to reinforce the existing power relations. In doing so, the academic discourse follows the official discourse in ignoring the historical processes that produced the "problem" of terrorism and simply proposes solutions that would smoothen the "existing relationships and institutions".

This thesis uses CTS as a lens through which to examine the existing power relations in the discourse of terrorism in China. However, as Horgan and Boyle (2008), Lutz (2010) and Heath-Kelly (2010) point out, CTS is not without limitations. According to Horgan and Boyle (2008, 52) in setting up the "orthodox terrorism studies" as a "straw man", CTS "creates just the kind of dualism that critical theory was designed to challenge". Heath-Kelly (2010, 245) echoes this argument, and states that the declaration of an explicit normative function for reason of a particular theory does not make itself better than a non-explicit one, if one was to conduct "value-free" research. According to her (2010, 235), the "pearl fishing" method is flawed in the sense that "a section of a philosophical position is appropriated without regard for the whole". Projecting a normative vis-à-vis "problem-solving" dichotomy per se goes against the critical commitment to conduct value-free research (Heath-Kelly 2010).

Furthermore, narrowly depicting terrorism studies as a monolithic body of uncritical literature risks losing sight of alternative approaches outside the mainstream journals (Horgan and Boyle 2008, 55). Lutz (2010, 33) adds that CTS's claims against the lack of attention to state violence is unfounded and lists a number of studies on repressive governments. Many established scholars have gone to great lengths to engage in the

definitional debates and take issue with “non-critical” approaches to terrorism (Baker-Beall, Heath-Kelly, and Jarvis 2015, 3).

Critical Terrorism Studies have undergone a series of critical reflections and developments and have become increasingly robust in their claims and diverse in their scope. The special issue regarding the practice, limits and experience of critical terrorism studies stands as evidence of this trend (Heath-Kelly, Jarvis, and Baker-Beall 2014; Jackson et al. 2018).

Employing CTS does not mean that this thesis dismisses the rest as “uncritical” just because mainstream terrorism scholars are not necessarily using the language of critical theories, but rather because the questions CTS scholars have posed are particularly relevant to terrorism studies in China. Taking the criticisms of CTS into consideration, this research does not dismiss the existing mainstream terrorism research entirely, simply because of a lack of explicit normative commitment.

2.1.3 Legitimacy, regime type and terrorism

The concept of legitimacy is closely associated with regime type. Würtenberger (1982, 680-81, cited in Dukalskis and Gerschewski 2017, 2) defines legitimacy as “a form of political rule that was justified by the absence of despotism and tyranny and was, instead, characterized by the rule of law”. According to this narrow definition, legitimacy is not a proper concept when discussing a non-democratic regime due to the lack of rule of law.

However, many studies have shown that non-democratic regimes do, and use various tactics to establish and maintain legitimacy. Examining Central Asian countries, Schatz (2006, 268-9) argues that “claims to legitimacy establish plausible ... links between ruler and ruled”. Regardless of the regime type, no ruler would refuse what legitimate rule brings: enhanced order, stability, and effectiveness (Beetham 1991, 25-37).

Legitimacy, together with repression and co-optation, sustain autocratic rule (Gerschewski 2013). Legitimacy is particularly important, as the CCP is transforming itself from a revolutionary force into a ruling party, and the extreme friend/enemy distinction during the revolutionary era is becoming increasingly irrelevant to the public today.

Regime type does not make a considerable difference to whether or not a state pursues legitimacy. However, it does play a role in how a state is influenced by, and respond to terrorism. The debate on the relationship between regime type and terrorism has generated a substantial amount of academic work. Scholars disagree on whether democracy encourages or constrains terrorism. Eyerman (1998) divides the scholarship into the “strategic school” and the “political access school”. The former

contends that the higher level of freedom in democracies lowers the cost of violence, thus exposing democracies more to potential attacks. The latter argues that the opportunities of political participation that democracies provide offer peaceful alternatives to express political grievances, reducing the likelihood that discontented groups will resort to violence.

Schmid (1992, 18–20) summarises several weaknesses of democratic regimes in dealing with terrorism. First, freedom of movement allows immigrants and political refugees to mobilise international terrorism from abroad. Second, it is more difficult to convince the public to accept the trade-off between civil liberties and state security, which creates obstacles for intelligence collection. Third, the counter-value nature of terrorists means that open societies provide an abundance of targets. Fourth, legal constraints make it difficult for a democratic government to prosecute an individual without solid proof.

In contrast, authoritarian governments are less constrained by these democratic values (Eubank and Weinberg 1994, 420). According to Pape (2003, 350), authoritarian police states are less restrained in curtailing civil liberties, making it more difficult for suicide attacks to be organised or gain publicity. Crenshaw (1981) and Eubank and Weinberg (1994) suggest that the lack of legal norms and complex institutions in non-democracies allows for relatively more efficient counter-terrorist measures. As totalitarian regimes are not under pressure to follow the due process and demonstrate procedural justice, they are less restrained in terms of using extreme measures. In extreme cases, with the monopoly of armed forces, totalitarian regimes can effectively use state terror to exert control and persecute political enemies (Wilkinson 2001, 17). As Lutz and Lutz (2010, 63) illustrate, totalitarian regimes have a record of eliminating dissidents abroad, as is evident from Nazi Germany and the KGB in the Soviet Union.

Although empirical research (Gurr 2003, 202; A. P. Schmid 1992; Laqueur 2001, 122) demonstrates a generally positive correlation between the level of freedom and terrorist incidents, it would be an over-simplification to suggest a causal link between regime type and terrorism, regardless of other factors. Wilson and Piazza (2013, 941) argue that whether a certain regime type is more prone to terrorism is contingent on “complex institutional differences that go beyond the democracy-autocracy divide”. Indeed, non-regime factors cannot be ignored in understanding the causes of terrorism. Savun and Phillips (2009) argue that it is the type of foreign policy democracies tend to pursue that makes them vulnerable to transnational terrorism. Ogden (2005, 247) argues that it is not authoritarianism per se, but poor governance, that has led to the aggravation of the grievances of the Uyghurs.

China seems to be particularly resilient to democratisation, according to Andrew J. Nathan (2003), due to its succession mechanism, meritocratic considerations that balance factional considerations in promotions, evolution towards the separation of the responsibilities and spheres of authority between the Party and government, and ability to rehabilitate its legitimacy. However, the four aspects that Nathan discusses have changed dramatically during President Xi Jinping's terms in office. First, the CCP has amended the Chinese Constitution to remove the term limits (Griffiths and Schwarz 2018), and its increasingly firm grip on power makes it less likely that we will see a peaceful succession to the next generation of leaders. Second, Xi's anti-corruption campaign rewrote the rules of Chinese politics (The Economist 2015a). As many observers (Fiol-Mahon 2018; Schmitz 2017; Skidmore 2017) argue, Xi's anti-corruption campaign, aimed at removing his political rivals, has reshaped factional politics, and brought factional considerations back to the forefront. Third, the institutional restructuring in 2018 (Xinhua 2017; Xinhua 2018a) signals a regression of institutional differentiation. Although the revision of the Anti-Terrorism Law indicated some attempt to accord power to the judiciary, the executive remains dominant in the designation, evidence collection, and rehabilitation processes in counter-terrorism practice. Fourth, terrorism can erode legitimacy and trust within a democracy (Crelinsten 1989), but what is the impact of terrorism and counter-terrorism on legitimacy in an authoritarian regime like China? How does the CCP rehabilitate its legitimacy in the face of heavy-handed counter-terrorism policy and practice?

This thesis contributes to the broader enquiry in regard to how authoritarian regimes respond to terrorism. While some believes that authoritarian regimes "differ from each other as much as they differ from democracy" (Geddes 1999, 121), others see commonalities among these regimes in regard to their legitimation mechanisms. Dukalskis and Gerschewski (2017, 3) have distilled four legitimation mechanisms, namely, indoctrination, performance, passivity, and democratic-procedural.

Examining the links between China's counter-terrorism approach and its quest for legitimacy and historical continuities, this thesis demonstrates similarities and differences between China and liberal democracies. The CCP shares the concerns for the legitimacy of its approach to terrorism, and it seeks to legitimise it through a number of tactics that have been studied by scholars, such as Gerschewski and Dukalskis, as typically non-democratic.

To maintain stability and sustain the CCP's rule, three processes, as identified by Gerschewski (2013), can be seen from China's counter-terrorism discourse, policy and practice, namely, legitimation, repression, and co-optation. The framing of terrorism-related incidents is built upon an array of ready-made assumptions that originated

from the narratives of the Century of Humiliation, which serve to establish and maintain the legitimacy of China's security agenda, which prioritises national unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. The Strike Hard campaign, as well as the restrictions put on education, religion, and ideology, serves to repress activities, ideas and views that are deemed "wrong". The increase of ethnic minorities in the political system⁴ and the engagement with community members – mainly seen in the mobilisation of the "patriotic believers", "opinion leaders", and "cultural workers" – reflect the CCP's attempt to tie relevant actors to the Party and facilitate frame alignment among the Uyghurs through the voice from within.

To legitimise its approach to terrorism, the CCP has employed various tactics, which can be categorised according to Dukalskis and Gerschewski's (2017) analysis of four legitimisation mechanisms. Indoctrination, which is evident from the important role of the Department of Propaganda, has always been ingrained in China's contemporary politics. Since the reform and opening up era, the CCP's legitimacy has been sustained by a hidden social contract whereby individuals give up part of their freedom in exchange for rapid economic growth. The latter has also enabled the CCP to demobilise the population so that they do not challenge the regime's goals. Moreover, the regime is under pressure to persuade its citizens that it is at least making efforts to respect democratic procedures.

This thesis highlights the CCP's struggle to seek to establish a counter-terrorism strategy that by and large respects democratic procedures. First, the revision of the definition of terrorism shows, albeit very limited, attempts to live up to the commitment to freedom of expression. Second, the revised Anti-Terrorism Law gave power to the judiciary to designate terrorist individuals and organisations, which indicated some concern for due process and procedural justice. However, the power of the executive is still not constrained, and the terrorism designation process is still problematic, with very little support for the reviewing and delisting process. Without an independent body to examine the designation issued by the State Counter-terrorism Leading Organ, the current designation mechanism still leaves the door open for power abuse. These factors show that China's counter-terrorism approach is constrained by authoritarian characteristics such as highly concentrated power, limited freedom, and a general lack of due process, even though there have been some efforts to resist these characteristics.

⁴ According to the White Paper "Human Rights in Xinjiang – Development and Progress" (2017), the number of ethnic minority officials in Xinjiang increased from about 3,000 in 1950 to 91,076 in 2016 which accounts for 40 % of the population at the time.

This thesis also highlights the coexistence of the four legitimation mechanisms that Dukalskis and Gerschewski (2017, 3) have identified – the regime did not abandon indoctrination when China’s rapid economic growth allowed it to do so, although it arguably has relied much less on the friend/enemy distinction as a source of legitimacy.

Moreover, this thesis further explores the politicisation of the past and the use of history as a source of legitimacy. As Lary (2008, 131) observes, the Chinese government has always considered the past as a key factor that provides the CCP’s right to rule. Compiling an official version of histories is a national project underwritten by the political considerations of gaining legitimacy by presenting the “correct” version of history. The history of Xinjiang is an example where the manipulation of history is obviously geared towards establishing the CCP’s right to rule. Section 4.3 demonstrates how the official history of Xinjiang has been controlled by the CCP, how the alternative accounts of the past have been labelled “nihilism”, and how it functions as a propaganda tool to support the CCP’s claims about the nature of terrorism in Xinjiang.

2.1.4 Responses to terrorism

This thesis focuses on the state response to terrorism. Having laid out some basic issues surrounding the conceptualisation of terrorism in China, this section will discuss two aspects of the state’s response – hard vs. soft approaches and (de-)radicalisation.

A horizontal comparison between the liberal/democratic model of counter-terrorism and China’s approach reveals some similarities. Among others, they share the concern to justify their counter-terrorism policy. A democratic government is expected to justify its counter-terrorism strategy to its citizens. If a counter-terrorism policy is counter-productive or does not do justice to the money spent on defending the state from terrorist threats, the legitimacy of the government will be thrown into crisis. The government will then be held accountable for its failure to ensure security. Therefore, it is important that a democratic government is able to justify its counter-terrorism policy.

Similarly, in China, political elites are aware of the need to maintain public support as a source of legitimacy. As the following chapters will demonstrate, the CCP has developed a series of ready-made narratives, assumptions and labels to be used in its counter-terrorism propaganda.⁵⁵ However, China’s approach shows some limitations. As a single-party state, China does not need to compete with alternative accounts of incidents. Indeed, the CCP has closed the door to competing narratives by deploying

⁵⁵ counter-terrorism propaganda: 反恐宣传

the Great Firewall and the concept of cyber sovereignty. Therefore, its counter-terrorism propaganda is hardly convincing, especially from the perspective of those outside China. As the only legitimate voice, the CCP is relying on government officials from within and self-aligned scholars to identify problems. As a result, its counter-terrorism propaganda is inevitably outdated, despite some developments, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

This section focuses on the research on the responses to terrorism in the English-language scholarship. The Chinese-language scholarship does provide some recommendations on improving the human rights standards in counter-terrorism, but such a discussions usually refer to the human rights violations of countries such as the US and the UK (see Fei Zhao and Zhao 2006; A. Liu 2010). Some scholars (Tuerxun 2014) discuss the human rights violations of the “terrorists” and frame the Chinese counter-terrorism strategy as the protector of human rights. Very few scholars challenge the human rights standard of the counter-terrorism measures in China directly, with some exceptions (X. Yu 2014; S. Yin 2008) which offer some mild criticism. Based on the assumption that the American understanding of human rights from a bourgeoisie perspective and the Chinese understanding of human rights from a Marxist perspective are incompatible, Pan and Tian (2002) argue that the essence of the human rights issues is the intervention of the US in other countries’ internal affairs.

2.1.4.1 Hard vs. soft approach

When examining a state’s response to terrorism, it is useful to categorise it into hard and soft approaches. A counter-terrorism strategy can be seen as a combination of hard and soft approaches. According to Rineheart (2010, 37), the hard approach – in other words, the war model or military model – deals with terrorism as a form of enemy-centric war, conducted mainly by the armed forces of a state, involving primarily offensive tactics, methods such as special forces operations, increased policing and intelligence operations. The soft approach, or the criminal justice model, provides a framework, preferably underpinned by the rule of law and democratic values, for the government to deal with terrorism, which usually involves population-centric methods, including efforts towards capacity building, economic development and counter-radicalisation (Rineheart 2010, 37). Rineheart also points out the limitations of each approach. The hard approach is more straightforward, but it is also more likely to violate human rights and the rule of law, whereas the soft approach is less aggressive, but little evidence can be found to show that it is really addressing the root causes of terrorism. The 9/11 attacks prompted many states to treat terrorism as a matter of emergency and an exceptional threat that requires a militarised strategy in addition to the criminal justice model (see Hocking 2003, 358). The clandestine nature

of terrorism makes it particularly difficult to collect information and present it as admissible evidence in court.

The negative impact of the hard approach has been discussed in great detail. Many scholars have repeatedly addressed the ineffective and counter-productive aspects of force-based counter-terrorism approaches (Jackson, Jarvis, et al. 2011, 232). The over-use of force can potentially alienate local populations and in turn feed into the recruitment of terrorist groups (Jones and Libicki 2008, xvii). What is euphemistically called “collateral damage” may “erode sympathy among decisive populations”, and tends to validate terrorists’ critical claims about the government (Burleigh, 2008 pp. 114–15, cited in English, 2009a p. 129). The erosion of human rights standards through the hard approach is seen in many liberal democracies (Crelinsten 2009; English 2009a, 102). It is difficult to strike the right balance between civil liberty and state security when the government needs to separate terrorist targets from the general population based on limited means of discrimination relating to how they are defined (race, age, religion, and nationality and so on). The efforts to profile terrorists, particularly in terms of their religion and ethnicity, has “diminished due process standards”, “enhanced interrogation techniques”, and solidified the already entrenched distrust among the decisive populations who might otherwise provide useful information for law enforcement (Adams, Nordhaus, and Shellenberger 2011, 5). Without respect for the rule of law, the war on terror risks losing the moral high ground by undermining “the very value that it presumes to protect” (Hoffman 2004, 932).

Some elements of the Chinese counter-terrorism strategy are clearly in line with a “war model”. To start with, the Chinese response to terrorist threats is branded the “people’s war on terror” (C. Zhang 2014a), and portrays terrorists as “panic-stricken rats” (Xinhua 2014b).⁶ By mobilising the people into its war on terror, the CCP seeks to gain public support for heavy-handed crackdowns and to downplay the potential erosion of human rights violations. The war narratives also justify the draconian “Strike Hard” campaign. The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), a local semi-military organisation, and the People’s Armed Police were involved in stability maintenance during the campaign (Pokalova 2013a, 286). The institutional restructuring in 2018 has placed the Armed Police Force under the control of the Central Military Commission⁷ (Xinhua 2017), indicating that stability maintenance in China has been further militarised.

⁶ people’s war on terror: 反恐的人民战争

⁷ Before 2018, the Armed Police Force was under dual leadership of the State Council and the Central Military Commission.

The soft approach also causes concerns over the balance between civil liberty and state security. On the one hand, the erosion of civil liberty does not necessarily benefit counter-terrorism practice. Taking an example of counter-terrorism in the US, the expanded investigative and surveillance powers in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks have made it harder for security agencies to gather useful intelligence (Adams, Nordhaus, and Shellenberger 2011, 5). On the other hand, the curtailment of civil liberties may have a negative impact. Long-term repressive measures may undermine the credibility of a government, and intensify the division between political parties. In the UK, for example, the ways in which terrorism and radicalisation have been linked to the idea of identity, integration, segregation and multiculturalism have led to biased judgements against Muslim youth (Lynch 2013, 241).

Some governments focus on social cohesion as part of their soft approach, as evidence (Wiktorowicz 2005) shows that discrimination against, and social and political marginalisation of Muslims can be used as a propaganda tool to mobilise Muslims in Western Europe. The ways in which the discourse of social cohesion overlaps with the discourse of terrorism may result in jeopardising the credibility of the officials who deal with social cohesion (Wiktorowicz 2005). After the 9/11 attacks and the 7/7 bombings, new counter-terrorism policies were quickly introduced (Alam and Husband 2012, 137). The xenophobic and racist sentiments accompanying far-right movements exacerbate the tensions against Muslims caused by the profiling of terrorists along ethnic and religious lines. In this context, the commitment of Muslims to their culture and identity might become a source of a wider anxiety in societies that value multicultural openness (Alam and Husband 2012, 142).

The central government in the UK has developed a community cohesion policy focused on the Muslims population of Britain (Alam and Husband 2012, 136). The interactive ways in which these two distinct policies have been implemented have been criticised by Alam and Husband (2012, 138) for creating a climate in which British Muslims were exposed to a “public level of scrutiny and hostility” in the context of post-attacks anti-Muslim sentiment. According to Abbas (2007, 287), the implementation of the anti-terrorism legislation has intensified the Islamophobia in British society.

It can be seen, therefore, that even the policies designed to promote cohesion can have a negative impact, as they highlighted the Self/Other dichotomy in British society, emphasised the differences of the *Others* and revealed an underlying intolerance for the *Others* who live and act differently (Alam and Husband 2012, 153). When such differences of *Others* became perceived as alien to British society, policy-makers considered it necessary to carry out measures to “aid their social cohesion into the

fabric of society as a whole” (Alam and Husband 2012, 153). Moreover, the de-radicalisation programmes PREVENT and CHANNEL have been questioned for their narratives, which may lead to the criminalisation of many Muslims in the UK (Qureshi 2015, 181).

“Soft” measures to curb domestic radicalisation and terrorism may result in the alienation of certain groups, according to some scholars. The discrimination, repression, stigmatisation and alienation directed at certain groups may even bolster terrorist narratives (Choudhury and Fenwick 2011, v). Some scholars use the notion of “suspect community” when discussing the communities that tend to be the focus of national counter-terrorism and de-radicalisation programmes. The term was coined by Hillyard (1993) to refer to Irish Catholics who were specifically targeted for state surveillance. Pantazis and Pemberton (2009, 646) developed the notion in the context of the post-9/11 “war on terror”, arguing that UK legal and political developments had designated Muslims as the “enemy within” and facilitated the construction of Muslims as a “suspect community”. Although the notion itself is criticised as a fallacy of composition – using the experience of some Muslims to talk about the treatment of the entire Muslim community (Greer 2010, 1177) – it does raise awareness of the potential negative impact on social cohesion in a multi-ethnic state.

The discourse of terrorism can also be seen as part of the soft approach – the construction of a series of assumptions, narratives and labels to serve the counter-terrorism agenda of a country. In order to justify the legitimacy of counter-terrorism policies, a discourse that demonises terrorism might lead to the creation of its own reality. Zulaika and Douglass’s (J. Zulaika and Douglass 2009; J. Zulaika 2003) writings detail how the discourse of terrorism, which is filled with an imagined description of monstrous violence, and sometimes baseless threats, creates the very reality that it sets out to eliminate. The discursive construction of such imaginary monsters leads to a change in the perception of the policy-makers, and thus the counter-terrorism policies could potentially foster more terrorism (J. Zulaika 2003, 195).

Such a constructed discourse can provoke the state into overreacting, which is the very aim that terrorist groups seek to achieve. Provocation has been studied as a “classic, well-established strategy of terrorism, but it is frequently ignored by governments in the heat of the moment”. A government can be induced to respond with indiscriminate repression against the population, which may lead to further radicalisation of the population in question (Kydd 2006, 51). The over-reaction of the state may feed into the framing of the status quo as a contestation between the “aggressive and guilty” state and the “defensive and innocent” operatives by terrorist groups.

In China, a number of policies can be linked explicitly or implicitly to the counter-terrorism strategy. As the CCP adopts a developmental approach to security, its security policy is closely intertwined with its development policy, and the link between the two is often seen as self-evident, requiring no further illumination. This results in a gap in relation to how the Chinese government links counter-terrorism with development policy. Chapter 5 will elaborate the conflation of the development and security agendas in the Chinese counter-terrorism strategy in more detail. Due to such a conflation, the boundary between hard and soft approaches in China is not always clear. Despite the lack of an explicit link between the security agenda and development policies, some of these policies clearly fall into the category of the soft approach to counter-terrorism. A focus only on the hard approach, such as the Strike Hard Campaign, leads to an impartial assessment of the overall counter-terrorism strategy. In the Chinese political context, policies on development, religion, education, integration, employment also contribute greatly to stability maintenance and the justification of the counter-terrorism rationale. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, these policies are designed to improve social cohesion by tackling the roots of socio-economic grievances, but their implementation does not always do justice to the intentions. Although little evidence is found to suggest a direct link between these policies and the effectiveness of the counter-terrorism strategy, the omission of these policies may lead to a partial understanding of Chinese counter-terrorism strategy. Without efforts to improve the socio-economic conditions for the Uyghurs, the Strike Hard campaign would have pushed the level of discontent to a point where the loss of control over Xinjiang became inevitable. Therefore, development policy plays an important role in tempering the heavy-handed hard approach to keep the counter-terrorism strategy from falling apart.

As Rineheart (2010, 38) points out, the state seldom functions according to a single model. A counter-terrorism strategy is always a combination of both hard and soft approaches. The categorisation of hard and soft approaches is helpful in linking the rationale for China's counter-terrorism with Mao's two types of contradictions – the "contradictions among the people" can be treated with a soft approach as persuasion and education, while the "contradictions between ourselves and the enemy" should be treated with a hard approach such as coercion (Z. Mao 1957, 1949). This explains the rationale for differentiating between counter-terrorism propaganda and the "Strike Hard" campaign.

It is worth noting that the "soft approach" used by Chinese government officials does not necessarily fall into Rineheart's categorisation. For example, the governance of

Xinjiang under Zhang Chunxian, the then Party Secretary of Xinjiang, was branded a “soft approach” (W. Wang 2010).⁸ The relatively “soft” measures are referred to in contrast to the more draconian control in Xinjiang in the aftermath of the 2009 Urumqi Riots under Wang Lequan. However, Zhang’s resolute repression of terrorists and his method of the people’s war (*People’s Daily Online* 2014a) are not fundamentally different from Wang’s approach as both officials prioritised state security and emphasised collective political stability.

2.1.4.2 Radicalisation and de-radicalisation

Radicalisation has been studied in great detail and depth. It is defined as “the social and psychological process of incrementally experienced commitment to extremist political or religious ideology” (Horgan 2009, 152). It also refers to the personal process through which individuals adopt extreme political, social, and/or religious ideals and aspirations that justify the use of indiscriminate violence (Wilner and Dubouloz 2010, 31; Randy Borum 2011a).

Some scholars question the very existence of the phenomenon known as “radicalisation” (Hoskins and O’Loughlin 2009; Furedi 2009). As the definition of “terrorism” itself is problematic, as discussed in the Section 2.1.1, the pathway towards “terrorism”, which is contingent upon how one defines it, inherits the same problems. “Radicalisation” is, therefore, a controversial term, the meaning of which varies among different people (A. Schmid 2004, 375; Randy Borum 2011a). The academic activities in the five years after the London bombings offered no “consistent notion of what is meant by ‘radicalization’” (A. Richards 2011, 143). Heath-Kelly (2013, 397) further challenges the concept of radicalisation by interrogating the process through which the radicalisation discourse has emerged and “how it engenders the performance of risk governance within British counter-terrorism”. The problem of the lack of clarity would not have been so salient, had it not been so intertwined with counter-terrorism policy. As Baker-Beall, Heath-Kelly, and Jarvis (2015) observe, whenever there is a new terrorist attack, the media immediately follows with an investigation into how the perpetrators were “radicalised”. The ensuing pressure for the government to provide solutions exacerbates the problem of conceptual ambiguousness.

In response to the attempts to dismiss radicalisation as a myth, Neumann (2013, 873) argues that the term does have meaning, and that the ambiguity of the term is rooted in the conflation of two overlapping notions, “cognitive radicalisation” and “behavioural radicalisation”. The disambiguation of the two notions reveals the

⁸ Soft approach to govern Xinjiang: 柔性治疆

fundamental problem underwriting many de-radicalisation policies – conflating extremist beliefs and extremist behaviours risks undermining the commitment to freedom of thought.

However, it is not easy to draw a clear line between radicalisation as a non-violent ideology and radicalisation as violent political behaviour. In order to provide a solution to the problem posed by extremist ideology, it is natural to seek to understand the mindset of the “enemies” by understanding the ways in which violence is justified as a legitimate response (see Habeck, 2006; Borum, 2003). However, focusing on ideology alone in preventing radicalisation may result in biased observations regarding the pathways to terrorism.

There have been several attempts to understand the process of radicalisation through various analytical models. The following section will discuss some of the attempts to conceptualise radicalisation. It can be seen from the following discussion that most of the existing analytical models are policy-oriented, aiming at indoctrinating the radicalisation process to manageable phases. Although the Chinese de-radicalisation policies are not built upon any existing models, the discussion of the latter provides a baseline for the study of the former.

Borum (2003) proposed a four-stage conceptual model to study the “terrorist mindset”. This model focuses on the process through which grievances and vulnerabilities are transformed into hatred of a target group, before being transformed into a justification for violence (R Borum 2003, 7). According to Borum, an undesirable event or condition (It’s not right) is identified as being unjust (It’s not fair). Then a person or a group is blamed for this injustice (It’s your fault), before the injustice is labelled as “evil” (you’re evil). This model was initially published for training purposes on the *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, and has a visible policy-orientation.



Figure 3 Four-Stage Model of the Terrorist Mindset (R Borum 2003, 8; Randy Borum 2011b, 39)

The model of Jihadi-Salafi radicalisation proposed by the New York Police Department's (NYPD) Intelligence Division is one of the most widely circulated models (Randy Borum 2011b). Written for law enforcement practitioners, it presents a consistent trajectory of radicalisation in a terse and explanatory style (Hofmann 2012).

This model describes the four phases of radicalisation, beginning with the environmental and social factors (pre-radicalisation), and then moving on to the self-identification of individuals with extremist ideology, before further seeking evidence to support the individuals' religious beliefs through indoctrination, and finally reaching the last phase, Jihadisation, when the individuals accept their duty to participate in jihad and identify themselves as mujahedeen (Mitchell D. Silber and Bhatt 2007).

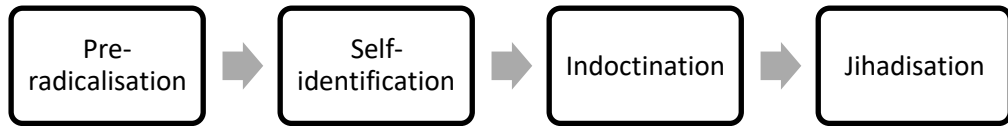


Figure 4 NYPD Model of Jihadi-Salafi Radicalisation (M. D. Silber and Bhatt 2007)

Precht (2007) provides a description of the typical radicalisation pattern in a report funded by the Danish Ministry of Justice. The four overlapping phases towards terrorism are shown in the graph below. Precht's categorisation of the background factors, trigger factors and opportunity factors are particularly relevant to Chinese de-radicalisation policies. For example, the opportunity factors in the first and second phases, according to Precht (2007, 34), include the mosque, internet, school, family and prison, sports activities, and friends. Chinese de-radicalisation propaganda is present in all of these places. As Chapter 5 will discuss, Chinese scholars believe that the number of mosques in China has outgrown the actual religious need of the Muslim population, which leads to religious policies that aim at limiting the growth of Islam. The de-radicalisation propaganda cultural event the "Little Apple" dancing competition is also held in front of a local mosque.

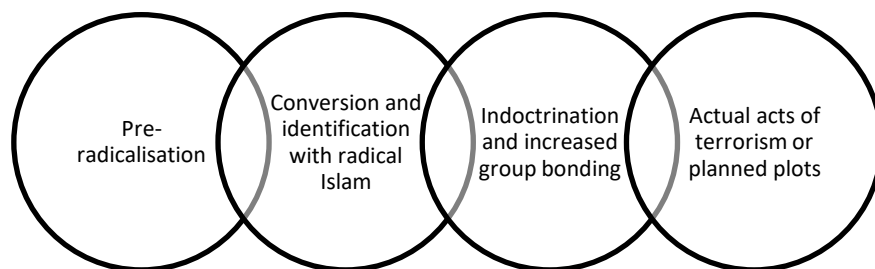


Figure 5 Typical pattern of radicalisation (Precht 2007, 34)

Veldhuis and Staun (2009, 5–6) point out the selection bias and statistical discrimination in the phase models. They propose a more comprehensive model, looking at the dynamics at the micro, meso and macro levels. As Chapter 5 will demonstrate, at the macro level, in building legitimacy through the narratives of the Century of Humiliation, the CCP portrays China as an innocent victim of imperialism that continues in the form of peaceful evolution in today's international relations. The assumptions derived from these narratives enable political elites and scholars to promote an integration model that prioritises "unity" over diversity. At the meso level,

the CCP carries out large-scale development programmes in order to firstly address poverty, despite that the inequality between ethnic groups accompanying economic growth has worsened ethnic relations. At the micro level, local authorities visit individual families under the “Visit, Benefit and Gather” programme (Chapter 6), and employ a variety of tactics to keep individual Uyghur students from dropping out (Chapter 7).

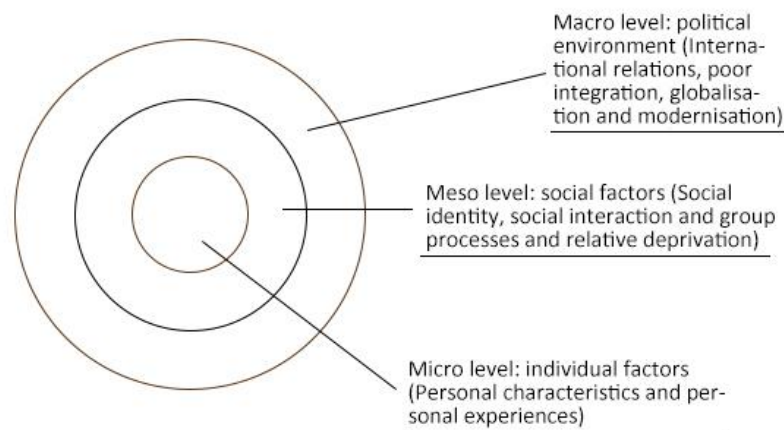


Figure 6 Veldhui and Staun’s Root Model (2009, 24)

As discussed earlier, the issue with many radicalisation policies lie in the conflation of “cognitive radicalisation” and “behavioural radicalisation” (Neumann 2013, 873). Taking the PREVENT strategy in the UK as an example, its focus on ideology is criticised by opponents of the War on Terror (Mohammed and Siddiqui 2013). Mohammed and Siddiqui (2013, 6) argue that eliminating an ideology does not prevent politically motivated violence, especially when Western policy and occupations are part of the key concerns behind the struggle. Borum (2011a, 8) argues that radicalisation as an ideology, or in Neumann’s words, “cognitive radicalisation”, should be seen as a *part* of the focus, while the process of how people actually move from the justification of violence to violent activities is equally important to combat violent extremism. Similar to Neumann, Borum (2011a, 30, 2011c, 2) advocates the differentiation of “radicalisation” (as an ideology) and “action pathways”. Both scholars emphasise that extremist ideologies do not always lead to engagement in terrorist activities.

The differentiation between ideology and behaviour is particularly relevant to Chinese de-radicalisation policies. The conflation of “cognitive radicalisation” and “behavioural radicalisation” is at the core of the debate over China’s Anti-Terrorism Law. The term

jiduanhua is the corresponding word for radicalisation in Chinese; it means the process by which an individual or a group increasingly identifies with an extremist ideology.⁹ Under Xi Jinping, the government began to re-emphasise the importance of ideology to regime security (see *CPC News* 2013c). Correspondingly, through de-radicalisation policies, the government attempts to intervene at an early stage of radicalisation when individuals start to have access to “terrorist” propaganda materials. This is evident from the “Special Action against Online Terrorist Audio and Video” in 2014.¹⁰ The intention to incorporate ideological control into the counter-terrorism strategy is evident in the development of Anti-Terrorism Law (Section 5.4). After being widely criticised, in the amended Anti-Terrorism Law, “thoughts” had to be deleted as a form of terrorism from its official definition of terrorism. However, ideological control is by no means ignored in practice. In fact, it is one of the tactics used in the overall counter-terrorism strategy, which will be discussed in Section 6.2.

2.2 Concepts related to counter-terrorism in China

The discussion of political violence, development policy and the integration model in this section will help to understand the rationale and perception of Chinese political elites and scholars. As the following chapters will demonstrate, they attribute the causes of unrest in Xinjiang largely to external influences, and to a lesser degree underdevelopment. The discussion of political violence provides the foundation for understanding the exaggeration of external factors and the omission of domestic factors in the counter-terrorism discourse.

The exploration of development policy highlights the CCP’s developmental approach to security. It highlights the complexity of the problem of counter-terrorism in terms of the relationship between development and stability. The example of migration and birth control policies demonstrates that the divergence of views on the relationship between development and ethnic tensions has led the CCP to adopt its current approach to counter-terrorism. It also underscores the necessity of viewing development policy as part of China’s overall counter-terrorism approach.

The introduction of the concept of the integration model in examining China’s counter-terrorism approach brings a new perspective based on counter-terrorism studies in the West. Drawing a parallel with multiculturalism in the UK, it highlights the gap in understanding China’s approach to the relationship between the

⁹ *Jiduanhua*: 极端化

¹⁰ Special Action against Online Terrorist Audio and Video: 铲除网上暴恐音视频专项行动

integration model and the counter-terrorism rationale. It paves the way for the analysis of the concept of “unity” in the following chapters.

2.2.1 Political violence in Xinjiang

The ineluctable binary opposition between the academic works produced by scholars in mainland China and those who are working outside China creates obstacles to understanding political violence in Xinjiang. At the same time, it provides useful information for examining the underlying ideological and political considerations in which the counter-terrorism discourse is embedded. As can be seen from the discussion in Section 2.1.2, scholars’ ties with the political circles have a more visible impact on the research conducted by Chinese scholars, as is evident from the absence of some sensitive topics such as human rights. This section, therefore, draws mainly on the research conducted by those working outside China. Most of these scholars are from the US, Australia, the UK or other European countries, and they are usually considered as parts of the monolithic “West” by the CCP. In the eyes of the Chinese officials and academics, those scholars build their research on “Western” values, and is inevitably a reproduction of the hegemonic pursuit of the “West” (Q. Wu 2017; B. Chen 2015). This is what Chinese scholars call “discourse hegemony” (B. Chen 2015).¹¹ In attempting to resist this discourse hegemony, the Chinese-language scholarship often has a different focus, using different sources and approaches that are underwritten by its quest for legitimacy. Therefore, the Chinese-language scholarship will be examined as part of the data to trace its roots in China’s political history, while the English language scholarship will be used as a reference point for the discussion in the following chapters.

Political violence was ongoing long before the discourse of terrorism was adopted to describe the political unrest in Xinjiang. Continuous tensions were caused by the competition for control, clashes between religion and the state, and the clash between the traditional Han culture and Muslim culture, which was compounded by political movements during the Cultural Revolution and the influence of the Soviet Union, as well as the more recent Islamist-inspired extremist ideology (Becquelin 2000; Shichor 1994; J. a Millward 2004; Clarke 2010).

Although separatist sentiment existed throughout the history of Xinjiang, it did not turned violent until after 1986 (Bhattacharya 2003, 373). After the founding of the PRC, and during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution that followed, radical communist policies have generated fear and anger and undermined the economic structured across China. In the following Reform and Opening-Up era, a

¹¹ discourse hegemony: 话语霸权

series of relatively relaxed religious policies were implemented, giving rise to a massive religious revival (Lambert 2001, 122). Despite the short period of relaxed control, Islam in China has always been under state control (Potter 2003a; Shichor 2005, 125). In addition to religion, the control and suppression of other aspects of life, such as ethnic language, cultural cuisine and garb intensified the sense of injustice against ethnic minorities and posed challenges for regime legitimacy (Davis 2008b; Potter 2003b). As the suppression is not only directed at religion, some of the Uyghur nationalists tend to be secular in their orientation (Gladney 2003, 19). According to Gladney (2003, 19), the issues they raise include not only religious freedom, but also environmental degradation, nuclear testing, over-taxation, and birth control policy.

Furthermore, the rapid growth of network information technology has opened up a new arena for competing narratives of nationalism (Culpepper 2012). The contestation between Han nationalism and Uyghur nationalism in cyber space contributes to the growing self-awareness of the Uyghurs (Bhattacharya 2003, 357–58). The virtual communities that have formed on the internet have raised the awareness of the issues that were previously less accessible to the general public in China (Gladney 2003, 16).

The improving access to the internet poses new challenges for the CCP in two aspects in the context of the counter-terrorism discourse. First, it exerts pressure on the CCP to improve its own propaganda in order to compete with the alternative discourse provided by the exiled Uyghur communities. Second, it forces the CCP to make more stringent policies to regulate the use of the internet to block the contents that might destabilise the regime, as is evident from the introduction of the Great Firewall and the concept of “cyber sovereignty”. In response to the dissemination of “terrorist” ideology, the local government published the *Notice on Prohibiting the Dissemination of Terrorist Audio and Video*, which targeted online “terrorist” ideology (Jingang Huang 2016). During the fieldwork in Xinjiang, many important venues such as train stations, custom offices and museums were seen to be staffed by police, who were checking cell phones.

In order to strengthen control over ideology, the CCP promotes the “correct” outlook on ethnicity, religion and the state to counteract the “Western” and separatist ideologies. In attempting to exclude the separatist discourse from China, the CCP conflates separatism and terrorism so that separatism can be punished under the Anti-Terrorism Law. The CCP uses the phrase “three forces”, conveniently bracketing terrorism, separatism and extremism together as security threats (see Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China 2001). The conflation of these three notions has led some scholars (Bhattacharya 2003; Boehm 2009; Beina Xu, Fletcher,

and Bajoria 2014) to question the actual threats posed by the Uyghur separatists. Some (Clarke 2008, 293; Shichor 2006, 90) suggest that the alleged ties between the East Turkistan Islamic Movement and Al-Qaeda are substantiated with very little evidence beyond Chinese sources. Shichor (2006, 90) argues that at least some part of the “evidence” provided by the CCP is fabricated and some of the so-called “terrorist acts” are “no more than ordinary crimes”. Alternative accounts of the “terrorist acts” are eliminated by the CCP to ensure the dominance of the official terrorism discourse (Pokalova 2013b, 288). Executing its power as a defining agency, the CCP reframed the 1990 Baren uprising and 1997 Yining ethnic riots as terrorist violence (Pokalova 2013b, 288).

While some (Clarke 2008) acknowledge that the political violence in Xinjiang is motivated by both domestic socio-economic problems and the external dynamics of Islamic radicalism, others question the very existence of what the government has called “external factors”. Debata (2010) detailed the official responses by various countries and international organisations, indicating that considering the increasingly important role China plays in the international community, many states and organisations are reluctant to confront China by raising the Uyghur issue.

However, it can be seen from the emphasis on the “ideological work” under Xi Jinping (Jingyue Xu and Hua 2013) that the CCP considers the Western sympathy towards the separatist movement in Xinjiang as a real threat. The perception of the US’ willingness to contain China by supporting the separatist movements in Xinjiang and Tibet is confirmed by the context of recent cases of Western intervention. As the following chapters will demonstrate, the anxiety among political elites about a possible Kosovo-style intervention is obvious in the counter-terrorism discourse and policy.

2.2.2 Development policy

The CCP adopts a developmental approach to security (F. Zhong 2015, 116), emphasising development as the precondition for security. Chinese scholars have sought to theorise this approach as a “China solution” to international peace (Yin He 2017).¹² He (2017) takes issue with the existing Western model of peacekeeping, underpinned by liberalism and proposes the developmental peace as the alternative “China solution”. The CCP has established development and peace as the themes of the present times, and states that development is both the condition for, and consequence of peace (Yin He 2017, 24). This development-oriented approach is in contrast with the robust and coercive approach of humanitarian intervention that

¹² China solution: 中国方案

underwrites the Western model of peacekeeping (Lei Xue 2018). Steven Kuo (2015, 166) rejects the ways in which the nascent Chinese peace is mistaken as a “model” or a “finished product”. According to Kuo, China’s approach to peacekeeping should not be understood as one side of the two competing models. Rather than challenging the Western liberal model, Kuo (2015, 166) argues that Beijing’s intention is to promote its own brand of peacekeeping to serve its interests and project its soft power.

This understanding of development and security is an inseparable part of China’s foreign policy and national strategy. When it comes to conflict resolution, Li Dongyan (2010) argues that China’s rationale is to maintain national unity, territorial integrity and ethnic solidarity, which contrasts sharply with the Western model of curbing violence and build peace through division and separation, as exemplified in the Western approach to Eritrea, Kosovo and South Sudan. According to China’s rationale, peace building should focus on social and economic development, instead of the exporting Western liberal approach (Dongyan Li 2010).

This rationale has prompted the CCP to resort to economic development in order to reduce the unrest in Xinjiang (Mackerras 2004; Sautman 1998). As there is a visible correlation between economic backwardness and social unrest, the CCP expects that economic prosperity could, in theory, reduce the Uyghurs’ dissent (Boehm 2009, 86). However, the terrorist attacks in 2013 and 2014, when Xinjiang retained a high economic growth rate, show that this rationale is clearly an over-simplification that does not capture the complexity of the causes of political unrest in Xinjiang. As a result, some policies have in fact exacerbated the very problem that they set out to mitigate.

Some criticise the efficacy of the development policy for the political agenda. For example, Clarke (2007, 325) argues that apart from functioning as a regional development strategy, the Great Western Development also serves as a national strategy concerning the political, strategic and cultural significance of the region, or state security, rather than societal security.¹³

Some (Bovingdon 2004, 5; Mackerras 2004; Sautman 1998) believe that the failure of such a strategy to improve societal security lies in the lack of attention paid to ethnic inequality. Clarke (2008, 278) criticises the large-scale Han immigration that started in 1953 (R. Ma 2000, 2) for exacerbating the ethnic tensions as the wealth created by development projects benefited different ethnic groups unequally. Clarke’s (2007, 326–30) analysis of the discourse of the Great Western Development indicates that efforts to improve the economy of the “West” (referring to Xinjiang in this context)

¹³ Great Western Development: 西部大开发

were made on the condition of “national unity” and “social stability” in a country where the majority Han population leads the way. In this context, the discourse is, in fact, contributing to the dynamics of insecurity in Xinjiang (Clarke 2007, 330).

Bovingdon (2004, 5) argues that the Han migrants were treated with favouritism, and placed in a more advantaged position compared to the local Uyghurs. Wiemer (2004, 188) believes that a large number of job opportunities brought by the economic development projects went to Han immigrants, which further intensified the ethnic inequality and anti-Han sentiment.

However, attributing political violence to the CCP also risks over-simplifying the causes of the violence. A relatively recent study (Howell and Fan 2011a) provides a different perspective on the Han-minority inequality. Based on a survey in Urumqi, the study by Howell and Fan (2011a) indicates that the Uyghurs do not seem to be disadvantaged compared to the Han migrants. In fact, they (2011a, 136) argue that the Uyghur migrants from southern Xinjiang to Urumqi are younger, more educated, and more likely to have higher incomes than their Han counterparts. This study suggests that the role of Han migration in causing the economic grievances of the Uyghurs might have been over-exaggerated. It also highlights the complexity of the causes of the political unrest in Xinjiang.

Language policy is another example that reveals the complexity of development policy. Language policy has always been criticised by dissidents and observers outside China. Rebiya Kadeer (2011, 3) herself blames the CCP for eradicating her people’s “religion, language and identity” in the Human Rights Council Forum on Minority Issues in 2011. The institutionalisation of the Chinese language, according to Smith’s (2002, 158) ethnographic study, partly contributed to the “marginalisation in a new urban social hierarchy created by Han Chinese for Han Chinese in developed urban areas”, which ultimately led to the intensified tensions between the Uyghurs and Han Chinese.

However, the impact of language policy on radicalisation cannot be analysed in isolation. For Chinese political elites and scholars, bilingual education is the very solution to the low employment rate among the young Uyghurs. This assumption regarding the relationship between language skills and the employment rate is confirmed by some Chinese scholars (Jiabin Han and Yu 2009, 75). This knowledge in turn feeds into the government policy that promotes bilingual education, regardless of the criticisms. This reveals three features of the study of China’s counter-terrorism. First, academia is an important part of the reproduction of the official discourse constructed by the political circles. Second, ignoring the rationale for the development policies, such as bilingual education, risks overlooking other important aspects such as the relationship between language skills and the employment rate. Third, the

popularity of the criticism of China’s development policy in the West, in the eyes of Chinese political elites and intellectuals, is an evidence of the “discourse hegemony” aimed at undermining China’s ideological security (F. Chen 2018; Wenlin Tian 2017).

Similarly, birth control policy is often seen as another source of the grievances of the Uyghurs. Lurid stories (J. Ma 2013; *The Economist* 2012; Hoshur 2013) of imposed “brutal abortion” effectively raised the awareness of the international community of the treatment of Uyghur women. The World Uyghur Congress (2009) blamed the CCP for allowing Han Chinese to have more than one children as part of the strategy to assimilate “East Turkistan” into China. Boehm’s (2009, 81) study also echoes the claims of the Uyghur activists that some Uyghurs fear that the CCP is attempting to end the very existence of their ethnicity through birth control.

However, these claims need to be scrutinised against the actual policies implemented in Xinjiang. The Han Chinese in Xinjiang were not granted the right to have two children until 2012, and this new policy was a response to the Uyghur birth rate, which is four times the national average (*The Economist* 2015b). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2010), the Muslim population has rose from 17.6 million in 1980 to 20.3 million in 2000, at a growth rate of 42.31%, which is three times higher than the growth rate of the national population. In 1975, the central authority initiated the birth control policy targeted at the Han Chinese, which resulted in a slower increase in the Han population from 1980 to 1995 (see Figure 8 below). It was not until 1989 that the CCP started the birth control policy for the ethnic minorities in Xinjiang (L. An 2011, 24). From 1975 to 1983, mandatory birth control was imposed on the Han population (Sautman 1998, 89).

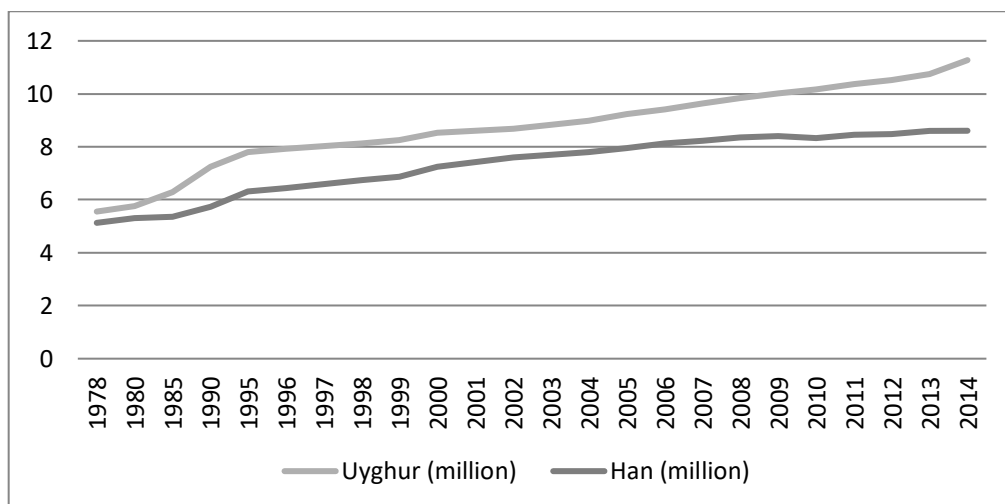


Figure 7 Han and Uyghur populations in Xinjiang from 1978 to 2014 (Statistic Bureau of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region 2016)

As little evidence can be found to show that the one-child policy targeted the Uyghurs in particular, it cannot be argued that this policy in isolation has contributed to anti-Han sentiment. Indeed, the one-child policy resulted in grievances across the country, and the policy, in conjunction with other factors, may have exacerbated the anti-Han sentiment among the Uyghurs. However, taking separatists claims for granted also risks undermining the ability to understand China's approach to counter-terrorism. The empirical chapters will explain Chinese political elites' and scholars' conceived causes of the Uyghur separatism.

Some other large-scale development programmes have not been studied in much detail. Visit, Benefit and Gather, a recent development project that involves sending over 200,000 cadres to local levels, remains unexplored. The empirical chapters will provide the empirical evidence to show the rationale for these programmes and how it led to policies such as Visit, Benefit and Gather. These policies are closely linked to the stability maintenance of Xinjiang and they have had a profound impact on ethnic relations. However, the relationship between these policies and the rationale for China's counter-terrorism remains a gap, which will be addressed in Chapter 5.

2.2.3 Chinese integration model

Some countries have already started to address the link between the integration model and terrorism. The impact of integration models such as multiculturalism on ethnic relations in the context of counter-terrorism has been studied in some depth (see, for example, Abbas 2007, 2005; Barley 2013; Choudhury 2011; Gabriel, Gomez, and Rocha 2012; Joppke 2004; Meer and Modood 2009; Modood and May 2001). Scholars and government officials in the UK have begun to pay more attention to the ways in which different ethnic groups integrate and how integration prevents or deepens ethnic divisions, considering the threat posed by so-called "home-grown" terrorists, such as the perpetrators of the 7/7 London bombings. The policy shift towards "community cohesion" in the UK underlines the growing concern about the relationship between the increasingly assertive Muslim identity and radicalisation (Choudhury 2011, 107). A best-selling book in 2006 *Londonistan: How Britain is Creating a Terror State Within* (Phillips 2006), explicitly links the causes of terrorism with the policy of multiculturalism.

Liberal democratic states have developed distinctive approaches to accommodate cultural diversity. Multicultural policies in the UK are called into question in terms of the excessive space they provided for cultural plurality which has led to a failure in creating a "common set of values of sense of nationhood"; while assimilationist policies in France treats individuals in the same way regardless of their ethnic or cultural identity, which might also intensify their feeling of being marginalised (Malik

2015). Concerns over the division of the society also led the Dutch government to abandon its model of a multicultural society (Kern 2011). A Finnish politician even called multiculturalism a “nightmare” that needs to be “defeated” (Winneker 2015).

Compared with European countries, China does not have a written doctrine on its integration model. Rather, its vision for social integration is embedded in its ethnic policy, derived from the discourse of the Century of Humiliation. As Chapter 4 will demonstrate, the “humiliation” narratives carry the connotation of “unity”, which is a reference used to define “separatism”. The notion of “unity” brings clarity to the friend/enemy distinction in the discourse of terrorism/separatism.

Therefore, the Century of Humiliation is a key concept that lays the foundation for the discussion of China’s integration model in the following chapters. The period of intervention by colonial and imperialist powers between 1839 and 1949 (Kaufman 2010) is also known by other emotionally provoking terms – “the history of tragedy”, “the history of resistance”, “the history of sacrifice”, “the history of awakening”, “the history of independence” and “the history of victory” (*China Daily* 2015, 1).

The concept of humiliation has a political function in contemporary Chinese politics. Humiliation has been an essential part of the construction of Chinese nationalism (Callahan 2004, 200), and it has been effectively used for mass mobilisation (Zheng Wang 2014, 4; Callahan 2004, 200). As a recurring theme in contemporary Chinese history, the ambition to blot out humiliation is a motivating factor for Chinese political elites (S. Zhao 2004a, 12). The periodical commemoration of national humiliation has shaped the mindset of a nation once it had become rhetoric, and thus it continues to exert an influence over the people (B. Xiong 2013, 173). According to Wang Zheng (2008, 804), the history of humiliation is so dominant that even talk of new achievements in recent years serves to demonstrate the end of past humiliations.

The Century of Humiliation is seen as a politically constructed notion. Elliott (2002, 143) questions the prevalence of the feeling of “humiliation” because most of the Chinese people were living outside the territories occupied by the imperialist powers and were not interrupted by their intervention in China’s political and economic system. However, despite some diplomatic call for China to move forwards (Schell and Delury 2013), the CCP has continued to reproduce the relationship between China as the victim and the imperial powers as the perpetrator, thus reinforcing the friend/enemy grouping between China and the “West”. In doing so, the CCP is able to justify the present security agenda by recounting the past.

In China, the discussion of ethnic relations is situated within the broader context of the China versus the “West” dichotomy, while some scholars frame China’s ethnic policy in the context of the colonial relations between the central authority and the

Uyghurs. This explains the hostility of Chinese political elites and scholars towards Western supporters of separatist claims. Some scholars (Dreyer 1976; Heberer 1989; Mackerras 1994) question the extent to which ethnic minorities enjoy real autonomy under the *minzu* regional autonomy policy. Some (Bachman 2004; Gladney 1998; Bovington 2004, 26) suggest a colonial relationship between the CCP and what it called the “New Frontier” (the literal translation of Xinjiang). Sending tides of Han migrants into Xinjiang, together with other policies, was seen as an act of “colonisation” by scholars such as Boehm (2009, 84), Shichor (1994, 77), Gladney (Gladney 1990, 11), Kung (2006, 379), Howell and Fan (2011b, 121), Becquelin (2004b, 360), and Bhattacharya (2003, 362). Their works echoes Erkin Alptekin, the then president of the World Uyghur Congress, who claimed that “[the] Chinese want to replace us with their own people as colonists, and assimilate those of us who remain, wiping out our culture” (cited in Schwartz 2004).

Such a framing undermines the friend/enemy distinction that is embedded in the narratives of the Century of Humiliation. In the eyes of Chinese officials and intellectuals, the alignment between these Western scholars and the Uyghurs’ separatist claims demonstrates how the Western discourse hegemony serves to delegitimise the CCP (F. Chen 2018; Wenlin Tian 2017). As the following chapters will demonstrate, the CCP has always blamed the Western support for groups that have separatist agendas for the sustained conflict in Xinjiang. In this context, human rights activists who support separatist groups are also blamed. An example is the CCP’s response to the mass DNA collection in Xinjiang, in which it claimed that the Human Rights Watch always makes “untrue” statements about China (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017).

2.3 Conclusion

The discussion of the key concepts used in this thesis highlighted some similarities and differences in terrorism studies (broadly defined) between liberal/democratic and authoritarian countries. This chapter functioned to situate the analysis of this thesis in a broader body of literature. It drew on the debate over concepts such as terrorism, legitimacy, authoritarianism, and radicalisation to construct a conceptual framework through which to analyse how China’s political elites and intellectuals perceive, frame, and respond to terrorism. The discussion of the controversies accompanying “terrorism” illustrated the importance of perceiving “terrorism” as a “rhetorical device”, rather than a given fact. Acknowledging the “ontological instability” enabled the researcher to focus on the underlying narratives and assumptions and the function of the labels that underpin China’s approach to terrorism. Informed by

Critical Terrorism Studies, this thesis takes seriously the ties between the state and scholars. It examines how scholarly works function to reproduce the state's discourse and how they help to understand the underlying assumptions of the friend/enemy distinction in China's terrorism discourse.

This chapter also highlighted the ways in which the analysis of this thesis contributes to the debate over legitimacy, regime type and terrorism. The discussion of the concept of legitimacy laid the foundation for the answer to why the CCP considered it necessary to build and maintain legitimacy during its transition from a revolutionary party to a ruling party (Nathan and Gilley 2003, 232). Building on Gerschewski and Dukalskis's works, this thesis presents the CCP's approach to terrorism as an example of how non-democracies pursue legitimacy and how they sustain their rule.

The discussion of radicalisation provided a context for China's response to terrorism. It drew links between China's approach and Western experience. In particular, the categorisation of hard and soft approaches helped to examine China's differentiation and treatment of friends and enemies according to two types of contradictions. This discussion also helped to examine the conflation of cognitive and behaviour radicalisation, which laid the foundation for the analysis of the sweeping counter-terrorism measures that target ideas that challenge the "correct" view promoted by the CCP.

The second half of this chapter focused on existing research on the causes and implications of the political violence in Xinjiang, the developmental approach to security and the integration model in China. The discussion not only helped to situate terrorism in China in the broader literature, but also helped to understand the process through which the CCP perceives and frames the "Xinjiang problem". According to scholars outside China, political violence in Xinjiang is caused by a mix of ethno-nationalist sentiments, socio-economic grievances and a sense of deprivation as a result of language and birth control policies. In contrast, the official discourse of terrorism has obviously oversimplified these causes and blamed "external forces" for its failure in counter-terrorism policy. Based on the assumption of a causal link between development and stability, the CCP has adopted a developmental approach to security. Such efforts have been centred on large-scale economic projects and further job trainings, which have become highly controversial in the light of recent reports on cadres' visiting Uyghurs' homes and the incarceration in the name of "job training". This section also highlighted the gap in regard to the CCP's perception of the integration model and terrorism. The narratives of the Century of Humiliation and the assumptions and labels derived from them have enabled the CCP to prioritise national

unity over diversity, and establish a set of “correct” ways in which the Uyghurs are expected to think and behave.

Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter provides the methodology that has been applied in this thesis to analyse China's approach to terrorism. The interpretivist assumption, which emphasises the social construction of the reality, lays the foundation for the methodology used in this thesis. Given the political nature of the concept of terrorism, the scientific methods that are applied to natural sciences are inadequate to address the political context in which the discourse of terrorism is embedded. Assuming that the truth consists of social facts, rather than brute facts (Jackson 2011), this thesis examines mainly how "shared ideas", rather than "material forces", construct the "structure of human association" (Wendt 1991, 1). The discursive process of the construction of the reality, identities and interests is an important aspect that explains the behaviour of the state and non-state actors involved in "terrorism" or counter-terrorism. To understand this process, this thesis relies on the political, historical and social context to make sense of China's approach to terrorism.

Informed by Critical Terrorism Studies, this thesis adopts a critical lens and acknowledges China's counter-terrorism approach as a social construction based on a series of assumptions inherited from the narratives of the Century of Humiliation. The assumptions about unity, separatism, and peaceful evolution reveal an underlying friend/enemy distinction in China's political discourse. In the context of counter-terrorism, the labels "hostile forces", "three forces" and "East Turkistan forces" are used to identify the "enemies".

3.1 Analytical model

This section provides a description of the analytical model that is used to explain how the CCP has legitimised its approach to terrorism. This thesis examines a wide range of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments based on the social construction of the collective memory of the Century of Humiliation. These attitudes, beliefs and sentiments give order and meaning to China's counter-terrorism policy and practice by laying out the underlying assumptions and rules for how "terrorism" should be perceived and dealt with.

The history of China as a weak and divided country is constructed as a strong motivating factor to prioritise national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity in China's security agenda. Political elites and intellectuals envision a situation where different ethnic groups enjoy a degree of freedom on the condition that they acknowledge that the "unity" of the state must transcend the "diversity" of ethnic groups. The absolute importance of "unity" in the Chinese political discourse makes it

possible to extend state power to deal with “separatism”. Historically constructed, the concepts of both “unity” and “separatism” have been broadened. As “unity” is linked to the security of both the state and the Chinese people based on the narratives of the Century of Humiliation, the concept of “separatism” is also broadened to include peaceful separatist expression and demonstration. In this context, all those who sympathise and support the separatist claims are regarded as the “enemy”, and are labelled “hostile forces”, “three forces” and “East Turkistan forces”.

China’s counter-terrorism policy, which is embedded in such a context, reflects the overriding concerns for national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The anxiety about separatist ideology can be seen from the overall security discourse, the anti-terrorism legal framework, and the actors involved in its counter-terrorism policy. The differentiation between hard and soft approaches reflects Mao’s theory of “two types of contradictions” – the “contradiction between ourselves and the enemy” should be treated with the hard approach, while the “contradiction among the people” should be treated with the soft approach.

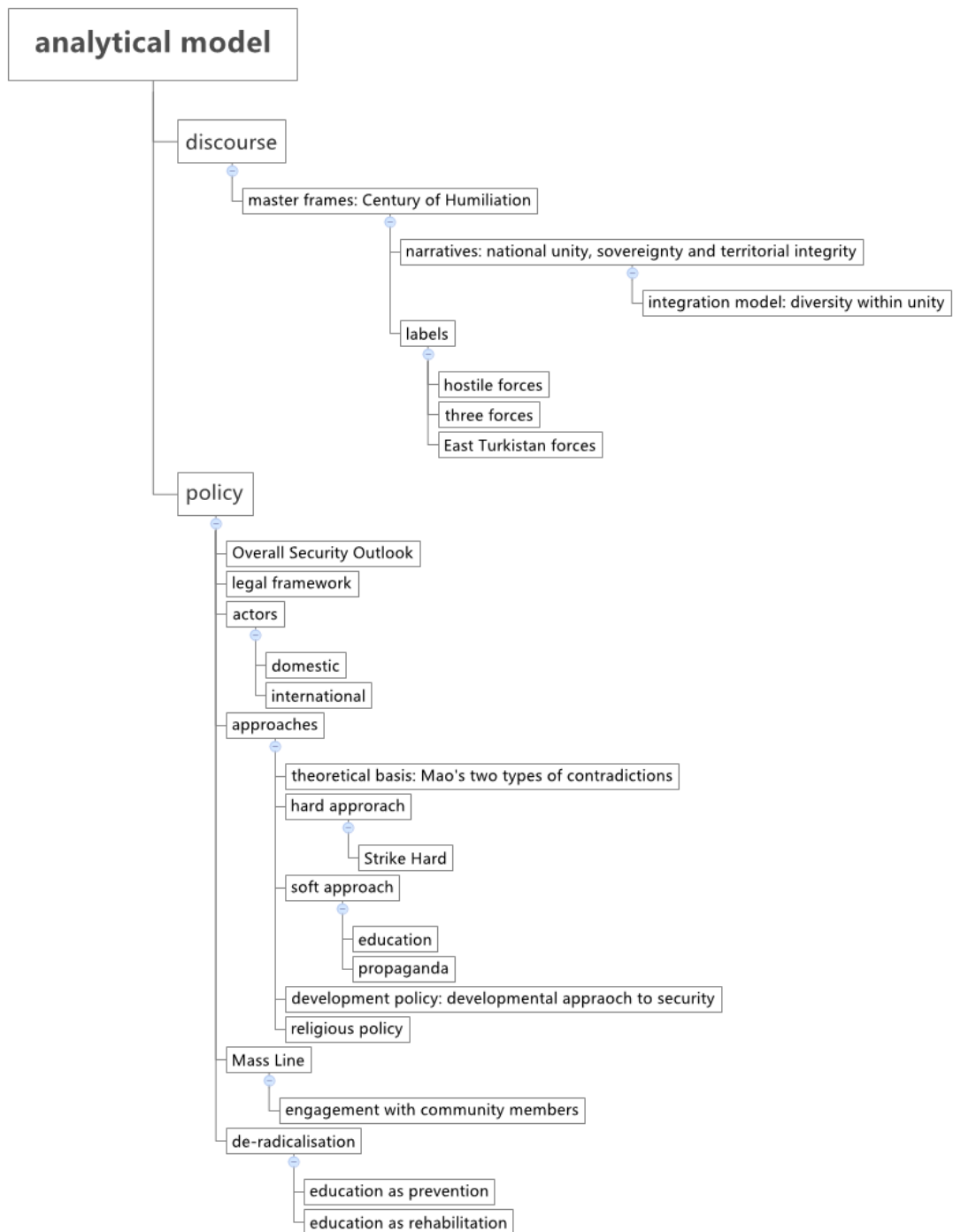


Figure 8 Analytical model

This thesis also examines development and religious policy as part of the overall counter-terrorism approach. The former reflects Chinese officials' and intellectuals' perceptions of the causes of political violence, and the latter reflects the concerns for the ideological challenges posed by the Islamic revival.

This thesis also explores the use of the Mass Line approach as a framework for de-radicalisation. The recent revival of the Mass Line approach under President Xi Jinping

reflects the anxiety about the foundation of legitimacy. Seeking support from the people, both the central and local authorities initiated a series of tactics to engage people from the Uyghur community.

Furthermore, this thesis looks at two ways in which de-radicalisation is approached through education. Overall, the de-radicalisation through education reflects the CCP's intention to treat radicalisation as the "contradiction among the people". The CCP's prevention and rehabilitation efforts reflect its strong propensity to maintain control in different stages of radicalisation.

This thesis also investigates how the government embeds the rationale for its counter-terrorism into the governance of Xinjiang. Various political slogans, such as "five keys" "four identifies", and "three cannot do withouts", reflect the government's attempt to maintain control over all aspects of social life.

In terms of practice, this thesis examines how the government responds to the "East Turkistan forces". The official counter-narratives on *hijrat* demonstrates how the state media compete with "terrorist" narratives. The case study also illustrates how the rationale for "hard and soft" approaches affects the de-radicalisation policy, with two examples of de-radicalisation propaganda.

The analysis of the framing of China's counter-terrorism discourse relies on the frame-alignment model of Snow, Benford and others (Snow et al. 1986; Benford and Snow 2000). "Frame alignment is a necessary condition for movement participation, whatever its nature or intensity" (Snow et al. 1986, 464). According to Snow and others (1986, 464), frames help an individual or a group organise experience and guide them to act, by providing a series of assumptions based on which the events are meaningful (Snow et al. 1986, 464). When a painting is framed in a certain way, some elements of it – colours, patterns or composition – are highlighted (Kuypers 2009, 181). By making some elements more salient than others through placement, repetition, or association with culturally familiar symbols (Entman 1993, 53), frames enable individuals to filter their perceptions of certain events in particular ways (Kuypers 2009, 181). For Gamson (1989, 157), "[f]acts have no intrinsic meaning. They take on their meaning by being embedded in a frame or story line that organises them and gives them coherence, selecting certain ones to emphasise while ignoring others".

The methodology facilitates the analysis of how political elites and intellectuals situate events in the context of existing friend/enemy divisions, establish legitimacy and mobilise the public. In order to do so, some assumptions are reinforced, while others are omitted. The methodology involves identifying how counter-terrorism is framed in this way, and how this discourse demonstrates key linkages with China's elite discourse and historical continuities. The reinforcement and omission collectively

constitute the discourses surrounding the counter-terrorism strategy that perpetuate the existing hierarchy within the state system.

It is important to understand the language used to examine the ways in which the government has responded to perceived and real terrorist threats and justified its counter-terrorism strategy. To identify frames, interpretive commentaries that surround news reports are sometimes more important than the informational content (Gamson 1989, 158). Official documents are often written in a concise and succinct manner, while commentaries on the state media provide more information on the assumptions that underpin the official statements and official attitude. In addition, "Metaphors, catchphrases and other symbolic devices" are important tools to detect the underlying narratives (Gamson 1989, 158). The metaphor of "rats" is an example of how the metaphor reveals the underlying narratives and gives meaning to the political slogan about terrorism.

The methodology also highlights how the use of labels and narratives reflects the underlying friend/enemy distinction. In Jackson's (2006, 3) words, labels are used to "describe agents or actors, behaviour, scenes, qualities or purposes within the public vocabulary", and narratives are used to provide "coherence and consistency to the scenes, characters and themes that guide the moral conduct of a society and which provide meaning to the lives of the community's members". Labels and narratives together "function to select, interpret and reframe past events" (Jackson 2006, 3).

As the discussion in the following chapters will demonstrate, the labels "hostile forces", "three forces" and "East Turkistan forces" function to identify the actors and the nature of the acts. By labelling an event, the CCP is exercising its power as a defining agency to ascribe right and wrong. Linking terrorist incidents with Western supporters, the CCP exercises its power as a defining agency to ascribe right and wrong, and use the friend/enemy distinction to explain current events. The narratives of the Century of Humiliation provide coherence and consistency with the theme of unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The collective memory of the great loss of territory in the face of colonial and imperial powers constructed through the recount of historical events enables the CCP to justify its rationale for strengthening state control over its bordering territories. Chinese intellectuals see the cases of the colour revolution in the Middle East as evidence of the "peaceful evolution", and the prelude to the intervention in China. These labels and narratives function to select, organise, and interpret the events and occurrences to construct and reconstruct the ways in which "terrorism" is understood in China.

In this process, the antagonist against the alleged enemy serves to highlight the imaginary boundary between friends and enemies. As Carl Schmitt (2006, 96)

observes, “[t]he political is the most intense and extreme antagonist...In its entirety, the state as an organized political entity decides for itself the friend-enemy distinction”. Following his line of argument, words such as sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity would not make complete sense without the understanding of against whom or what the unity is to be protected. As discussed in Section 2.1.1, “terrorism” is such a loaded term that the concept of the enemy in the discourse of counter-terrorism is particularly vague. As Dillon (2002, 74) pointed out, fuelled by fierce currents of nationalism and militarism, the friend/enemy distinction is being highlighted “to the point where no one can tell us what this particular *terrorism* is, how many *terrorists* there are and what resources are required to defeat them” (author’s emphasis). The contestation between the artificially reinforced identity, or “imagined communities”, using Anderson’s (2004) words, is highlighted by using these labels, and the political context from which they originated.

The frame-alignment approach provides not only a tool with which to examine the condition for movement participation (the participation in the People’s War on Terror), but also the degree of alignment (Ketelaars, Walgrave, and Wouters 2014, 504). Ketelaars and others argue that treating it as a precondition creates the dichotomy between “aligned” and “non-aligned”, while in fact most people in real life experience a certain degree of alignment and very few are fully aligned to a particular frame. Therefore, the alignment is better treated as a spectrum (Figure 10), whereby the counter-terrorism discourse gradually changes the mindset of individuals and ingrains the friend/enemy grouping into the ways in which they respond to the terrorist attacks and counter-terrorism measures of the CCP. The phrase “People’s War on Terror” reflects the very intention to situate the war on terror in China’s political discourse, which has a tradition of mass mobilisation. The Mass Line approach provides a guideline for the engagement of community members in fighting against terrorism.

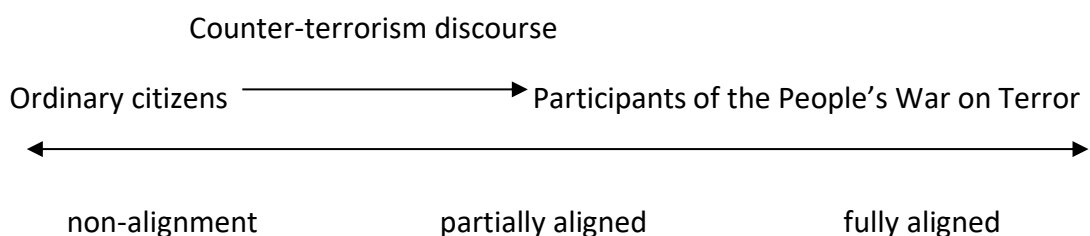


Figure 9 Spectrum of frame-alignment

As Ketelaars and others (2014, 504) point out, many individuals are only partially aligned, and they are the target of multiple competing frames. In the Chinese context,

the frames that compete with the official discourse are proposed by the Uyghur dissidents overseas, who are calling for the independence of “East Turkistan”. When talking about this topic, individuals are constantly seeking to find their position on this spectrum (Figure 11). As the ethno-separatist discourse is beyond the scope of this thesis, only the responses that are relevant will be discussed in the following chapters.

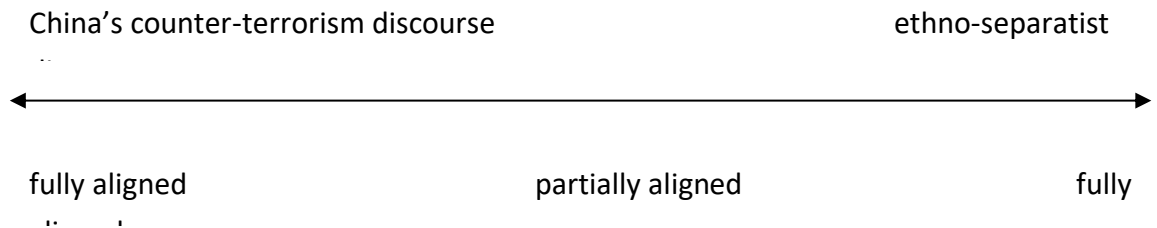


Figure 10 Competing frames on terrorism and counter-terrorism in China

As Figure 11 shows, two major sets of frames are competing for influence among ordinary citizens. In China, the ubiquity of the CCP's discourse is particularly salient due to the strict control over ideology. Adopting the Mass Line approach for mass mobilisation, individuals within Chinese territory are overwhelmingly affected by the official discourse. The dominance of the official discourse is further reinforced by the Great Firewall and the *National Cybersecurity Strategy* (National Internet Information Office 2016) which formalised the CCP's control over its cyber sovereignty, unequivocally highlighting the determination to “prevent, stop and punish according to law any act of treason, secession, sedition, subverting or inciting others to subvert the legitimate state power of the people's democratic dictatorship” (National Internet Information Office 2016). In this context, the CCP ensured the scale of its counter-terrorist propaganda, despite the limited credibility of the propaganda materials, as the discussion of counter-terrorism propaganda in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 will demonstrate. As “public attention is highly selective”, people tend to “rely upon and accept information that is easily accessible” (Kuypers 2009, 181). Therefore, the monopoly of the official discourse, regardless of the quality of the propaganda materials, plays an important role in the mass mobilisation in China.

There is an overarching set of frames in China's counter-terrorism discourse that constitutes the “master frames”. A policy document may contain only a fragment of the master frames, or the “specific collective action frames” derived from the master frames (Snow and Benford 1992, 138). Interpretations of the assumptions in the specific frames may vary in different contexts, but some basic assumptions remain the essence of all of these specific frames. The master frames in China's counter-terrorism discourse concern the challenges to its national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. More specifically, the master frames involve an array of assumptions about the “enemies” intentions to weaken China by fomenting disunity among the Chinese

people. These assumptions give consistency to the behaviour of other countries, and help the CCP to interpret the Western support for separatist movements in the context of a continued friend/enemy antagonism. Specific collective action frames concern the separatist movements of the “hostile forces”, “three forces” and “East Turkistan forces”, and how the external support has sustained the problem of terrorism in China. These narratives function as the “schemata of interpretation” that enable their users to “locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms” (Goffman 1974, 21).

To analyse how the master frames work, some assumptions of the master frames are summarised as follows:

- The CCP is the legitimate government for the Chinese people because it has made great efforts in achieving the independence of the Chinese nation after an arduous war against the imperialist invaders.
- National unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity are the most fundamental rights that the Chinese people are entitled to. All of the ethnic groups in China enjoy a degree of freedom and autonomy on the condition that they acknowledge the priority of “unity” over “diversity”.
- Attempts to separate China along ethnic lines are an unacceptable infringement upon the country’s sovereignty.
- Attempts to undermine the CCP’s leadership in the name of human rights are part of the grand strategy of the “West” to “Westernise and divide” China by peaceful means. Although the “peaceful evolution” is no longer used as an official policy in the US, Western countries continue to undermine the Communist regime by promoting liberal/democratic values.
- It is difficult to eliminate terrorism in China because separatist groups such as the World Uyghur Congress receive support from Western countries. They support separatists as proxies so that they are not directly involved in the hostilities.

The above assumptions are based on the existing friend/enemy division in the Chinese political discourse. The counter-terrorism discourse reproduces and entrenches such a division. These assumptions feed into the diagnostic framing that justifies the use of extraordinary measures in dealing with the “enemies” designated by the state. The state then is able to propose a solution, such as the introduction of the Anti-Terrorism Law and mass mobilisation to engage ordinary citizens in the People’s War on Terrorism.

It can be seen from the summary of the master frames that China’s counter-terrorism discourse prioritises national unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Compared

with liberal/democratic countries, the counter-terrorism discourse in China reflects the emphasis on collective interests (national unity and state security) over civil liberties and human security in China's political context.

Although the master narratives of the ethno-separatist discourse are not the focus of this study, they help to understand the different accounts of the same topic produced by the CCP and the overseas Uyghur dissidents respectively. It would be an oversimplification to assume that the latter are a monolithic group. However, it is important to make some generalisations to understand the difference between the competing frames. The ethno-separatist discourse portrays the CCP as an extremely repressive government, a perpetrator of countless human rights violations. The separatist claims are based on a set of assumptions regarding how the CCP deprived Uyghurs of their rights to development, rights to life and rights to national self-determination.

It is worth noting that when the users reproduce the friend/enemy dichotomy by adopting the symbolic devices of a set of frames, they do not necessarily understand the entire framework, but this does not mean that they cannot apply the symbolic devices (Goffman 1974, 21). For example, the use of "hostile forces" does not always point to an actual actor that is seeking to undermine the CCP. But its vagueness does not preclude political elites or academics from using it. On the contrary, the vagueness provides the convenience the users need to attribute the blame without pointing to an actual political entity.

3.2 Sampling criteria, and reflection on objectivity

The data selection mechanism in this thesis was designed to examine China's counter-terrorism discourse, policy and practice, aiming at understanding the key linkages between its counter-terrorism approaches and its quest for legitimacy. The primary aim of this thesis is to examine the counter-terrorism discourse. This is supplemented by a discussion of how the policy and practice are also informed by the quest for legitimacy that is embedded in the discourse. The analysis of the counter-terrorism discourse is based on doctrine documents, articles and commentaries in the mainstream media. White papers such as "The History and Development of Xinjiang" (The Information Office of the State Council 2003) are also used to illustrate the links between China's counter-terrorism approaches and the ways in which the history of Xinjiang is presented. Responses of the Foreign Ministry spokespersons and speeches of political elites are important sources in regard to how current political elites frame the issue of terrorism. As official documents tend to be succinct, some of the links are elaborated in more detail in the commentaries and scholarly works. For example, the

official discourse does not draw a very explicit link between the colour revolutions in the Middle East, but the scholarly works, especially in terms of political implications and their policy recommendations, clearly indicate the anxiety among the political and academic circles about the Western intervention in the democratisation process in China.

The process of frame alignment can be divided into 3 overlapping phases – the friend/enemy grouping, mobilisation and prescription. The texts are analysed for their underlying assumptions regarding who the enemy is, who is mobilised, and what should be done. The friend/enemy grouping enables the CCP to make decisions on the nature of the violence, and take measures accordingly. The mass mobilisation, inherited from the Mao era, is designed to help the CCP maintain public support and reduce the cost of credibility in the face of human rights violations in counter-terrorism practice. The alignment process, in turn, reinforces the integration model that prioritises unity over diversity.

Before the 9/11 attacks and before the CCP coined the term “three forces”, political unrest was usually labelled as a “counterrevolution” (Tanner and Bellacqua 2016). The Chinese public were not familiar with the notion of “terrorism”. The reference to “hostile forces”, the “West” and “ulterior motives” helps the public to link the new term “terrorism” with the old narratives that the CCP has always been using to make sense of the conflicts that have taken place within Chinese territories.

Policy documents and the academic interpretations of these documents are used to explain how the official discourse of counter-terrorism is translated into practice. As discussed in Section 3.1, the discourse is used to describe the actors and the acts and make sense of the nature of the attacks. In contrast, policy documents show how diagnostic framing is translated into prognostic framing. These documents are important to analyse the ostensible disjuncture between the counter-terrorism policies and counter-terrorism discourse. The CCP adopts a developmental approach to security, which assumes that security problems can be solved by economic development. However, this assumption is not always explicated in many of the de-radicalisation policies. Integration, economic and education policies are not linked directly with the root causes of terrorism in the official counter-terrorism discourse. The examination of the policy documents in this thesis indicates that many of the development policies are closely inter-linked with the considerations for stability and security.

In addition to the discourse and policy, the thesis also examines how the counter-terrorism practice reflects the CCP’s struggle between efficacy and justice. As a single-party state, the CCP’s counter-terrorism practice is seldom criticised within China.

Therefore, this thesis draws on reports and statements from the US, the UK, the European Union, the United Nations, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch in regard to their criticisms of China's counter-terrorism practice. The triangulation of sources based on Chinese official sources, Uyghur dissidents and the international community provides information about the different ways in which they interpret violent incidents. For instance, the CCP frames the Urumqi Riots in 2009 as terrorist attacks (Xinhua 2009c). Rebiya Kadeer, the leader of the Uyghur dissident community, asserts that the incidents started as a peaceful protest (Kadeer 2009). When reports in the mainstream media in the West favour the dissident group, the CCP accuses the "West" of maintaining double standards in regard to "terrorism".

This thesis identifies a large number of Chinese-language sources to illustrate the key linkages between China's counter-terrorism discourse and its quest for legitimacy. The Chinese-language documents include the Anti-Terrorism Law, policy documents of local governments, and propaganda materials.¹⁴ They are supplemented with statistics from the national and local Bureau of Statistics of China. Except a few political speeches and some of the national level policies, many of these documents do not come with an English translation. Even when there is an English version, the meaning of the term might be compromised. In some cases, the English version of an official text is provided by the official media. To make it more accessible, the English version not only paraphrases the text, but also alters the language to cater for an international audience. The friend/enemy dichotomy is toned down to avoid causing resentment among the "Western" audience. In some cases, the translation is inaccurate. For example, *sangu shili* is translated as "three evils" (see Roney 2013; Aris 2009) while "*shili*" per se does not contain the same pejorative connotation that "evil" does.¹⁵ The translation of "evil" distorts the degree of objectivity of the official discourse of terrorism. In order to mitigate the limitations of using translated texts, this thesis analyses the original texts published on Chinese websites.

In addition, using original texts allows the researcher to examine the symbolic meaning of a metaphor against historical continuities. For example, Xi's metaphor of terrorists as rats (Xinhua 2014b) can be better understood in the Chinese context. The collective memory of killing rats during the political movement "Eliminating the Four Pests" encourages the participation of the people in the War on Terror. Linking counter-terrorism with a past experience of killing rats helps to make sense of terrorism and reduce the fear caused by it.

¹⁴ Chinese policy documents are usually titled opinions, regulations, ordinances, measures, provisions according to the different legal effects.

¹⁵ *Sangu shili*: 三股势力

The criteria used for the selection of data are listed below:

- whether it provides an official account of an event or counter-terrorism generally;
- whether it provides an official commentary in mainstream media (the official commentaries of news agencies often appears without an author, thereby representing the political stance of the agency);
- whether it provides a counter-terrorism or de-radicalisation narrative that is part of the master narrative;
- whether it contains any labels related to terrorism (e.g. “hostile forces”);
- whether it addresses the socio-economic grievances of the communities that might be affected by the counter-terrorism strategy;
- whether it responds to the international criticisms about the impact of counter-terrorism on civil liberty;
- whether it offers an interpretation of the current policies or policy recommendation;
- whether it shows different perceptions of the security threat between central and local governments and between the Uyghur and Han.

This non-random sampling mechanism was designed to focus on the perceptions of the CCP and Chinese officials. This thesis seeks to expose the logic of friend and enemy in China’s counter-terrorism discourse, policy and practice. Commentaries and academic sources supplement the government statements, which tend to be general and succinct. Some academic articles have been written by police officers or the researchers working at a police college. Their writings are important data to analyse in terms of the reproduction of the official discourse and interpretations that shed light on the underlying assumptions of the official counter-terrorism discourse.

The selection of the Chinese official sources was based on the consideration of the monopoly of the voice of the state media. According to the “iron rule” of Chinese media, reports on sensitive issues such as terrorism must cite official sources (see H. Shao and Du 2006). The ways in which terrorist incidents are reported are monopolised by the major state-owned media such as Xinhua, *People’s Daily*, *China Daily*, *Huanqiu* (also known as *Global Times*), *China News Service*, *China Radio International* (CRI), *China Central Television* (CCTV), *CPC News*, *Takungpao*, *Fenghuang* (*the Phoenix*) and *Tianshanwang*.¹⁶ News agencies must follow the order from higher

¹⁶ *CPC News* is an official website founded in 2006. The website serves as an authoritative platform that publicises information and archives about the CCP. *Takungpao* (大公报) is a left-wing newspaper published in Hong Kong under the leadership of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

levels, speaking with one voice (P. Lu 2006, 7). As a result, the reports on the same incidents are highly repetitive. These reports were tracked down to the original reports by the major state-owned media, and repetitive reports by other commercial news agencies such as Sina or NTES have been removed from the data.¹⁷

The data selection also involved considerations regarding the authenticity of the sources. This thesis borrows Michael Swaine's categorisation of sources.

Authoritative: sources that are explicitly "speaking for the regime" (Swaine 2012, 1), including the Information Office of the State Council, Ministry of Public Security of the People's Republic of China, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Supreme Court, Supreme People's Procuratorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China. *People's Daily* and *CPC News* are authoritative as they represent the official views explicitly. Interviews with government officials are also considered authoritative.

Quasi-authoritative: sources that indirectly and implicitly represent the official view. Anonymous articles and commentaries appearing in the state media are considered quasi-authoritative in the sense that they are intended to represent the view of the media and are usually written or approved by senior editors.

Non-authoritative: low-level commentaries and signed articles appearing in the state media. They do not stand for the official view as these sources tend to be more explicitly nationalist. Commentaries published on *Huanqiu* are examples of radically nationalist views, but they provide important information on how the friend/enemy distinction is embedded in the official discourse of terrorism.

Authoritative sources are given more weight in understanding the CCP's official view. Quasi-authoritative sources are less representative of the official view, but the commentaries provide more insights into political elites' rationale. Non-authoritative sources do not stand for the official view, and are thus weighed even less in terms of authority. Constrained by the iron rule, non-authoritative sources seldom challenge the authoritative sources. However, they offer a broad spectrum of diverse reactions to explain, interpret and defend the authoritative sources, which helps to analyse how intellectuals reproduce the official discourse of terrorism.

Occasionally local government officials and scholars seek to reflect on the existing policies, but their voice is not strong enough to be noticed in a broader context in which the state is keen to demonstrate the "achievements" of its counter-terrorism

Tianshanwang is a local state-own website in Xinjiang, co-founded by the Propaganda Department of XUAR and *People's Daily*.

¹⁷ Sina: 新浪; NTES: 网易,

policy. More often different sources are in line with the official view, the difference lies only in the degree of the alignment. For example, local governments are required to adjust the policies made at the central level so that they are appropriate to the local conditions. Under pressure to demonstrate competence, local governments would come up with harsher regulations. This observation is best exemplified in the *Ordinances on de-radicalisation in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region*, which is considerably harsher than the Anti-Terrorism Law, due to the ban on a large number of activities among the Uyghur community.

The use of quantitative data involves considerations of the limitations of basic facts. Taking the number of foreign fighters as an example, it is almost impossible to identify the “real” number based on the triangulation of reports from the CCP (around 300 combatants), scholars (20 to 30 people), Syria’s ambassador to China (around 5,000 Uyghurs) and non-governmental organisations (114 fighters). The number of foreign fighters has been manipulated to the extent that the claims that the numbers are used to support are more important than the number per se. Some Uyghur dissidents have accused the CCP of exaggerating the number to justify suppression, citing Uyghur expert Sean Robert’s estimation of “20 to 30”, while others accuse the CCP of suppression, which has led to 5,000 Uyghurs fleeing China, citing the Syria’s ambassador to China. This highlights the importance of investigating the political context in which the number is discussed.

Using qualitative data raises some questions regarding the objectivity of the data. From an interpretivist perspective, this thesis does not claim to pursue absolute “objective” knowledge about the counter-terrorism discourse. Rather, it seeks to understand the political context in which concepts and ideas are embedded. As Jackson (2006, 3) argues, “discourses are never neutral or objective; they are always an exercise in social power – the power to ascribe right and wrong, knowledge and falsehood, and the limits of the reasonable”. As the data for this thesis is highly political and ideological, it is important to differentiate the “knowledge” obtained from patriotic education and the knowledge that has been tested. This research does not seek to eliminate all of the personal values of the researcher from the enquiry. Rather, the researcher reflects upon her subjectivity and maintains vigilance regarding the impact of the subjectivity on the outcome of the research. In doing so, the researcher aims at minimising the bias caused by personal experience.

The researcher received 13 years of education in China, during which she participated in school trips to the patriotism education bases. The impact of personal experience on the researcher has two dimensions. First, the political education relies overwhelmingly on the Marxist interpretation of the state, society and history.

Inevitably, the Chinese culture, which prioritises collective interests, has partly shaped her perception of the relationship between state security and civil liberties. Second, the monopoly of the official interpretation of the social reality means that China's political education is not under pressure of competing with alternative social and political theories. As a result, the textbooks repeat the conclusion, without addressing the alternative theories. To mitigate this problem, the researcher attended training on research methods and read extensively on alternative political theories before making the decision regarding the methodology for this thesis. It was decided that critical theories are particularly helpful to examine the political context in which China's counter-terrorism discourse is embedded.

Identifying the impact of personal experience and values helps minimise their influence on the objectivity of this research. In addition, personal experience is also helpful in identifying the linkages between China's counter-terrorism discourse, policy and practice and its quest for legitimacy and historical continuities.

3.3 Fieldwork in China

The fieldwork in China aimed at verifying the observations obtained from the analysis of the official discourse and Chinese scholarship. Funded by the International Research Collaboration Awards of the University of Leeds, the fieldwork provided an opportunity to visit the School of International Studies of Peking University. From 25 June to 3 September 2016, the researcher visited Beijing and Xi'an. Beijing is the centre of academic exchange and its abundant academic resources provide a solid foundation for research. Xi'an is home to the first counter-terrorism research centre at the local level. The Northwest University of Political Science and Law, the home institution of the centre, allowed the researcher the access to its archive. From 3 July to 24 July 2017, the researcher embarked on a trip to Xinjiang, after a brief stay in Shanghai. This trip provided some more insights into the presence of the police, mass surveillance, and propaganda materials in everyday life.

The visits allowed the researcher to interview around 30 participants, including civil servants, police, students, experts and scholars. Her conversation with officials from the Complaints Bureau, China's Think Tank at the State Council and police officers at the local level provided some insights into the "insiders' view" on ethnic conflicts and political violence in Xinjiang, and their link with external supporters. Students from Minzu University of China and Northwest University of Political Science and Law discussed the impact of education policy on ethnic relations, especially the "Xinjiang Class". Scholars from the Institute of International and Strategic Studies in Peking University (Beijing), People's Public Security University of China (Beijing), and

Northwest University of Political Science and Law (Xi'an), and East China University of Political Science and Law (Shanghai) offered their insights into the relationship between ethnic conflict and the "hostile forces" abroad.

The identity of the researcher as someone who was working at a "Western" institution may have created some obstacles when approaching interviewees. In China's political context, the extent to which the interviewees were willing to participate was largely determined by their awareness of the sensitivity of the topic of counter-terrorism in China. The CCP views education as being at the forefront of the ideological battlefield, and young researchers are considered vulnerable to the "infiltration of the hostile forces" (*China News* 2015a). In particular, the distrust felt among Chinese officials and scholars of "Western" scholars is worsened by the "lies", "distorted facts" and "unfounded claims" in "some Western media" about the 2009 Urumqi Riots (*People's Daily Online* n.d.). If the interviewees had considered the researcher as being influenced by the "wrong viewpoints of the West" (*China News* 2015a), it is likely that the researcher might have been viewed with hostility in China. The researcher's intentions to obtain information about criminal cases and legal cases would also have raised concerns about whether such a research project would undermine the legitimacy of the CCP. The discussion of sensitive topics such as human rights violations may have resulted in an impression that the researcher had been influenced by the "Western values" and was using them to justify "Western" interference in China's domestic affairs.

The "sensitivity" of this topic and the relevant data also posed challenges to data collection. Legal documents provide a set of rather vague criteria for what exactly a "sensitive" topic entails. Generally, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Guarding State Secrets stipulates that all citizens have the obligation to guard state secrets (People's Congress 2010). Article 111 of the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China stipulates that providing classified information or intelligence to an overseas institution, organisation, or individual shall be punished as a "crime endangering state security" (National People's Congress 1979). In some cases, some policy documents are not categorised as "classified", but it is at the hands of the officials to decide whether they can be shown to a researcher based at a foreign institution. Experienced practitioners and officials are usually more vigilant than scholars in identifying "state secrets", as a result of regular training on the situation, laws and regulations, and the technological aspects of "secret keeping" at all levels of the government, according to Article 7 of the "Regulation on the Implementation of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Guarding State Secrets" (State Council 2014). As a result of such training, some practitioners and officials would simply refused to give the information that was not officially "classified" to the researcher. In

some extreme cases, it is likely that a researcher's attempts to obtain such data were interpreted as spying on state secrets. Such a political climate resulted in the self-censorship of many officials and scholars, which limited the expression of personal opinions in the interviews.

To mitigate this problem, it was made clear before the interview that the purpose of the research was to improve the understanding of China's counter-terrorism approach, and the research were not biased towards Uyghur dissidents and human rights activists outside China; they were framed so as to be as neutral as possible. For example, many Uyghur dissidents consider the CCP's suppression of the Urumqi Riots in 2009 a "genocide". This kind of framing was avoided so that the interviews would not provoke the officials and distract them to issues that are not directly relevant to the interview questions. It was also stressed at the beginning of the interviews that the interviews were not designed to obtain any information that was not publicly available from the interviewees. Interviewees were also advised to be vigilant in regard to disclosing the information that could potentially put themselves in danger. Considering that the use of the consent form and a recorder may have constituted a potential barrier to obtaining in-depth and genuine data, they were not used in the interview. However, verbal consent was obtained before the interviews commenced. The interviews were recorded in the form of written notes. Pseudonyms were used to identify the interviewees. The key to the identifying code was stored in an encrypted file on a server hosted at the University of Leeds so that unauthorised access was impossible without a secure VPN. All of the manuscripts were destroyed after the interviews.

Notes from the interviews were analysed in Citavi, a computer assisted qualitative analysis software. The notes were saved as word documents and imported to Citavi. Relevant texts were highlighted for Citavi to trace relationships between them. Computer-aided qualitative analysis helped the researcher to bring together related information from different interviewees for comparison and analysis, and to challenge the existing assumptions and first impressions of the data, thus helping address and critique the research questions (García-Horta and Guerra-Ramos 2009).

3.4 Clarifications of ambiguous concepts

Two controversial concepts used in this thesis require clarification. First, it can be seen throughout the thesis that the "West" is often used in the friend/enemy grouping to indicate the *other*, the entities and individuals that hold traditional liberal/democratic values and that hold a grudge against the Communist regime. The "West" is often used as a label, rather than an indication of specific countries, in the counter-

terrorism context. It is an oversimplification of the complicated international system in which “Western” countries vary in many ways and certainly do not have the same agenda for foreign policy. The use of this concept per se risks further entrenching the existing division between the so-called “West” and China. This thesis acknowledges the implications of using the “West”, and seeks to examine the use of this label in a broader political context. The “West” is an integral element of the Chinese political discourse, which became embedded in the history when China fell prey to colonialism and imperialism. Replacing the “West” with another word may result in the compromising the meaning of the original texts. Acknowledging the “West” as a label, this thesis critically examines the underlying assumptions regarding the use of the term. The specific meaning of the “West” in a different context will be explained in the thesis when clarification is needed.

Second, the concept of “propaganda” has a different connotation in China’s political discourse. Propaganda is generally associated with the selection of facts and the use of loaded language to produce a one-sided conclusion and to induce an emotional, rather than rational response (B. L. Smith 2016). The morality of propaganda is often questioned due to its deceptive and manipulative nature and the use of tactics such as meaningless association to persuade people (Jowett and O’Donnell 2012, 5). In the Chinese context, there is no pejorative connotation attached to the idea of propaganda per se. In Chinese, the corresponding word *xuanchuan* simply means to publicise.¹⁸ *Xuanchuan* is an essential instrument with which to examine the CCP’s normative position – its perception of “correctness” – as well as how it publicises, and even imposes it upon the public. As the CCP enshrines the socialist path with Chinese characteristics as the only “correct” path for China (Research Centre of the Theoretical System of Socialism with Chinese characteristics of the Central Party School of CPC 2011), its *xuanchuan* is inevitably selective, promoting the “correct” ideology while denouncing the “wrong” one in the form of “guidance” (Brady 2010, 20). As it is already acknowledged in the academia that propaganda is at the core of the CCP’s claims for legitimacy (Brady 2010, 1), it would be confusing to use other words such as “publicity” instead. However, to make sense of the role of China’s counter-terrorism propaganda, it is important to understand that *xuanchuan* itself is a neutral term in China’s political context, and that Chinese political elites do not associate it with negative connotations.

3.5 Considerations of the limitations of the research design

¹⁸ *Xuanchuan*: 宣传

The analysis of the empirical data is based principally upon publicly available data, supplemented by interviews to verify the observations from such an analysis. Given the opacity of the counter-terrorism policy-making process, materials on intelligence cooperation and statistics regarding the funding allocated for counter-terrorism are not accessible even to Chinese scholars (Shun Zhang 2013, 12). The limitation in terms of the accessibility of the data partly shaped the design of the methodology. The research was therefore designed to concentrate on the official discourse and academic interpretations, in order to identify the links between the quest for legitimacy and the counter-terrorism strategy. In doing so, the lack of information at the operational level did not pose a fundamental challenge to the understanding of the overall counter-terrorism approach.

Secondly, this project focuses mainly on the justifications of the CCP and Chinese scholars. It may be questioned whether the lack of contact with the opposition group might result in bias on the issue of Uyghurs' claims of independence. Contact with the opposition group was avoided for two reasons. First, it is not the aim of this project to provide an answer in terms of the legitimacy of Uyghurs' claims. Second, contacting the Uyghur émigré community could well have eroded the trust between the researcher and the Chinese government. Critical comments published by human rights organisations, the UN and English language media is adequate to analyse the response of the political elites and Chinese scholars.

3.6 Conclusion

Focusing on Chinese sources, this thesis examines the ways in which the CCP, its political elites and Chinese intellectuals frame terrorism. An analytical model was designed to answer the research question. To examine the ways in which political elites perceive, frame, and respond to terrorism, this thesis looks at a wide range of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments based on the social construction of the collective memory of the Century of Humiliation. The analytical model provides a framework to examine the view of political elites and intellectuals that national unity should be placed above diversity. The focus on unity helps the CCP to extend state power to tackle separatism.

The analytical model helps to analyse how the CCP frame, define, and deal with "terrorism" by revealing the underlying friend/enemy distinction in China's political discourse. It helps to analyse how the framing of terrorism and counter-terrorism draw on the narratives of the Century of Humiliation and various assumptions and labels to legitimise China's approach to terrorism.

The analytical model also helps to examine the political violence in Xinjiang. By analysing the underlying assumptions and labels used in China's de-radicalisation policy, the analytical model helps to reveal the friend/enemy distinction that has enabled the CCP to justify its hard and soft approaches to terrorism.

Chapter 4 Unity and the enemy

The question of friend and enemy often arises when examining China's counter-terrorism documents, speeches and academic writings. This question was posed by Mao Zedong (1925) nearly a century ago: "Who are our enemies, who are our friends?". Terrorist attacks are often attributed to "hostile forces", but who are the "hostile forces"? What have they done? When political elites and scholars talk about "separatism", what sort of "separatism" is it? What sort of "unity" is it that a territory is "separated" from? When linking terrorism with "hostile forces", are political elites and intellectuals referring to the same enemy that China was fighting a century ago?

This chapter will approach these questions by providing a brief account of the evolution of the concept of unity and enemy. The first section is a short chronological study of the conceptualisation of "unity". It will draw on ancient philosophical debates over the causes of instability to explain why China's rulers in both ancient and modern history consider unity the key to the governance of China. It will discuss the arguments of Mozi and Laozi regarding the causes of instability and their understanding of "unity". These in understanding Chinese political thoughts beyond Confucianism. The influence of the Confucianism on the contemporary Chinese politics remains dominant, as the Confucianist obedience to order and hierarchy is more likely to be favoured by Chinese rulers.

The first section will also discuss a related concept, the "Grand Union". This concept helps to understand the linkages between the concept of unity and the historical continuities since the Century of Humiliation. The debate between advocates who wanted to abolish the use of *minzu* such as Gu Jiegang and Fu Sinian, and their opponents such as Fei Xiaotong and Jian Bozan is very relevant to Chinese elites' rationale for the integration model and the framing of separatism in China's political discourse.

The second section will discuss the perception of the enemy in modern and contemporary Chinese political discourse. It will highlight the changing assumptions attached to the phrase "hostile forces" and seek to identify who the enemies are in China's political discourse. It will investigate the assumption that the "West", especially the US, has never given up on undermining communist regimes, instead turning to more "peaceful" means, such as cultural and ideological infiltrations to influence the Chinese public. This assumption has been used to justify Xi Jinping's focus on "ideological work" in recent years. The Party views itself as being responsible for helping individuals to distinguish between "correct" and "wrong" ideologies.

The third section will focus on the politicisation of history. It will explain how the Century of Humiliation and the following period of division have been used to justify the emphasis on unity in the CCP's political agenda and to distinguish between friends and enemies. Political elites and intellectuals have developed a "correct" version of history, which allows limited alternative interpretations of the history of Xinjiang. The "correct" version of history assumes that Xinjiang has been "an integral part of Chinese territory" (*People's Daily Online* 2017a), and that the enemies have been undermining China's national unity by "distorting" the history of Xinjiang (State Council Information Office 2002b). Those who negate this assumption are at risk of being put in the category of the "wrong" and could potentially be considered as separatists.

The fourth section will then discuss how the concept of separatism is conditioned by the assumptions of unity and *minzu*. By defining the "correct" outlook on history and *minzu*, the CCP has constructed alternative interpretations as separatist. The framing of the "correct" version of history allows the CCP to establish unity as a legitimate political agenda and separatism as illegitimate claims that are often supported by external enemies.

The fifth section will provide a critical analysis of the framing of unity and the enemy in the counter-terrorism discourse. It will examine the assumptions regarding friends and enemies and how these assumptions have been framed in Chinese official documents and scholarly works. It will explain how the use of the label "hostile forces" allows the speakers to attribute blame to the enemies they have designated. It will also discuss how these assumptions have resulted in tightened control over non-governmental organisations and the internet.

The sixth section will discuss how the label "East Turkistan forces" has been used to boost the legitimacy of the CCP. The ambiguity of the use of the label and the lack of transparency and due process in terrorism designation have made "East Turkistan forces" a highly politicised label. This section will attempt to reveal the assumptions underlying the label and explore how the concept of the enemy has helped the CCP to maintain its legitimacy. This section will also discuss the issue of foreign fighters from Xinjiang in order to further unravel the assumptions underwriting China's counter-terrorism discourse. In particular, the counter-narratives on *hijrat* have portrayed those who fled China as individuals who were deceived or coerced. This case demonstrates the ways in which the CCP has sought to gain support from the majority and omitted the possibility of genuine grievances among the Uyghurs.

4.1 Chronology of the concept of unity in Chinese political philosophy

The concept of unity lays the foundation for understanding other issues such as nationality, ethnicity and the state in China's quest for legitimacy. It helps to explain political issues such as the degree of autonomy that ethnic minorities are entitled to in China. This section also shows how the Chinese political elites and intellectuals have developed the integration model of "diversity within unity" which prioritises "unity" and limits the minorities' ability to claim autonomy.

4.1.1 Debate of unity in ancient China

The concept of unity can be traced back to ancient debates on how a state should be governed. For thousands of years since the Xia Dynasty (around 21st century BC – 16th century BC), China has been a "family-governed monarchic country", or a country with a "patriarchal clan system" (Zhonggeng Chen 2011, 53).¹⁹ In contrast to a "family-governed monarchic country", what the elites are pursuing today can be categorised as a "public governed country". The notion of "*da yitong*" (Grand Union) originated from the discussion between two types of governance. In ancient Chinese, "*da*" means respect, the phrase meaning having respect for unity, but in contemporary usage, it is translated as "Grand Union", with "*da*" as an adjective meaning "grand". The notion of "Grand Union" still exerts an influence on today's politics (N. Yang 2010, 294; Qi 2015, 31). It is considered as the foundation for many other political ideas, such as maintaining national sovereignty, social stability, and economic development, defending the nation against external invasions, organising water conservancy projects, preventing separatism, and increasing communications between ethnic groups (Qi 2015, 33). Since the Qing Dynasty, the idea of "Grand Union" has been reinforced through various policies. According to Yang (2010, 296), it has not only been used to limit the way in which China is governed, but has also shaped Chinese mentality. Although throughout history Chinese society has seen a constant cycle of division and unification, the ideal of "Grand Union" is built firmly on in the cultural tradition that underpins the Chinese national mindset (Xibo Chen and Han 2005, 60).

Philosophers in ancient China had different views on the relationship between unity and instability. This section focuses on the arguments of two philosophers, Mozi and Laozi. Mozi was an advocate of unity. According to him, violence is the result of the untrammelled pursuit of individual interests because people follow different moral standards (C. Zhou and Qi 1995, 87; 90). The solution, therefore, is to select a "wise man", or a "Philosopher king" in Plato's words, to govern the state (C. Zhou and Qi 1995, 89). The "wise man" has the responsibility to build the consensus on morality in

¹⁹ family-governed monarchic country: 家天下; family-governed monarchic country: 宗法制;
public governed country: 公天下.

a state in order to prevent chaos (C. Zhou and Qi 1995, 89). This framework emphasises benevolent governance and the moral exemplifying role of the ruler (G. Zhou 2007, 40). Mozi's proposal of the "wise man" is Hobbesian in the sense that an absolute monarchy is necessary to allow people to leave the State of Nature, but it is different in that Mozi's argument links the legitimacy of the ruler with his own morality, i.e. his virtue of being "wise", while the Hobbes' argument ties legitimacy with legal constraints.

On the contrary, Laozi was a major opponent of national unity. He did not oppose benevolent governance per se, but the way it was used by the rulers. According to Zhang Songhui's (S. Zhang 2006, 193–97, cited in Luo 2016, 89) study, Laozi believed that advocating benevolent governance per se marks the corruption of morality; benevolent governance has become the instrument the ruler uses for their own agenda, and publicly advocating benevolence will corrupt the nature of benevolence. He advocated an alternative model of governance – "a small country with a small population".²⁰ Laozi's argument resonates with the libertarian scepticism of authority in his attitude against the rule by one. He believed that atrocities are caused by tyranny – "people die from famine because of heavy tax; people are difficult to govern because of what the rulers do; and people despise death because the superior seeks to live a life of luxury" (Rao 2006, 180). According to Laozi, people no longer fear death if violence becomes inevitable to end the tyranny of the ruler. Laozi's solution, therefore, is to minimise the power of the authority by limiting reliance on social institutions:

A state should be small, and so should the population. People shall have various instruments, yet they feel free to ignore them; people shall be afraid of death so that they would not travel afar; people do not see it necessary to use the carriage or the boat, even though they are available; people do not feel the need to display their weapons to deter their enemy, even though they are also available... people in neighbouring countries shall be able to see each other and hear the sound of their livestock, yet do not feel the need to communicate until they die (Rao 2006, 190).

The utopian picture of a simplistic human society that Laozi portrayed reflected his ideal, which, in essence, contravenes the idea of a powerful central authority. In an era of turmoil, Laozi went to another extreme and depicted an idealistic society where there was minimal political structure, a limited number of government officials, and little or no interference in people's ordinary life (C. C. Zhou 2009, 2). In this ideal world, the "us and them" dichotomy is not obvious simply because the small government does not need to promote its political agenda by identifying an enemy, and thus there is no need for the people to choose sides. Laozi's argument challenges the concepts of

²⁰ a small country with a small population: 小国寡民

unity, and a strong government is seen as an impediment to the wellbeing of the people. In a society where “unity” is not necessarily seen as beneficial, “separatism” is naturally not a crime.

It is clear that Laozi’s view of the government does not fit well with the CCP’s rationale for prioritising unity. Some Chinese scholars have politicised the study of Laozi’s philosophy, and criticise his utopia as a “regression”, a sign of “backwardness” (Rao 2006, 189). Others have acknowledged the undeniable significance of Laozi’s political thoughts in Chinese philosophy, but have sought to downplay the incompatibility between Laozi and the current mainstream political thoughts. For example, scholars of the Pei Laozi School deny the link between the idea of “a small country with a small population” and separatism (X. Zou 1997; Jing Li 2003a).²¹ Li Jing (2003b, 80), a researcher based at a local Party School, argues that despite Laozi’s preference for less state interference, the seemingly “separated” groups in his utopia are in fact “unified” under the *Dao* (literally translated as “the way”, indicating certain patterns and rules to govern in the context of politics, the violation of which results in tyranny), meaning that all the rulers must be the executants of the *Dao*, thus achieving a “unification of diversity and homogeneity”. The far-fetched interpretation of the Pei Laozi School demonstrates the close ties between academia and the political circles, and the anxiety about any ideas that might justify separatism.

In comparison, the Confucian ideas that value “unity” are more likely to be accepted by the rulers, as is evident from the booming of Confucianism in the Han dynasty. Dong Zhongshu, a Confucian philosopher in the Han dynasty, took Mozi’s argument on unity a step further (G. Liang 2009, 51–52). In the Warring State Period, the establishment of vassal states enabled resource mobilisation on a larger scale which intensified existing conflicts, causing heavy loss of life. Dong’s conceptualisation of “Grand Union” was based on the lessons from studying the causes of violence in this period (W. Wei 2009). “Grand Union” projects political elites and intellectuals’ obsession with unity. The influence of this concept can be seen throughout China’s political history (N. Yang 2010, 294; Qi 2015, 31).

Dong Zhongshu promoted the ideal of the “Grand Union” as a solution to the conflict caused by separation. The core of the “Grand Union” in ancient China was to avoid separation (caused by warlords taking up territories), strengthen the power of the central authority and establish Confucianism as the national ideology (G. Zhou 2016, 3). Although the current leadership does not officially promote Confucianism as a national ideology, Dong’s argument still affect contemporary scholars in terms of

²¹ Pei Laozi School: 沛老子学派

viewing unity as positively correlated with prosperity throughout Chinese history (see Xingliang He 2011). The following passage from scholar Zhou Guidian's (2016, 3) article in *People's Daily* clearly illustrates how traditional ideas are still relevant today:

The key to Dong Zhongshu's political philosophy is the Grand Union theory which incorporates territorial integrity, political unity and ideological unity...Only by strengthening the centralisation of authority can we prevent separatism, appease unrest, and let people live and work in peace and contentment. The centralisation system established two thousand years ago is the most advanced system in the world at that time... Since then, the unity of China has become the consensus of all ethnic groups, together with Confucianism as the core value, laying the foundation of the Chinese spirit.

4.1.2 Debate of *minzu* in modern China

The discussion of the necessity of unity in modern China can be found in the debate over *minzu* among political elites and intellectuals. The dramatic political change in Chinese society since the Opium War has changed the framing of unity.²² In ancient China, the Grand Union implied the ambition and aspiration of bringing peace to the world, while in modern China, unity is framed in the context of the national crisis and defence against imperialist invaders (Y. Wei 2016, 74).

In this context, ethnic minorities are important because they form a part of the collective identity of the Chinese nation against the same enemy. The debate over *minzu* involves how to incorporate different ethnic groups into the unified Chinese nation. Although scholars disagree on the major causes of separatism, they share the view that national unity is the priority in regard to ethnic issues.

In the late Qing dynasty, political activist Kang Youwei (1981) used the "Grand Union" to refer to the unification of five ethnic groups, i.e. the Manchus, Han-Chinese, Mongols, Muslims, and Tibetans (G. Zhao 2006, 21). In 1912, Sun Yat-Sen put forward the idea of the "Republic of Five Nationalities" (Fei 1992, 601) upon the founding of the Republic of China.²³ The "Three Principles of the People" of the democratic revolution, according to Sun Yat-sen (1986, 9:394), will lead people to "the world of Grand Union that Confucius had expected".²⁴

During Mao's revolution, Mao Zedong sought to link the notion of the "Grand Union" with the communist ideal, which was alien to many Chinese at that time. Li Aihua

²² *Minzu* can be translated as nationality and ethnicity. The ambiguity of this word is relate to a debate over ethnic studies in China, which will be explained later in this section.

²³ Republic of Five Nationalities: 五族共和

²⁴ Three Principles of the People: Nationalism, democracy, and people's livelihood (民族, 民主, 民生)

(2016, 69) argues that in Mao Zedong's article "On People's Democratic Dictatorship", he uses the discourse of "Grand Union" to refer to the communist ideal. However, although there are traces of the "Grand Union", this concept failed to provide a practical guideline for Mao's revolution, which explains why he stopped using the phrase from 1937 to 1949 (Aihua Li 2016, 69). According to Li (2016, 74), Mao's use of the "Grand Union" served to promote the concepts of communism which were alien to intellectuals at that time.

In the late 1930s, there was been an important debate over *minzu* between two important scholars in China. Advocates for the abolition of the use of *minzu* such as Gu Jiegang and Fu Sinian, and their opponents such as Fei Xiaotong and Jian Bozan debated over how the framing of "*minzu*" may have an impact on the actual unity of the Chinese nation. This debate is discussed in Ma Rong's (2012, 1) study on the concept of the "Chinese nation" in 1939. Gu Jiegang's article, entitled "The Chinese Nation is One" published in *Social Welfare* on 13 February 1939, argued that the framing of Chinese communities as five "nationalities" instead of "ethnic groups" was a plot by the imperialists to divide and dismember China (R. Ma 2012, 2).²⁵ Ma (2012, 2) comments that in an age when Imperial Japan had established Manchukuo (State of Manchuria) and was inciting the "autonomy of Inner Mongolia", Gu's concern was not groundless. His assimilationist argument was partly shaped by his fieldwork in Xining where he saw the slogan of "national self-determination" all over the street (Zhiyan Zhao 2008) and the consequences of ethnic conflicts (J. Gu 1939c). He was worried that separatists such as Ma Bufang would be able to divide China in the name of "national self-determination" (Zhiyan Zhao 2008).²⁶

Gu linked the framing of a part of Chinese territory as "China proper" with a plot by the imperialists to divide China. In his article "The Name of 'China Proper' Should Be Abandoned Immediately", Gu wrote:

What pains us the most is that the imperialists created some nouns in order to divide us, and we fell into their trap when these nouns were disseminated into China. We talked about them and wrote about them every day, and these nouns have served their purpose of dividing us, as if they were able to divide the territory and the people into several parts, making it more difficult to work for the unity [of the Chinese nation]. We

²⁵ The Chinese Nation is One: 中华民族是一个); *Social Welfare*: 益世报

²⁶ Ma Bufang was an important member of the Muslim Ma clique warlord during the Republic of China era. The Ma clique controlled the Qinghai province which borders Xinjiang, Tibet and Gansu.

cannot but to blame the foolishness of our intellectuals which put the country in an unprecedented crisis (Gu 1939; cited in Ma 2012, 3).²⁷

Gu's concern was that the framing of "China proper" would create the very reality the imperialists hoped to achieve. He worried that in adopting this framing, Chinese intellectuals were unwittingly acknowledging the legitimacy of the occupation by the imperialists in those regions outside "China proper", such as Xinjiang and Tibet. In particular, Gu's subsequent article on this subject elaborates the implication of the framing of Xinjiang as "East Turkistan" for on the unity of China.

Foreigners call our Manzhou as Manchuria, the people of Manzhou as Manchus; Menggu as Mongolia, and the people of Menggu as Mongolian, Xinjiang as East Turkistan, and the Hui as Mohammadans; our 18 provinces were called China proper, and the Han the Chinese. [They] simply divide us into five countries, and exclude Man, Meng, Hui and Zang outside of China! We had a name Xiyu for what is currently called Xinjiang province. They use neither of them [Xiyu or Xinjiang] and insist on calling it "East Turkistan", with a clear intention to connect it [Xinjiang] to Turkey in its West, and estrange it from its own government in the East (Gu 1939b; cited in Ma 2012, 3).

This quote is very relevant to the concerns of the current leadership about framing "Xinjiang" as "East Turkistan". The CCP sees those who adopt this framing as having a separatist agenda, and groups all those who speak of "East Turkistan" under the banner of the "East Turkistan forces". Gu's writing explains that this framing is not simply a matter of name, but one matter of sovereignty.

In addition to the World Uyghur Congress which has already been designated a terrorist organisation by the Ministry of Public Security, some other Uyghur organisations outside China are also using the name "East Turkistan", including the Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization (2015), the Uyghur American Association, the International Uyghur Human Rights & Democracy Foundation, the Uyghur Human Rights Project, and the Eastern Turkistan Education and Solidarity Association. Among them, the Eastern Turkistan Education and Solidarity Association is under close watch by the CCP because of its support for foreign fighters from China to Syria (*Global Times* 2013a).

Gu's patriotism had an impact on his view of *minzu*. Fei Xiaotong disagrees with Gu on considering the naming or framing as the major reason for the weakness and division of China at that time. Fei Xiaotong held that groups with different ancestors, languages and cultural traditions should be regarded as different nations, and the objective existence of different nations should be respected (Zhiyan Zhao 2008). He

²⁷ The Name of 'China Proper' Should Be Abandoned Immediately: "中国本部"一名亟应废弃

argued that it is possible to form a unified political entity based on the common interests of stability and security (Zhiyan Zhao 2008). Jian Bozan, a Uyghur historian, criticises Gu's view of *minzu* as Han Chauvinist (Kewu Huang 2016). He acknowledges the importance of "unity", but rejects Gu's renunciation of the existence of other nations (Kewu Huang 2016).

Gu responded to Fei's criticism by questioning the training he received in the UK. The following quote implies that Gu was suspicious about whether scholars trained abroad understood the real situation in China.

I would advise bluntly those who studied anthropology and ethnology that you should examine how many ethnic groups are there within the Chinese border in practice. Do not blindly follow others' view that China has five nations, and attract a bunch of followers, boost the credibility of the imperialist propaganda, and put the country in a status of brokenness (Gu 1939b; cited in Ma 2012, 6).

Fei's study in the UK was influenced by scholars such as Sergei Mikhailovich Shirokogorov and Bronislaw Kasper Malinowski, who attached great value to individuality and diversity, while Gu's experience as a traditional historian made him a persistent believer in the Chinese nation as a political entity (R. Ma 2012, 6).

Fei was not convinced by the argument that "an empty noun" alone may lead to the dismemberment of China. Fei was more concerned about domestic problems at that time, implying that threat to the survival of China as a state was from the inequalities within, rather than the imperialist invasion from outside.

If our country can truly achieve "Republic of Five Nationalities", every citizen can enjoy equality, everyone's vital interests can be satisfied, the country will certainly be supported by its people. It would not be divided by any empty noun, and its people will stand up and fight together if there is an invasion by a powerful state. If an empty noun can divide a community, then this community itself must have been unhealthy. An unhealthy community may be able to prevent its enemies' strategy of division, but a more important solution lies in improving its own organisation (Fei 1939, cited in Ma 2012, 6).

It is important to emphasise that although Fei Xiaotong and Jian Bozan disagree with Gu's assimilationist view of *minzu*, neither of them challenged the concept of "unity". Fei developed the paradigm of "diversity within unity".²⁸ Recognised by the CCP, the "diversity within unity" paradigm laid the foundation for ethnic studies in China. Fei Xiaotong (1988) put forward the paradigm of "diversity within unity" in his 1988 Tanner lecture in Hong Kong. This paradigm is based on the Marxist Materialist

²⁸ diversity within unity: 中华民族多元一体格局

Dialectics, positing that everything in existence is a combination of ultimately contradictory forces. Reflected in history, China as a state is experiencing a repeating cycle of unity and division. The cycle is concurrent with the changing status of the contradiction between unity and plurality. When China is in a state of unity, cultural diversity can be manifested to a reasonable level; whereas in times of turbulence, political unity is often prioritised in the whole nation (Y. Lin 1991, 9–10). This laid the foundation for Fei’s argument that there are multiple layers of social identities, and that the unity of the Chinese nation is based on shared experience, shared destiny, and a shared sense of dignity and humiliation at the top layer (Fei 1999, 13).

This paradigm is both a description of, and a prescription for China’s integration model. It illustrates Fei’s understanding of the hierarchical relations between the Chinese nation as a unified political entity and the diverse ethnic groups that inhabit China, and describes the ways in which the relationship between the central authority and local ethnic groups has been negotiated previously. It is adopted by the CCP in dealing with ethnic issues to prioritise “unity” over “diversity”, which allows the CCP to adopt extraordinary measures to safeguard national unity. This academic debate again demonstrates an apparent political function of Chinese academia echoing the Lei Laozi School’s far-fetched interpretation of Laozi’s liberalist ideas.

Fei’s design of “diversity within unity” also reflects his contractarian view of the relationship between the unity at the state level and the diversity at the individual level. Ma (2012, 7) points out that Fei’s emphasis on equality is more relevant today, as China has already achieved the “unity” that was in crisis in modern China, and the compromise of diversity might risk undermining the legitimacy of the authority.

If the central government and the mainstream society cannot properly handle the question of political rights, education resources, employment opportunities and social mobility between communities, then [individuals or communities] at the “diversity” level will gradually withdraw their identification with the “unity”. Such estrangement will surely threaten the maintenance and the stability of the “unity”. Today we must emphasise the “unity” of the Chinese nation, and at the same time, we must pay attention to the “diversity” of the 56 ethnic groups, safeguarding the equal rights of the 56 ethnic groups in all aspects.

The above discussion shows that the academic debate over *minzu* has reinforced the centrality of the concept of “unity” in China’s political discourse. At the same time, it has worsened the confusion over the discussion of China’s *minzu* in English. “*Minzu*” is usually translated as either “nationality” or “ethnicity”. In a political context, the ambiguity surrounding this term is particularly problematic because in English, “nationality” and “ethnicity” entail different political rights. If the 56 *minzus* are

translated as “nationalities”, are they entitled to the right to national self-determination?

To answer this question, the concept of “nation” has to be examined in the Chinese context. Some argue that the entire concept of “nation” itself was “imported” in the late 19th century (Jieshun Xu 2008, 109–10). Zhao Suisheng (2004b, 16) argues that this notion was brought into China as “an instrument for China’s regeneration and defence”. In the late Qing Dynasty, the crisis that the Chinese society was faced with has made nationalism a mainstream ideology, and state-building a shared mission of the Chinese nation (K. Liu 2016, 79). Because the motivation for state-building is deeply rooted in national liberation from imperial powers, the notion of the “nation-state” was assigned great importance (K. Liu 2016, 79). The rise of the concept of modern states requires the reconstruction of the relationship between individual rights and state power (Jingya Li 2009, 1).

While the fluidity of the meaning creates an obstacle for understanding the subject in non-Chinese contexts, He Shutao (2009, 11) gives credit to its flexibility in reflecting the meaning - and interaction of the meanings - in various circumstances. He argues that the term “*minzu*” refers to a subject that is different from what is widely accepted as ethnicity research in the West; therefore it is unnecessary and confusing to replace “*minzu*” with “ethnic group” (S. He 2009, 11–13).

The question of self-determination is politically sensitive for it undermines the claim about national unity. Ma (2013, 3) worries that influenced by an international awareness of the right to national self-determination in the de-colonisation period, the reassertion of ethnic identity among minority groups is increasingly entangled with territorial claims. He approaches the translation of “*minzu*” by differentiating the two layers of the meaning of the term. When used in phrases such as “minority ethnicities”, *minzu* refers to the people, or ethnicity; when used as Chinese nation, it assumes that China is a territorial state, where all of the ethnic groups within the territory of China are considered integral parts of the whole nation.²⁹ Accordingly, the implication of the term is two-fold. When viewing ethnic groups as political entities, the government emphasise the integrity of the Chinese nation, especially against separatism in bordering provinces. When viewing them as cultural groups, the government regards ethnic relations as cultural interactions (R. Ma 2013, 6).

Wang Lian (2010, 33) proposes a model that differentiates between a “political nation” (state) and “cultural nations” (ethnic groups). He argues that the core of nationalism is a political nation, while the core of separatism is a cultural nation. He sees the

²⁹ minority ethnicities: 少数民族; Chinese nation: 中华民族

legitimacy of the state as self-evident by considering the state as a “political nation”, and only challenges the legitimacy of the independent aspiration based on a “cultural ‘nation’”. It can be seen that his criteria for distinguishing legitimate claims of independence are highly political and serves the political agenda of maintaining the unity of the existing state, while denouncing the attempts of ethnic groups to form new states. His argument reinforces the existing power relations between academia and political circles.

The close ties between academia and political circles result in a state-centric view of *minzu* which serves to promote national unity. In this context, the term “*minzu*” is not linked to the “state” as the way that “nation-state” is perceived in the West (Mackerras 1995, 3). Confusing these terms is considered as having a political agenda. According to Huang Yusong (2016, 31), neither “state” nor “nation” can accurately describe China, and the confusion has given others reason to dismember China into various “nation-states” that are used in a modern sense.

Many Chinese scholars (see L. Wang 2010, 30; Hao 2002, 7–8; Hou 2009, 24–25; Pang 1996, 5) remain sensitive to the political implications of framing the 56 “*minzu*” within the Chinese state as “nationalities”, especially when this is entangled with the claims of the pursuit of a “nation-state”. Some question the role that “nation-state” plays in separatist movements. Hou Wanfeng argues that the conflicts in Kosovo, Kashmir, East Timor and Chechnya demonstrate that the concept of “nation-state” is nothing more than an ideal (Hou 2009, 24–25). According to Hao Shiyuan (2002, 9) Western countries, especially the US, encouraged separatism in the former Soviet Union by exaggerating the existing friend/enemy division.

Some other scholars, while admitting the confusion caused by the translation of “*minzu*”, maintain that there is no need to change the translation just to reduce confusion for English readers. Although the political implications of the term “nation” are different in the Chinese discourse of unity and *minzu*, Hao Shiyuan (2016, 308) argues that the translation of *minzu* as “nation” is consistent with China’s national conditions because it is used “in the sense of the historical origins of a people (ethos), and it is necessary to keep using the term nationality, which indicates a shared citizenship and national characteristics. To Hao (2016, 308), different “nationalities” are part of a “unified state nation – the Chinese nation”. His understanding of the relationship between the state and nation is in line with the paradigm of “diversity within unity” – a person’s nationality, in other words, the identity of being part of the Chinese nation comes first and the ethnic identity is secondary to the status of being “Chinese”. In other words, he prioritises “Chineseness” over ethnic identity.

Still others approach *minzu* from a cultural relativist perspective, arguing that cultural groups across the world have different understandings of nationality and ethnicity, and the validity of the translation should not be judged based on how the term is understood in the Western context. Zhu Lun is a major advocate of the validity of referring to the 56 ethnic groups as nationalities. He argues that other countries, including Spain, have increasingly accepted the use of nationality, as the term is increasingly linked with autonomy, rather than independence (L. Zhu 1996, 12). Ironically, the Catalan independence movement in 2017 showed that “nationality” is still understood predominantly in the Western context, as the word has been linked closely to separatist claims as a result of growing ethno-nationalist movements in Europe (Pazzanese 2017). This highlights the importance of disambiguating *minzu* in order to clarify the role that “unity” plays in China’s political discourse.

4.1.3 The legacy of the debates of unity and *minzu* in contemporary China

The two sections above laid the foundation for understanding the role of the concepts of unity and *minzu* in the contemporary Chinese political discourse. The ideal of “Grand Union” is woven into the CCP’s pursuit of the “socialist path”. The following quote justifies the link between the “Grand Union” and the commitment to national unity of the current leadership by framing the “Grand Union” as the shared pursuit and the “highest social ideal” for the Chinese nation.

We all know that the Grand Union based on the idea of “all under heaven are equal” is the social ideal pursuit by the Chinese nation. The idea of “Grand Union” put forward in the famous “Book of Rites” has a profound influence on successive generations of politicians...many philosophers have turned the nostalgia for the past [the Grand Union in the Yao and Shun era] into the pursuit for the future. For example, in The Book on Grand Union, Kang Youwei believes that society will continue to evolve into the ultimate “Grand Union” of the world. The pioneer of democratic revolution, Sun Zhongshan [Sun Yat-sen] also regards “all under heaven are equal” as his ideal and pursuit. It is safe to say that throughout Chinese history, the “Grand Union” based on the idea of “all under heaven are equal” has become the highest social ideal for this [Chinese] nation. And the “Grand Union” based on the idea of “all under heaven are equal” is the very “fundamental cultural genome of the Chinese nation” that General Secretary Xi Jinping talked about.

It is exactly because the Chinese nation has such a pursuit and such a cultural genome when the scientific Socialism founded by Marx and Engels came into China, Chinese people were exceptionally willing to accept such a social ideal. It can be argued that the reason we chose the Socialist path has much to do with the “Grand Union” based on the idea of “all under heaven are equal” that the Chinese nation has pursued (Xinhua 2015f).

This quote also demonstrates a typical tactic in the Chinese political rhetoric of inducing frame alignment by recounting the past. It illustrates how the old notion of unity has been translated into a source of legitimacy by linking it to respected political activists such as Kang Youwei and Sun Yat-sen. The second paragraph then links the notion of the Chinese “cultural genome”, which prioritises unity with socialist values of equality. Although the notion of the “Grand Union” is no longer frequently used today, it has been included in the political discourse to justify the legitimacy of the “socialist path”. The following quote shows how the “Grand Union” has been modernised by combining it with what the CCP considers “Western values”.

Since the Opium War in 1840, the entire Chinese nation had been placed on the brink of the elimination. The Chinese nation was faced with two historic tasks, survival and development. To this end, China has started the historical process of national rejuvenation. In this process, Chinese people has combined the “Grand Union” based on the idea of “all under heaven are equal” and the values such as democracy, human rights, and science forged since the Western renaissance, in order to find out the path for survival, development and national rejuvenation (Xinhua 2015f).

The linkage made between the “Grand Union” and “Western values” per se is particularly interesting in the context of the increasingly apparent hostility towards “Western values” under Xi Jinping. It is possible that the CCP is aware of the negative connotations of the notion of the “Grand Union”, and has attempted to whitewash the notion by linking it to the values that are more likely to be accepted by ordinary citizens. According to Yang Nianqun (2010, 57), while the notion projects a sense of national pride in the harmonious coexistence of various ethnic groups across geographically distinctive regions, the practice related to the “Grand Union” evokes memories of tyranny, dictatorship, and feudalism, as a high level of centralisation risks power abuse by the rulers. The centralised structure required to establish the “Grand Union” resembles a totalitarian regime in that it ties the destiny of a whole nation to the judgement of the emperor, making political decisions highly arbitrary. In addition, Yang (2010, 57) points out that the notion empowered the ruler with a sense of responsibility and superiority, which became an obstacle to social evolution. Furthermore, extreme forms of obsession with the “Grand Union” have resulted in speech crime or the literary inquisition in the Chinese context. Considering these connotations, Yang proposes to understand the notion as a political cultural ideal, rather than to put it into practice.³⁰

³⁰ The literary inquisition (文字狱) refers to official persecution of intellectuals for their writings. For details, see Zhang and Zhang 2010 “A Review of the Studies on Literary Inquisition of the Qing Dynasty”

Despite the criticism, the notion of the “Grand Union” remains crucial to the understanding of national unity in relation to separatism. It establishes a point of reference against which “separatism” is understood. The “Grand Union” conditions the perception that separatist claims are at odds with the unity of the state. For example, the notion of the “Grand Union” is included in the training course for “patriotic believers” from Xinjiang to study mandarin Chinese (Central Socialist School 2018). The course is provided by the Central Socialist School and functions as propaganda for the “sinicisation of religions” and the resistance against an extremist ideology (Central Socialist School 2018). The training of “patriotic believers” is part of the de-radicalisation measures aimed at preventing separatism through religion.

The “diversity within unity” paradigm, designed to prioritise unity, has become the core of the CCP’s perceptions on ethnic relations. An official document on the development of Tibet highlights the “correctness” of this paradigm in dealing with ethnic groups by requiring cadres from different ethnic groups to

correctly understand the diversity within unity paradigm of the Chinese nation, consciously resist narrow national awareness, resolutely oppose ethno-separatism, enhance the identification with great motherland, with the Chinese nation, with Chinese culture and with the Socialist path with Chinese characteristics” (People’s Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region 2011, 22).

Given the emphasis on unity, the political discourse in Xinjiang reflects the alignment of the local authority with the central authority in ensuring the political loyalty of Xinjiang to the state. On the 1st October 2015, Zhang Chunxian (2015), the then Party Secretary in Xinjiang, gave a speech on the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Summarising the progress of the government in the past 60 years, the following quote is a typical example of the counter-terrorism propaganda at the higher level in Xinjiang, which is embedded in the political discourse that prioritises unity, and characterised by a state-centric problem-solving mentality. The speech touches upon a wide range of topics, such as legal rights, ethnic integration, and religious policy. “Socialist core values” at the end of the quote were used to bring all of these aspects together in shaping a climate that is conducive to patriotism, unity, productivity and progress.

We unswervingly followed the correct path with Chinese characteristics to solve the problems of ethnicity, gave full play to the advantages of the system of regional ethnic autonomy, protected the legal rights and interests of all ethnic groups, promoted exchanges and integration between different ethnic groups, so that the socialist ethnic relations based on equality, unity and mutual assistance could be strengthened and developed. Adhering to the basic principles of the Party’s religious work, we protected the legal, prevented the illegal, curbed extremism, resisted

infiltration, combated crime, and actively guided the religious work to suit the socialist society. Religious freedom was ensured, and the legalisation of religious work continued to be improved. We put the socialist core values into practice, promoted the Xinjiang spirits, and vigorously developed the unified and diverse, integrated and open modern culture with Xinjiang characteristics. “Five identifies” has been enhanced, and the love to China and Xinjiang, unity and dedication, diligence and mutual help, openness and progress have become the main theme of Xinjiang.³¹

4.2 Political leaders’ perception of the enemy

This section provides a brief account of the concept of the enemy. Before the term “terrorism” was widely used in the Chinese political discourse, the notion of the enemy was framed in various other ways. This section focuses on the use of the concept of the enemy as a label to examine the shifting friend/enemy distinction from the Mao era up to now. It illustrates how the concept of the enemy has enabled political elites to identify the threats to the legitimacy of the CCP according to the political needs of different times. This section shows how the label functions as a language device to delineate the boundary between “friends” and “enemies”. Attributing blame to “hostile forces” allows the speaker to obscure the identity of the accused perpetrator, deflecting the audience’s attention away from domestic causes of terrorism without referring to a specific political entity.

The phrase “hostile forces” initially appeared in the Chinese translation of *The Brief History of Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshvik)* in 1938. This book was initially used as a text book for “Party construction” in China (G. Qian 2015, 31; Le 1959, 12).³² The phrase was imported from the Soviet Union under Stalin to refer to his political opponents (G. Qian 2015, 31). The book itself has been criticised by some Chinese scholars for advocating a “personality cult and subjectivism” (Le 1959, 13), but the phrase “hostile forces” – an ideologically charged term – has remained an important part of the Chinese political discourse.³³

The meaning of “hostile forces” is contingent upon which political entity is considered by the CCP as the most formidable threat to its legitimacy of the CCP. In the early days of the founding of the PRC, the “enemies” were the Nationalist Party under Chiang Kai

³¹ “Five identifies”: identify with the motherland, identify with the Chinese nation, identify with Chinese culture, identify with the CCP, identify with socialism with Chinese characteristics (CRI 2015).

³² Party construction: 党建

³³ Subjectivism: 主观主义

Shek, bandits and anti-China forces in the international community (Fang 2013). During the Great Famine (1959-1960), the CCP used “hostile forces” to refer to all dissidents (G. Qian 2015, 31). The vague usage of the term resulted in criminalising those who were dissatisfied with the CCP leadership (G. Qian 2015, 31). The failure of the Great Leap Forward and the revolutions of 1989 resulted in anxiety among political elites about their ideological and political opponents (G. Qian 2015, 32). During the Cultural Revolution, the phrase was used to demonise the “five black categories”, meaning landlords, rich farmers, counter-revolutionaries, bad-influencers, and rightists (Fang 2013), reflecting the theme of class struggle under Mao.³⁴ After the Party decided to give up Mao’s “class struggle as the guiding principle”, the “enemies” became “anti-democratic forces”, i.e. dictatorship (G. Qian 2015, 32).³⁵ However, such usage was immediately criticised by Deng Xiaoping. The term was abandoned at the 14th National Congress when Deng called upon the Party to be vigilant against the its Left-leaning tendency of the Party (Y. Shao 1992).

Today, the term “hostile forces” is often used with various qualifiers – “foreign/international/Western hostile forces”. It is also used interchangeably with “anti-China forces”. Political elites and intellectuals assume that separatists rely on Western supporters to promote their separatist claims, and these supporters often share common interests with separatists due to the same “anti-China” stance (Yaxin 2008). In the eyes of Nur Bekri, the chairman of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, Rebiya Kadeer and the World Uyghur Congress are desperately trying to join the “anti-China chorus of the Western hostile forces”, and “vociferously defame and attack China in the international community” (Yaxin 2008). The following sections focus on the concept of the enemy in different leadership periods and its legacy in China’s counter-terrorism discourse.

4.2.1 Mao Zedong: “peaceful evolution” and two types of contradiction

Some of Mao’s views of security seem to have faded away with time, and no longer frequently appear in the current political discourse, but in essence, they remain the foundation upon which the current security discourse is constructed. Some ideas have been internalised and the users of the narratives are aligned with Mao’s underlying assumption without being fully conscious of such an alignment. This section focuses on Mao’s idea of “peaceful evolution”, which still influences China’s behaviour as an international actor (Gong 1994, 268–70).

³⁴ five black categories: 黑五类

³⁵ class struggle as the guiding principle: 阶级斗争为纲

Formulated by United States Secretary of State John Foster Dulles at the onset of the Cold War in the 1950s, peaceful evolution entails a series of peaceful tactics to weaken the Sino-Soviet bloc and undermine socialism (Ong 2007, 717–18). Since the Mao era, peaceful evolution has been considered a major threat to the regime (Z. Wu 2012). After the Second World War, the conflict in the ideological sphere intensified as the Soviet Union and the US sought to expand communism and capitalism.

Mao's anxiety about peaceful evolution can be traced back to the time when John Foster Dulles was encouraged by the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s (Z. Liang 1992, 2). Mao's speech at a small conference in Hangzhou in November 1959 reflected his concern that the US would not give up its plan to expand capitalism, but instead, it has turned to peaceful means to convert socialists into capitalists (L. He, Yao, and Xiao 1995, 10). On 8 August 1966, the 8th Central Committee passed the *Decision of the Central Committee of the CCP Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution* which quoted Mao's comment from the 10th Plenary Session of the 8th Central Committee that addressed the importance of ideology in peacefully winning over the hearts and minds of the Chinese people. Mao believed that it is a general rule that in order to overthrow a political power, it is necessary to start from the ideological sphere, and manipulate public opinion (Central Committee 1966). To resist this ideological threat, Mao emphasised the importance of adhering to Marxism (P. Wang 2006, 13). Mao's perception of an ideological threat is closely relevant to the ideological control under the current leadership. The anxiety about the impact of "Western values" on the legitimacy of the CCP has resulted in a cascade of criticism of them (S. Li 2009; Wenlin Tian 2017; J. Dong 2012; J. Guo 2012; S. Ling, Hu, and Chen 2017).

Peaceful evolution is the linchpin of how Chinese political elites and intellectuals understand Sino-Western relations. In the context of the ideological conflict between communist China and the capitalist West, "terrorism" is understood as an extreme manifestation and the legacy of the confrontation in the Cold War. During the Cold War, both the Soviet Union and the US pursued a hegemonic expansionist policy, supporting the opposing sides and engaging in a proxy war (Mastanduno 1997; Hong Zhang 2004, 19). The US was accused of supporting the anti-Soviet, anti-Communist, and anti-Socialist movements that used terrorism as a tactic (J. Sun 2010, 6–8; Hong Zhang 2004, 10). The numerous attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro are considered as an example of the US' engagement in terrorist attacks against communist countries (Sen Yang and Hu 1990). On the other hand, the Soviet Union was also accused of supporting left-wing terrorism in West Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and Southern Africa (Hong Zhang 2004, 19).

Chinese scholars see terrorism in the post-Cold War era as a continuation of the ideological confrontation in the Cold War (S. Wang and Hu 1998b, 31). Wang and Hu attribute terrorism to the changing world order and the ensuing instability. In particular, they blame the US' involvement in the Revolutions of 1989 and its military intervention to promote democracy, linking them with regime instability, unrest and civil war in some Third World countries (S. Wang and Hu 1998a, 63). The expansion of democracy, the enlargement of the NATO towards the East, as well as the plans to transform the Middle East have convinced Chinese scholars and officials that China will be the next target of the "colour revolution" (Jianming Huang 2013, 126; H. Dong 2001, 1; Aimin Li 2015, 59; 61), as the collapse of the Soviet Union has left China as the biggest Socialist country (Y. Gu 2009, 304), inviting the "end-game of the historic capitalist-communist struggle" (G. Wang 2014, 217).

In this context, Chinese scholars believe that Islamic fundamentalism is a ramification of the tensions in Islamic societies that resulted from Western expansion in the form of direct or indirect interventions accompanied by the output of Western cultural values (Gou, Xiao, and Shen 2014, 239). The US' failure to prove the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq undermined the credibility of its counter-terrorism agenda (M. Yu et al. 2003, 133), and convinced Chinese scholars of the hegemonic nature of its War on Terror (M. Yu et al. 2003, 133).

Mao's argument about friends and enemies is at the core of China's quest for legitimacy. He differentiates between two types of social contradictions: the "contradictions among the people", which in essence are the contradictions with friends, which should be dealt using soft measures, such as education and persuasion; and the "contradictions between ourselves and the enemy", which are essentially irreconcilable, and should be treated with more radical measures such as deprivation of political rights and coercion (Z. Mao 1957, 1949).³⁶ Those who were deemed "one of us" (people) would have democratic rights, whereas those who were deemed the "enemy" would be the object of dictatorship (K. Yu 2002, 182).

We have always advocated adopting two different methods – dictatorship and democracy – to solve different types of contradictions... Against our enemies, we should adopt methods of dictatorship, meaning when necessary, depriving them of political participation, forcing them to obey the law of the people's government, forcing them to engage in labour work, and transforming them into a new person through labour. On the contrary, as for the people, [we should] use democratic methods... do not

³⁶ contradictions among the people: 人民内部矛盾; contradictions between ourselves and the enemy: 敌我矛盾

coerce them to do this or that, but educate and persuade them using democratic methods (Z. Mao 1957).

Mao's categorisation of friends and enemies is particularly problematic in the context of his black-and-white view of Imperialism and Socialism. In a time when the ideological conflict was intensifying, he considered it necessary to choose sides between imperialism and socialism (Z. Mao 1949). "There is no third way" (Z. Mao 1949). The radical friend/enemy distinction underwrites other writings by Mao himself and his followers.

Mao (1957) admitted that it is very easy to mistake good people for bad, and it is the very policy of drawing a sharp line between ourselves and the enemy that helps rectify mistakes from the past. He realised the risks of "making mistakes" by labelling someone as an enemy; however, he insisted giving excessive power to those who are making the decision of who is the enemy. Although he did emphasise the importance of making the correct decision and rectifying the mistakes of the past, he did not specify the criteria for making these decisions. The decisions regarding "who is our enemy" justify the use of extraordinary measures against the designated enemies.

Combining the label "hostile forces" and "contradictions" and two types of contradictions, the official counter-terrorism discourse attributes right and wrong, links attacks to the broader ideological conflict between China and the West, and justifies extraordinary measures against the designated enemy. After several terrorist attacks in Xinjiang in 2013, Ismail Tiliwaldi, former vice-chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, made the following statement on the nature of the attacks.

Several consecutive violent terrorist attacks took place in Xinjiang once again revealed the insidious nature of the violent terrorists – they split the country, endanger the society, kill innocent people, and plan crimes. Once again, they proved that domestic colluded with foreign hostile forces colluded. They never gave up their intentions to put China into demise or turmoil. They do everything they can to cause trouble and stir up unrest. Once again, the attacks show that violent terrorism challenges the common bottom line of human civilisation, and endangers the common order of human society. Our struggle with the violent terrorist forces is by no means a contradiction among the people, but an irreconcilable life-and-death contradiction between ourselves and the enemy. It is by no means a question of ethnicity or religion, but a serious political struggle between separatism and anti-separatism, between infiltration and anti-infiltration, between subversion and anti-subversion (Tianshanwang 2013).

A commentary on the *Huanqiu* clearly demonstrates how individuals aligned with the CCP frame the problem of “terrorism” as a “contradictions between ourselves and the enemy”.³⁷ The writer calls for more decisive actions against China’s “enemies”, and bluntly encourages the CCP to learn from “our old opponent America”, and to “blast off” “hostile forces” and the organisations protected by anti-Communist governments or those governments that are hesitant to disavow “terrorism” (X. Gao 2014). “It is time to ask the entire world to declare their position, you are either with us, or against us!” (X. Gao 2014). The second half of this sentence is a direct quote from the English version of Bush’s speech on terrorism, indicating the applause for the US’ resolute crackdown on the supporters of terrorism abroad. This shows how the friend/enemy distinction underpins the antagonism that encourages hard approach.

4.2.2 Deng Xiaoping: developmental approach to security and bourgeois liberalisation

Deng’s governance was characterised by his focus on development. Unlike Mao, Deng did not envision an immediate war (F. Zhong 2015, 121). He believed that the most urgent crisis that the CCP was facing was not a physical war, but a legitimacy crisis caused by economic backwardness. This means that Deng was relatively less radical in terms of identifying and eliminating the “enemies”. Instead, he was more concerned with economic development which gives legitimacy to the CCP. The class struggle as an ideological concept of the Mao era is officially over (Brown and Bērziņa-Čerenkova 2018), but the friend/enemy distinction based on class remains, as exemplified by Deng’s crackdown of bourgeois liberalists.

As underdevelopment was considered to be a more urgent security threat, Deng shifted the security paradigm from “war and revolution” to “peace and development” (Jianhui Liu 1995, 74). This transition can be clearly seen through the shifting focus of the CCP’s national strategy and its attempts to redefine the relationship with other countries. In a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union Eduard Shevardnadze, Deng said that in order to create a peaceful international environment to enable development, China must improve its relations with some important countries (Party Literature Research Center of the CPC Central Committee 1998, 419). Beginning in 1978, together with the reform and opening-up policy, the CCP committed to focusing on economic development and modernisation without producing a new bourgeoisie (Deng 1993a). The following 12th Congress that followed in 1982 is seen as a historic turn of the CCP to turn towards economic development

³⁷ *Huanqiu (Global Times)* is a nationalist tabloid newspaper affiliated to the *People’s Daily*

(*CPC News* n.d.). In a speech in 1987, Deng (1993b, 232) confirmed the “correctness” of the focus on economic development.

The shift from “revolution” to “development” under Deng laid the foundation for the understanding of security centred on development. Zhong Feiteng (2015, 105) calls it a “developmental approach to security”, which entails several premises.³⁸

First, development is at the core of Deng’s theories on governance. Economic development, according to Deng (1993c, 3), is the “foundation to solve international and domestic problems”. Because it provides solutions for political problems, “development is not only an economic issue, in fact, it is a political issue” (Deng 1993c, 354).

Second, development is the source of legitimacy. Deng acknowledged that the legitimacy of the CCP not only comes from “thought work”, but also the speed of economic growth. His slogan “development is the absolute principle” reflects his approach to security, which focuses on economic development (Cheng and Li 2000; D. Li 2000).³⁹ The key to surviving under hegemonism “is whether we could achieve our developmental strategy by gaining rapid economic growth” (Deng 1993c, 356). Learning lessons from the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Revolutions of 1989, Deng (1993c, 345) further affirmed the centrality of development: “the problems took place in some of the countries in the world, in essence, are caused by economic backwardness...why do the people support us? It is very clear that it is because of the development in the recent decade”.

Third, development is the primary task for the CCP. National defence should be subordinated in favour of economic development (F. Zhong 2015, 117) (Deng 1993c, 355–56). The purpose of national defence is to serve the “overall situation” of economic construction (Deng 1993c, 99).⁴⁰

Fourth, to allow China to develop, the CCP must make peace with the international community. “To concentrate on domestic construction, China needs at least twenty years of peace” (Deng 1993c, 50). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs under Deng made great efforts to ease the tensions and normalise the relations between China and the Soviet Union and improved relations with neighbouring countries (J. Tang 2011). Deng played an important role in toning down the friend/enemy distinction that had been hyped during the Mao era and made efforts to avoid war (J. Tang 2011). He was optimistic about the prospect of long-term peace. “We must not scare ourselves and

³⁸ A researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

³⁹ development is the absolute principle: 发展才是硬道理

⁴⁰ overall situation: 大局

deliberately cause tensions. If we always emphasise that a war is about to occur immediately, and devote all our energy to the war, then it will affect the Four Modernisations".⁴¹

Deng's developmental approach to security is essential to understanding the CCP's rationale for dealing with the alleged terrorist threat in Xinjiang. Political elites (C. Zhang 2015) consider development the "foundation and key to solving all the problems" in Xinjiang. However, the oversimplification of the causes and the subsequent solutions to the political unrest in Xinjiang resulted in some controversial policies, which have had mixed consequences for ethnic relations. On the one hand, actual improvements in wellbeing prevent those who have benefited from development policies from resorting to violence. On the other hand, some well-intended policies may result in entrenching existing ethnic divisions due to the assimilationist assumptions embedded in China's political context.

Although Deng disagreed with Mao and shifted the focus of the CCP from revolution to development, he did not deny Mao's assumptions about the enemy. He agreed with Mao on the existence of ideological enemies and their intentions to undermine the foundation of the legitimacy of the CCP by peaceful means. Although Deng emphasised democracy, as opposed to Mao's focus on centralism, he agreed with Mao that China should never follow the Western model of democracy which represents the capitalist class (K. Yu 2002, 184). His concerns about the peaceful evolution of the West against China can be seen from the following quote.

America, and some other countries in the West is carrying out peaceful evolution against socialist countries. Now there is a proposal in America: to fight a war without gunpowder. We must remain vigilant. Capitalism wants to defeat socialism eventually. In the past, it uses weapons such as the atomic bomb and the hydrogen bomb, which was opposed by the people of the entire world. Now they are carrying out peaceful evolution (Deng 1993c, 325–26).

Deng developed Mao's idea of enemy by focusing on a domestic tendency of bourgeois liberalisation. The term "bourgeois liberalists" refers to those who were influenced by the West through peaceful evolution. Deng considered their call to democratise China as being influenced and supported by the US. For example, the Tian'anmen Square protest in 1989 was considered the result of the all-round US hegemony in the political, economic, cultural and ideological realms (Z. Liang 2014, 23). Deng worried that these people would take advantage of the economic reform

⁴¹ The Four Modernisations were national strategy set forth by Deng Xiaping to encourage the modernisation in four areas – agriculture, industry, national defence, and science and technology.

that started in 1978 and gradually turn China into a Western capitalist society that is subordinated to the West (Z. Liang 2014, 23). To Deng (1989, 1993c, 207), the real aim of the rebels who participated in the Tian'anmen Square protest was not anti-corruption as they claimed, but to "subvert our country and our party... they have two slogans, one is to bring down the Communist Party, the other is to overthrow the socialist system". He stated that their goal was to "establish a capitalist republic that is subordinated to the West" (Deng 1989, 1993c, 207).

Deng was cautious about labelling the protesters. Whereas he maintained a hard-line attitude towards anti-government activists, he was also trying to win over some of the students by showing some tolerance. He (1993d, 327) clarified that those who had participated in the hunger strikes and demonstrations and signed petitions were not to blame. Only those leaders who had "ulterior motives" and violated the law should be investigated (Deng 1993d, 327).

For those who participated in the protest and signed the petition, including overseas student, we adopt a forgiving attitude and do not call them to account. We gave necessary punishment to only a few people who had the ambition and attempt to subvert the Chinese government. We cannot tolerate turbulence... I am not talking about Western governments, but at least some people in the West are seeking to subvert socialism in China. (Deng 1993c, 331)

The above quote conflicts with other speeches and writings by Deng in that he avoided attributing the blame directly to "Western governments". This quote is taken from the transcript of Deng's meeting with Richard Nixon. He put the blame on the media, especially the Voice of America, for lying about the Tian'anmen Square protest (Deng 1993c, 331). This reflects Deng's insistence on improving China's relations with other countries, and shows that he did not want to risk a deterioration in Sino-US relations, which were vulnerable at the time.

The tactic of attributing the blame to only a small number of people who have "ulterior motives" is also seen frequently in today's political discourse, as is evident from the customary use of the phrase "the masses who are ignorant of the truth" to avoid antagonising the majority of those who participate in large-scale demonstrations.⁴² As Chapter 6 will demonstrate, the state media used the same tactic to portray the Uyghurs who fled China as victims who were deceived by real terrorists.

The shift towards a market economy undermined the socialist ideology that Mao committed to adhering to. Worrying that the confusion in the ideological realm would

⁴² the masses who are ignorant of the truth: 不明真相的群众

result in instability, Deng stated that “stability overrides everything” (1993c, 284–87). He was concerned that adopting the Western democracy would plunge China into chaos and result in a “full-scale civil war” (1993c, 285). The following quote explains his rejection of adopting Western democracy characterised by multi-party elections.

China must not allow demonstration at will. If people demonstrate for 365 days a year, then nothing can be done, foreign investment will not come into China...We must make it clear to domestic and foreign audiences that strengthening control is for the purpose of stability, it is for better reform and opening-up and making ways for modernisation. (Deng 1993c, 287)

Deng’s idea of stability maintenance remains a central theme of China’s political discourse, particularly in Xinjiang. As Chapter 5 will demonstrate, political elites have created a number of slogans that extend the scope of stability maintenance to every aspect of life. The chapter will show how the theme of stability maintenance securitised a number of ethnic issues, such as marriages and divorces, *halal* food, and wearing full-face veil.

4.2.3 Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao: the transition period

In comparison, the rapid economic development under Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao allowed the two leaders to reduce the reliance on the concept of the enemy as a source of legitimacy. Both leaders continued to focus on economic development and opening up to the global market and toning down the ideological friend/enemy distinction. The phrase “hostile forces” was rarely used. There is no obvious difference between the two leaders in terms of how they perceived the enemy. Therefore, Jiang and Hu’s approaches are explained in one section.

During the transition period under Jiang and Hu, the friend/enemy distinction remained an underlying assumption. Jiang said that although class struggle was no longer the major contradiction in our society, it would exist for a long time and possibly be accelerated (Z. Jiang 1992a). Jiang maintained that some Western countries had connived with ethno-separatism and religious extremist, which had led to regime instability in certain countries, jeopardising their sovereignty and unity, and thus posing a threat to international security (Z. Jiang 2000). Jiang acknowledged the threat posed by bourgeois liberalisation, and attributed it to “international hostile forces” who seek to induce regime change by means of peaceful evolution (Z. Jiang 2016).

Some Western countries use ethnic questions and religious questions as the pretext for promoting hegemonism and power politics and interference in other countries’ domestic affairs. They always involved in and took advantage of ethnic disputes and religious disputes, connive at and support ethno-separatism and religious extremism, which complicated

ethnic questions and religious questions. The activities of ethno-separatists and religious extremists have endangered regime stability and even sovereign and territorial integrity in some countries; seriously hampered the economic development in these countries; and often caused instability in the region, posing threats to the alleviation of tensions and stability of the international situation (Z. Jiang 2000).

A difference between Jiang and previous leaders was his concerns for religious extremism. These were likely to have been due to the spread of Falun Gong, which had started in 1992. In 1999 the development of this group caused concerns for its ability to undermine the stability of the regime by challenging the authority at Zhongnanhai, the central headquarters of the CCP (A. Niu et al. 2007; Martina, Scott, and Johnson 2015). Jiang's suppression of the group has resulted in its group members undertaking anti-CCP activities across the world, which still continue today. Their website, Epoch Times regularly posts anti-CCP reports. The group has attracted some sympathisers from the West, as is evident from the criticism of the Amnesty International (2016), Freedom House (2015), and *the Diplomat* (Browde 2016) about organ transplant operations and torture. The legitimacy of Falun Gong's claim is beyond the scope of this thesis. What the case shows however is it is framed as a conspiracy orchestrated by Western hostile forces (Commentator of *People's Daily* 2001).

Although Jiang agrees with Mao and Deng on blaming the West for causing instability and its involvements in ethnic and religious disputes in other countries, his assumption of the enemy functioned to mobilise domestic development. The above quote is taken from a speech entitled "The Dual Historical Task of our Military is Mechanisation and Informationisation", which reveals the purpose of using the concept of the enemy – to introduce the call for modernising the military.

Jiang's perception of the threat was shaped by some cases of Western involvement in ethnic or religious conflicts in other countries (see Z. Jiang 2000). One of these cases was the "humanitarian intervention" in the conflict in Kosovo. As many analysts (Choedon 2005, 54; Jing Chen 2009, 158; Z. Pang 2005, 88; Snetkov and Lanteigne 2015, 128; Hirono and Lanteigne 2011, 248; T. Liu and Zhang 2014, 406; Xiao 2003, 28) have pointed out, the unauthorised use of force for humanitarian intervention in cases such as Kosovo caused concern for the CCP about Western intervention in the separatist movements in Xinjiang, Tibet and Taiwan. These cases convinced Jiang of the "long-term struggle between hegemonism and anti-hegemonism" (see Z. Jiang 2000). Jiang's solution to this struggle, like Deng's, was to keep a low-profile in the international arena in order to create the environment conducive to development (Z. Jiang 2000).

Like Mao and Deng, Jiang insisted on the non-interference principle in developing relations with other countries and considered independence and sovereignty unnegotiable. “We will never impose our own social system and ideology onto others. Likewise, we will never allow other countries to impose their own social system and ideologies on China” (Z. Jiang 1992b). “On issues of ethnic interests and national sovereignty, we will never submit to any external pressure” (Z. Jiang 1992b). An irreconcilable attitude towards national unity and sovereign and territorial integrity can be seen in the current counter-terrorism discourse.

Rapid economic development under Jiang led him to suggest an end of the class struggle and an invitation to the bourgeois class. With the continued efforts towards opening up, in 2001, Jiang suggested that the “CCP’s long-standing goal of class struggle had been abandoned, and said that the Party must open its door to the “new classes” of private business people and professionals (Brady 2010, 30).

Following Jiang, Hu Jintao proposed a multi-dimensional understanding of the security threat, including economic, financial, nuclear, ideological, cultural and political security (Y. Zhu 2012, 96). Under Hu, the CCP began to pay attention to the security of the people, giving rise to the consideration of the “People First” policy, which echoes the Human Security paradigm (X. Ren and Li 2013, 35). As the cost of development has become increasingly apparent, Hu (2006) started to highlight that development could not be “undertaken at the expense of spiritual civilisation, ecological environment, not least human lives”. Regarding the Xinjiang problem, Hu Jintao called for a bottom-up control system by sending cadres to work in remote villages (Nathan and Gilley 2003, 221). This policy has clearly been consolidated in the “Visit, Benefit and Gather” project under Xi, which aimed to send 200,000 cadres to the local levels in three years.

A major feature of the security discourse under Hu was an emphasis on peaceful means to conflict resolution (The State Council 2011). Compared to his predecessors, Hu was much more cautious about using the phrases “peaceful evolution”, “foreign hostile forces” and “bourgeois liberalisation”, which might undermine economic cooperation with other states. He was still concerned about “hegemonism and power politics”, as is evidenced in his report at the 17th National Congress, but did not specifically point out the forms of threat that “hegemonism” posed to China’s security directly (J. Hu 2007). In a speech at the Propaganda and Thought Work Conference, while addressing a smaller group of audience, Hu cautioned all of the Party members to “keep their eyes peeled” for ideological infiltration of various hostile forces (J. Hu

2003).⁴³ Although the frequency of the appearance of terms “peaceful evolution”, “foreign hostile forces”, and “bourgeois liberalisation” in core official documents has largely declined under Hu, some scholars still interpret his arguments in the context of the complicated international security environment. For example, according to Wei Xinghua, Hu’s emphasis on combining Marxism and China’s national conditions means that the CCP should insist on economic reform, while resisting “peaceful evolution” at the same time (X. Wei 2008).

4.2.4 Xi Jinping: re-emphasising ideology enemies

Recent years have seen a resurgence of the discussion over ideology infiltration, which underpins the friend/enemy distinction in the current counter-terrorism discourse. Since the economic reform, the theme of development and modernisation has toned down the confrontation between different ideologies, and the boundary between capitalism and socialism has been blurred. Xi’s governance marks a return to the primacy of politics after years of focus on economic performance (Brown and Bērziņa-Čerenkova 2018). Economic slow-down, accompanied by other issues such as corruption and pollution, has forced political elites and intellectuals to re-emphasise the concept of the enemy. Ren Jie (2012), a researcher at the Marxism Institute at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, argues that Western hostile forces have not given up their cultural infiltration and are seeking to undermine communism by means of “cultural propaganda”. He identifies a number of new enemies - neo-liberalism, liberal democracy, and historical nihilism – that distort and defame historical figures and leaders in Party history and pose threats to people’s identification with the mainstream authoritative ideology.

Since the re-emphasis of ideology during the Hu Jintao era, as Holbig (2013, 2009) observes, Xi Jinping has further consolidated the importance of ideology. On 18 August 2013, not long after he took over the administration, Xi Jinping delivered a speech at the National Conference on Propaganda and Ideological Work, in which he re-emphasised the importance of ideology after focusing on economic development for almost four decades. According to Xi, “ideology work is extremely important” (Jingyue Xu and Hua 2013). “It is essential to the future and fate of the CCP, long-term security of the state, national solidarity and cohesiveness” (*CPC News* 2013b). By linking ideology with core national interests, Xi prioritised the “ideology work” in China’s security agenda. Associating ideology with security, he has established a regime of truth that dismisses alternative ideas as “wrong”. This way of framing is

⁴³ keep their eyes peeled: 保持高度警戒

evident from his proposal to “help the cadres and the masses to distinguish between right and wrong and clarify vague understanding” (*CPC News* 2013a).

Under Xi, “Western” values are less tolerated due to their potential to lead to democratisation in a way that might threaten the legitimacy of the CCP. Those values are identified as “wrong”. The CCP is acutely aware of the risks posed by Western values, particularly in an era when China is exposed to various intensified social contradictions, and the Chinese people are exposed to various ideologies via the internet (Commentator of *People’s Daily* 2013b). In this context, the CCP considers it necessary to “firmly grasp the leadership, management and the discourse of ideology work” (Commentator of *People’s Daily* 2013b). The CCP frames Marxism, communism and socialism as the “correct direction of ideology”. The emphasis on distinguishing between the “correct” and “wrong” ideologies make it possible to group those who follow the “wrong” ideology as the enemies.

In the context of the concentration of personal power, Xi’s speech has led to a nationwide political movement to re-focus on ideological work. His speech has been repeatedly studied and cited by Chinese officials and intellectuals and disseminated to all levels of government. The following quote by Lu Yan, a lecturer at Shandong Provincial Party Committee, indicates a full alignment of intellectuals with the framing of the threat by the CCP.

The collapse of a regime usually starts from the realm of ideology. Political instability and regime change can happen overnight, but the evolution of ideas is a long-term process, which needs our special attention to prevent. Once the defence of ideas is breached, other defence will hardly hold up (Yan Lu 2016).

Academics joined Xi Jinping in identifying the ideological enemy. Zhang Guozuo (2015, 1) relies on the Marxist assumption of ideology as the superstructure of society. According to his interpretation of this assumption, an economic base is an objective reality; therefore, the ideology determined by the economic base is also an objective reality. He (2015, 1) warns against the “ideological warfare” waged by “some Western political forces” who

flaunt Western values, subvert traditional ideological system, demonise the history and current situation of some authorities, confuse right and wrong, provoke ideological disputes, upset social psychological balance, to achieve the ultimate goal of creating political turmoil in order to subvert the regimes they dislike or the regimes they conceive as political rival of their own.

Li Xiguang (2014) identifies the “wrong” ideas as those that

negate China's development model and development path, advocate to capitalise China, make judgements based on Western criteria, fight China's ideology with Western ideology, replace China's regime with a Western regime, deny the revolution history and the regime legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party.

Similarly, Zhang's (2015, 1) definition of the "wrong social ideologies and views" covers a wide range of alternative interpretations of history and politics. He identifies those who "advocate extreme 'democracy' and absolute 'freedom'" as ideological enemies, which is particularly relevant to China's counter-terrorism discourse. Articles on the state media demonstrate that Chinese political elites and intellectuals consider many human rights activists as ideological enemies because of their criticism based on the Western model of democracy and freedom (see for example Pang 2016; Chen 2016; Pang 2015; Xinhua 2012).

It can be seen from the above academic interpretations of ideological enemies that Xi's focus on ideology has entrenched the existing friend/enemy distinction between China and the "West". The concept of the enemy has been broadened to include various kinds of dissent. In doing so, academics have reproduced the morality that the CCP has created based on the assumption of the threat to the regime. They have reinforced the necessity of maintaining legitimacy through ideological means (A. Tang 2016).

The re-emphasis of ideological enemies under Xi is framed differently. As China grows into an important actor in the international community, the CCP has begun to adjust its language when framing the enemy to cater for the international audience. Li Zhiguo (2013) observes that the theoretical framework has been preserved by using the words of "the masses", "contradiction", "struggle", and "hard work", while the notion of the enemy has been de-emphasised. According to an official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the translation of official documents has been adjusted deliberately to tone down the discourse of ideology for a foreign audience (Zhiguo Li 2013).⁴⁴

However, although political elites avoid directly using the language of Mao and Deng, their assumptions regarding the intentions of the enemy remain fundamental to the policies on ideological security. These assumptions enables Xi to further require the loyalty of the Party media – the "Party media must use the Party as its surname" (*People's Daily Online Forum* 2016).⁴⁵ Based on the assumption of Western discourse hegemony, Xi considers it necessary to have China's own discourse power, as is

⁴⁴ the masses: 群众; contradiction: 矛盾; struggle: 斗争; hard work: 奋斗

⁴⁵ Party media must use the Party as its surname: 党媒必须姓党

evident from his report at the 19th National Congress in 2017 (Y. Long 2017).⁴⁶ He proposed to improve the competitiveness of China's discourse so that it tells convincing "Chinese stories" (Jingyue Xu and Hua 2013).

By controlling the state media, the CCP promotes the "correct" ideology and China's security discourse to counter-balance the dominance of the Western security discourse in the international community (A. Tang 2016). Xi inherited Deng's ethos that "stability overrides everything", prioritising social stability and long-term peace as the "overall goal of Xinjiang work" (Xinhua 2014a). He frames solidarity and stability as a "blessing", and separation and turmoil as a "curse" (Research Centre on the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region 2017).⁴⁷ The Party media frames the *minzu* regional autonomy policy as a perfect policy. The following quote from *Xinjiang Daily*, the Party media of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, shows how the Party media demonstrates loyalty by uncritically praising China's ethnic policy.

[minzu regional autonomy policy is] a perfectly correct good system that respects history, suits national conditions, complies with the aspirations of the people, which realised the fundamental interests of all ethnic groups and gained sincere support from all ethnic groups in Xinjiang. (*Xinjiang Daily* 2015b)

Emphasising that such a perfect policy must be adhered to and implemented "without any hesitation" (*Xinjiang Daily* 2015b), the Party media contributes to the monopoly of the CCP in the security discourse in China, further marginalising alternative narratives from the Uyghur community. The Party media wrote the "correct" version of the history of Xinjiang, which assumes that "Xinjiang is an integral part of Chinese territory" (*People's Daily Online* 2017a), rendering all those who challenge this assumption "wrong". This categorisation precludes alternative interpretations of Xinjiang history in China, as the CCP endeavours to "eliminate the influence of the wrong ideas in the aspects of history, culture, ethnicity and religion" (*People's Daily Online* 2017a).

4.3 The politicisation of the past

Forgetting history means betrayal.

--- Xi Jinping (Xinhua 2015e)

⁴⁶ discourse power: 话语权

⁴⁷ solidarity and stability as a blessing, and separation and turmoil as a curse: 团结稳定是福, 分裂动乱是祸

History and the framing of history are an important part of China's quest for legitimacy. They function to encourage alignment with the official political discourse, internalise the friend and enemy distinction, and convince the public of the need for the political agenda to be promoted by the current leadership. China's counter-terrorism discourse draws on the assumptions derived from the narratives of humiliation. The narratives of the Century of Humiliation are at the core of the legitimacy of the CCP's claims of delivering the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" (Millar 2015). In Powers' (2004) words, history is used as "propaganda". This section discusses how the past is framed and used to justify the present security agenda.

As discussed in Section 2.2.3, the suffering of the Chinese nation due to colonial and imperialist invasion between 1839 and 1949 has been established as a source of legitimacy for the governance of the CCP. Political elites and intellectuals today continue to utilise the notion of the Century of Humiliation as a reminder of the weakness of China at that time. Reliving the trauma in the collective memory serves to mobilise the public to contribute to the CCP's agenda of strengthening China in order to blot out humiliation. Revisiting traumatic events such as the Nanjing Massacre helps to construct a sense of national identity and downplay the differences among ethnic groups within the Chinese nation. In this context, the CCP sees it as necessary to repeatedly remind the Chinese people of the past (*People's Daily Online* 2017b).

Mao Zedong (1939b) identified imperialism as the "the foremost and most ferocious enemy of the Chinese people". Mao (1939c) believed that Chinese society had become a "semi-colonial and semi-feudal" society since the Opium War of 1840, the influence of which on the development of Chinese society could still be seen in the following century. He (1991a, 9) specified that the enemies are "all those in league with imperialism - the warlords, the bureaucrats, the comprador class, the big landlord class and the reactionary section of the intelligentsia affiliated to them". Mao also reflected upon the impact of the naming of China's territories as part of the imperialists' plan to "carve up China". The following quote shows Mao's view on how the enemies had caused the humiliating loss of Chinese territories.

On April 17 of this year [1934, author's note], the Japanese imperialists openly proclaimed that China belongs to Japan, Japan is the master in East Asia, and Japan opposes any other country "plundering China" under any pretence. Meanwhile, the selling out of North China and the Japanese imperialists' attempt to monopolize China naturally prompted other imperialist countries to speed up their efforts to carve up China directly. In the vast areas of Xinjiang, Qinghai, Xikang, and Tibet, the British imperialists are now establishing their "Tibetan State". The areas of Banhong and Canglan in Yunnan have also been occupied by the British.

The French imperialists are invading and plundering in Yunnan, Guizhou, and Guangxi. The American imperialists are also making frenzied efforts to establish their rule over China. Neither the unity between these imperialist countries (such as the British-Japanese alliance) nor the clashes among them (such as the conflicts between Japan and the United States) are aimed at helping China. They are only designed to carve up China more quickly and turn China into a colony of the imperialists. (Z. Mao 1939a) [translated by John King Fairbank, Center for East Asian Research]

The above quote reveals the actual enemies to which Mao was referring to – imperialist countries including Japan, Britain, France and America, as well as the Kuo Min Tang (KMT, also *Guomindang*) which, according to Mao had colluded with the imperialist countries. Mao (1939a) pronounced the claims of imperialist countries over Xinjiang, Qinghai, Xikang and Tibet to be illegitimate imperialist invasions, further shaping the concept of unity in the context of imperialist invasion – the “completeness” of China means the successful reclaiming of all of the territories that have been taken by imperialist countries.

To link the agenda of the current regime with historical events, the CCP has carried out various measures, such as requiring mandatory participation of students in the Patriotic Education Bases – tourist sites that reflect the history of the Century of Humiliation and the resistance of the Chinese people.⁴⁸ These sites are published by the Department of Publicity, and the selection of these sites reflects the politicisation of history for the purpose of propaganda.

In the context of counter-terrorism discourse, the narratives of the Century of Humiliation are also associated with the CCP’s commitment to the non-interference principle. The CCP attributes terrorism to external enemies – the “hostile forces”. This attribution attaches a negative connotation to all of the sympathisers of the Uyghurs’ separatist claims because their sympathy and the subsequent support are considered as part of the plot to interfere with China’s domestic affairs and undermine the legitimacy of the CCP, as discussed in Section 4.2. The label “hostile forces” functions to embed the friend/enemy distinction discussed earlier in the discourse of counter-terrorism. This distinction contains a package of assumptions regarding who the enemies are. Applying the friend/enemy distinction in the current counter-terrorism discourse allows the speaker to imply the link between the perpetrators of a particular terrorist incident and the enemies in the West. Based on the assumption that these enemies collude with terrorists in China, the CCP has put terrorism in the context of the antagonism between China and the West.

⁴⁸ Patriotic Education Bases: 爱国主义教育基地

In the contemporary political discourse, the history of humiliation has shaped the shared identity – the “national ethos” of the Chinese people, and stories of heroic sacrifice are referenced to construct a shared victimhood. The shared historical experience serves as a “shortcut” for understanding the friend/enemy distinction in contemporary politics; the identity of the enemy is left unclarified because it is considered “common sense” (K. Huang 2015). The narratives of the Century of Humiliation enable the CCP to channel the shared sense of victimhood to project all ethnic groups as a unified whole to resist the same enemy. Based on the assumptions of political leaders about the West’s attempt to westernise and divide China discussed in Section 4.2, the CCP sees ethno-separatism as part of the enemy’s plot.

To justify the present, Xi argues that “reality is rooted in history” (Xi 2014b). For Xi, history explains the rationale for the behaviour of the state (Xi 2014b). The following quote highlights how Xi has framed the “correct outlook on history” as something that the entire nation is expected to follow.

History will gradually fade away. But the implications and lessons of history are always there, whether recognised or not. Everyone, including those who bravely fought against the invasion and the people of the country which had launched the invasion, including those who had gone through that era and who were born after that era, has to adhere to the correct outlook on history, and remember the implications and lessons of history (Xinhua 2015e).

Denying the correct outlook on history is considered a “betrayal” (Xinhua 2015e). An imaginary line is drawn between those who are aligned with the correct outlook on history and those who are not.

4.3.1 The impact of the politicisation of history on the perception of ethnic relations

In this context, the issues of ethnicity and ethnic relations are important to political leaders from Mao to Xi, because of the role they play in curbing or promoting separatism (Xi 2017). As discussed in Section 4.1.2, the issue of ethnic relations is highly political. A discussion over “diversity” without acknowledging “unity” as a precondition could potentially be considered subversive. The very policy that is supposed to ensure autonomous rights is openly framed in the context of unity. A commentary (Shengmin Yang 2017) on *People’s Daily* makes it very clear that the *minzu* regional autonomy system serves to promote national unity. Patriotic believers have been trained to treat diversity as secondary to unity (Q. Cui 2016).⁴⁹

⁴⁹ *minzu* regional autonomy system: 民族区域自治

Within the integration model, which prioritises unity, a certain degree of diversity is allowed with some corresponding preferential policies that positively discriminate against ethnic minorities in terms of the one-child policy, education, language, career path, subsidy, and leniency for criminals. The impact of preferential policies on inter-ethnic relations in Xinjiang has not been studied in detail, with one exception (Sautman 1998). Sautman is rather optimistic, stating that the preferential policies in Xinjiang have actually helped to produce substantial equality, and improve economic efficiency and have not created inter-ethnic tensions. However, as Chapter 5 will demonstrate, the reverse discrimination has, in some cases, entrenched the existing divisions and reinforced the self-awareness of some Uyghurs as a distinctive group, thus contributing to the dichotomy between state-orchestrated nationalism and ethno-nationalism.

The categorisation of “correct” and “wrong” ideas is also reflected in the official view of ethnic relations. The CCP denounces those who question the identification of 56 ethnic groups in China (*CPC News* 2015). It frames the criticism that the Uyghur is artificially created by the CCP as an ethnic group as a distortion of history (*CPC News* 2015).

It is clear that no matter how the term *minzu* is translated, the official view of ethnic relations is underpinned by a hierarchy of three levels of identity. Loyalty to the state comes first, before identification with the Chinese nation and the identification with ethnic groups. It is not always necessary to distinguish them, but if a person has to discuss them in the same context, “the state must come first, and then nationality, and then ethnicity” (*CPC News* 2015). “Local nationalism goes against the logic of the state; therefore it is something we should oppose” (*CPC News* 2015).

4.3.2 The impact of the politicisation of history on the framing of terrorism in Xinjiang

In the context of counter-terrorism discourse, the “correct outlook on history and ethnicity” is the precondition for understanding the Xinjiang question” (Y. Sun 2009).

⁵⁰ The conference on several historical issues regarding Xinjiang (*People’s Daily Online* 2017a) provides the Party line on the history of Xinjiang.

Xinjiang is an integral part of Chinese territory. The paradigm of the unity of various ethnic groups [referring to the paradigm of “diversity within unity”, author’s note] is a historical tradition and unique advantage formed since Qin and Han dynasties in China (*People’s Daily Online* 2017a).

⁵⁰ correct outlook on history and ethnicity: 正确历史观和民族观

The CCP's claims of the only "correct" version of Xinjiang history have of course been questioned by many scholars in the West (for example, see Gladney 1998; Millward 2006; Bachman 2004; Palmer 2013). Their criticism has been dismissed as "historical nihilism" rooted in the Western discourse, which distorts Chinese history (*China Daily* 2017).⁵¹ In response, the CCP has placed the claims of "correct" history in the context of the struggle against the influence of Western discourse. Chinese scholars consider historical nihilism as serving the political agenda of Western countries, which is aiming for the cultural infiltration of American values in Asia (Zengzhi Wang 2016). The correct outlook on history envisions the concepts of unity as being related related to the rejuvenation of China after the Century of Humiliation. Without this context, the concept of separatism cannot be fully understood.

According to the "correct" version of the history of Xinjiang, although there were two short-lived East Turkistan Republics, in 1933 and between 1944 and 1949, the founding of these republics is considered by Chinese scholars and the government to have been supported by foreign powers. In 1865, Khanate of Kokand (a Central Asian state existed from 1709 to 1876) sent a troop led by Yakub Beg to invade Xinjiang (M. Fan and Meng 2010, 33). When Yakub's invasion started to gain momentum, British India supported Yakub in attempting to expand its sphere of influence in Xinjiang. The "puppet state" that Yakub established in Xinjiang opened the door for Britain and Russia (P. Liu 1993, 183). The Second East Turkistan Republic was considered the result of direct involvement of the Soviet Union – including the provision of weapons and military training and harbouring of the rebellion's leaders (E. Han 2013, 42). Later, the Russian expansion in Central Asia posed a challenge to the British rule (N. Li 2003, 58). In 1869, Britain and Russia negotiated the "carving up" of Xinjiang in Petersburg (N. Li 2003, 58). The CCP believes that many of the claims of the East Turkistan Republic are illegitimate, because their ideological and theoretical system were "fabricated" in the context of the Great Game between Britain and Russia. The perception of the CCP explains why the phrase "East Turkistan" always appears with quotation marks in Chinese official documents and academic work, which indicates the CCP's denial of its legitimacy.

The adherence to the "correct" version of history makes it difficult to separate the study of Xinjiang history and politics. As the correct outlook of history treats "East Turkistan" as a geographical term rather than a political term that implies the independence of Xinjiang, alternative interpretations of Xinjiang history could be seen as attempts by "old colonists" to "dismember China" (State Council Information Office 2002b). For example, the *East Turkistan History* written by Muhammad Amin Bughra,

⁵¹ historical nihilism: 历史虚无主义

a separatist designated by the CCP, is considered a distortion of history (Y. Sun 2009). The use of history as propaganda for separatist claims is considered the “politicisation” of an otherwise “non-existent nation”, and a manifestation of the “ulterior motives” of those who have political agendas (Y. Sun 2009).

Making connections between the history of foreign involvement in establishing the two East Turkistan Republics and the CCP’s sovereignty over Xinjiang, the CCP has constructed the external enemy as a major cause of terrorism in China. According to the 2009 Xinjiang Development White Paper, since the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the “East Turkistan forces” have received support from “foreign forces” to instigate riots and armed conflict in Xinjiang, and since the 1990s, have begun to resort to terrorism as a tactic to separate Xinjiang from China (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China 2009).

4.4 The construction of the concept of separatism

As discussed in previous sections, the affinities between academia and the state result in the alignment of academic work with the Party line in defining unity. Similarly, academics adopt the “correct outlook on history” and the label “hostile forces” to remain aligned with the Party in regard to identifying the enemies. Those who refuse to align are considered “wrong” and must be “eliminated”. Alternative interpretations of history are considered a “distortion” of history, or “distorted history” (*People’s Daily Online* 2017a).

The concept of separatism is constructed based on the above assumptions.

First, the concept of separatism is constructed by defining what “unity” is. Unity has been framed by the rulers as conducive to stability. Laozi’s idea of minimum government intervention was considered as “regression” and “backwardness” (Rao 2006, 189). In China’s political discourse, the concept of “unity” is rooted in the ideal of the “Grand Union”, rather than the Westphalian “nation-state”. Accordingly, the “unity” that the CCP advocates is the unity of a multi-national state comprised of 56 *minzu*, rather than the unity of a “nation-state” of the Han Chinese. This assumption explains the morality of ethno-separatism in China – the attempts to split China are linked to the collective memory of China being “carved up” by imperialists. The politicisation of history created a shared sense of victimhood that feeds into Chinese nationalism and is intertwined with the aspiration to take back the lost territories.

Second, the concept of separatism is contextualised in the debate on the naming/framing of *minzu*. Gu believed that the everyday practice of using the language used by foreign imperialists creates its own reality, which is separation.

While others disagreed with his assimilationist assumption that negates other *minzu*, they did not challenge the official view, which prioritises nationality over ethnicity. Fei Xiaotong developed the paradigm of “diversity within unity” to help the public to make sense of the hierarchical relationship between national identity and ethnic identity.

The *minzu* regional autonomy policy, which prioritises national unity and prohibits separatist activities, is written into the Chinese Constitution (National People’s Congress 2004). Like the “correct outlook on history”, the CCP promotes the “correct outlook on *minzu*” (Hao 2015), which implies that those who sympathise with the separatist claims are not only “wrong”, but could also potentially be illegal.

In the context of growing awareness among the Uyghurs, the CCP is particularly concerned with believers as religion transcend national borders. To ensure their loyalty, the CCP has provided training for patriotic believers so that they will accept of the paradigm of “diversity within unity” and the “sinicisation of religions” (Central Socialist School 2018). This paradigm implies that the growing ethnic self-awareness must be subordinate to national unity. It also implies the extent to which religious freedom should be limited – those who follow conservative interpretations of Islam must exercise their religious freedom on the condition that they acknowledge the legitimacy of the secular government of the CCP. Some believers prefer to adopt the religious custom of marriage and divorce instead of registering with administrative departments, and reject secular and bilingual education. The official documents on de-radicalisation (The Party Committee General Office of the XUAR and The People’s Government of the XUAR 2014; People’s Congress 2017) categorise the disregard for the secular administration system for education, marriage and language as a sign of radicalism (The Party Committee General Office of the XUAR and The People’s Government of the XUAR 2014; People’s Congress 2017).

Third, the concept of separatism is constructed by defining the “correct outlook on history”. The CCP monopolises the discourse of counter-terrorism as it is the most powerful agency in China that has the defining power. The CCP does not officially ban alternative accounts of history. However, as can be seen from the discussion in the previous section, it is particularly hostile towards the kind of historical studies that might challenge the legitimacy of the CCP’s control over Xinjiang.

4.5 A critical analysis of the framing of unity and enemy in counter-terrorism discourse

It can be seen from the above discussion that China’s quest for legitimacy is characterised by a high level of state-centricity. Political elites and intellectuals have

incorporated the ideas that are conducive to justify the unity of the state. A closer look at the dubious assumptions underlying the discourse of unity and separatism indicate a similarity with Edward Herman and Gerry O'Sullivan's (1989, 37–38) criticisms of the state's bias in the counter-terrorism discourse. The following assumptions are summarised from the discussion in previous sections in this chapter:

1. China is an innocent target and victim of imperialism. The CCP led the Chinese people to fight against the colonial and imperialist invasions. Terrorism in China is part of a broader conflict between China and the West and is supported by China's enemies in the West.
2. The West dislikes communism and continues seeking to undermine communist regimes through ideological and cultural infiltration. After a number of cases of Western involvement in regime change, China will be the next target.
3. Underlying the efforts to undermine the communist regime of China is American support.
4. External enemies have not given up undermining the CCP regime. These efforts were initially in the form of military warfare. In peaceful times, the West has adopted peaceful means to "Westernise and divide" China.
5. Therefore, it is necessary to tighten the grip over education, ethnic issues and religion to ensure national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The state-centric approach to security posits that the unity of the state provides stability, which is the precondition for the development of different ethnic groups. Framing the state as an innocent victim of separatism justifies extraordinary measures taken to protect the state from the overt and covert attempts of separatism supported by "hostile forces". The intentional ambiguity in the use of "hostile forces" enables the speaker to attribute blame without clarifying the identity of the enemies and justify its counter-measures against them. From a critical perspective (Jackson 2007, 245), the affinities between the state and academia mean that the body of knowledge is little more than a reproduction of the state's discourse of terrorism based on the narratives of the history of humiliation and the assumption of the enemies.

The underlying assumption regarding external enemies in China's security discourse can be understood as what Snow and Benford (1988) call "diagnostic framing". In particular, in more recent studies in China, Western hegemonism has been conceptualised as "neo-interventionism" in the name of liberal/democratic values such as human rights (Y. Fan 2000, 41). Many scholars believe that the discourse of human rights has been used as the "weapon" by the "Western hostile forces" to carry out ideological infiltration (Y. Fan 2000, 37; Y. Yao 1996, 33; Jian Peng 2000, 100). The

Party media hold that neo-interventionism takes the forms of both military intervention and “ideological export”, with the latter including the dissemination of Western value of human rights, democracy and capitalism (Qiushi 2012). Some Uyghurs recruited by the CCP as ethnic cadres are aligned with this framing.⁵² One Uyghur senior official, Nur Bekri delivered a speech at a cadre conference in Xinjiang which aimed at tackling the problem of “three forces”. He (2008) said that “Western hostile forces” support and collude with separatist movements, as well as Falun gong and other civil movements, in order to undermine the regime and system, weaken the basis of legitimacy of the CCP, damage the image of the CCP, and sabotage national security and social stability. He agrees that the ultimate goal of the enemies is to subvert the CCP’s rule and socialist system and divide and weaken China (Nur 2008).

The term enemies generally refer to the “West”, but the specific assumption about who the enemies are has varied across different leadership periods and in different contexts. Like the concept of “terrorism”, the label “hostile forces” has been used so broadly, as discussed in Section 4.2, that it becomes impossible to identify them without context. The following summary is an attempt to clarify the use of “hostile forces” to understand the friend/enemy distinction in the counter-terrorism discourse.

First, the label “hostile forces” refer to international terrorist organisations that are covertly supported by the “West”. In a commentary on *Xinjiang Daily* (2011), the link between “three forces” and international terrorist activities immediately follows the blame being placed on the “Westernise” strategy, which suggests a connection between Western hostile forces and international terrorist activities. The article asserts that the current counter-terrorism is, in fact, a continuation of the 100 years of struggle between the Chinese people against the imperialists’ plot to “split” China.⁵³ The article alleges that the “essence” of the “three forces” is the attempt of the Western hostile forces to annihilate China and the attempt of the ethnic separatists to cause disturbances in China.⁵⁴ The article concludes with a prognostic framing, calling for the people to have a “clear-cut stand to fight against ethnic separatism, resolutely safeguard the unity of the motherland, and resolutely safeguard the supreme interests of the state and the fundamental interests of the Chinese nation”. The framing of terrorism in this article is clearly underpinned by the antagonism between China and the West, posting the “West” as a monolithic entity with a coherent anti-China goal.

⁵² ideological export: 意识形态输出

⁵³ split: 分裂

⁵⁴ 西方敌对势力亡我之心不死，民族分裂势力乱我之心不变

Second, “hostile forces” refer to “Western” media that serve to promote the political agenda of the “Western hostile forces”. Radio Free Asia, based in Washington, is regarded as one of the major actors that “spread rumours” and “even encourage violent terrorist thinking within China” (Xia, Wang, and Qing 2014a). Some journalists of *Huanqiu*, the nationalist tabloid newspaper affiliated with the *People’s Daily*, claim that there is conclusive evidence that Radio Free Asia has become the megaphone of the “East Turkistan forces”, as evidenced by decades of propagating “anti-Han” sentiment and “Xinjiang separatist” movements and the direct involvement of some journalists in inciting violent attacks in China (Xia, Wang, and Qing 2014a). Quoting a journalist from the Uyghur department of Radio Free Asia, they stated that “some of us are learning suicidal bombing techniques that allow one person to fight against 100 people. The CCP cannot protect everyone on the street” (Xia, Wang, and Qing 2014a). They accused Radio Free Asia of producing a large amount of “distorted reports” on the Urumqi Riot in 2009. According to Xia and his colleagues (2014b), RFA has been broadcasting in Uyghur language for 2 hours a day, 7 days a week and the narratives used on Radio Free Asia are based on distorted Uyghur history; they demonise the CCP’s ethnic policy as “colonisation” and “massacre”, and mobilise Uyghurs to fight for independence (Xia, Wang, and Qing 2014b). The article listed Voice of America, BBC, Radio France Internationale, and Deutsche Welle as other “Western media” that have been fuelling anti-China sentiment (Xia, Wang, and Qing 2014a). In addition, YouTube, iTunes, Facebook, Google and Twitter have been accused of providing a platform for the separatists (Xia, Wang, and Qing 2014a). Not surprisingly, those platforms are all blocked in China.

Third, “hostile forces” refer to human rights organisations. As discussed in earlier in this section, Chinese political elites and intellectuals frame Western involvement in other countries in the name of human rights as part of the Western hegemonic mentality that aim at undermining the regimes it dislikes. They are highly sceptical about the political agenda behind the international criticism of China’s human rights record. An article published in 2008 stated that Reporters Without Borders is “extremely anti-China”. Chinese officials and scholars have also criticised Amnesty International for its support of “sex worker’s rights” (H. Liu 2015), and Human Rights Watch for its selective reports, double standards, and bias against the Chinese government (X. Pang 2015).

Accusing external actors of being “hostile forces” has been heavily criticised by activists and scholars outside China. Shichor (1994, 79) suggests that the so-called “enemies” are merely imagined because it is not clear which entities “hostile forces” are referring to. Debata (2010, 55) has also questioned the very existence of such entities, as he believes that many states are reluctant to confront China, as its role in

the international economy becomes more important. An article on the Human Rights Watch indicates that the current focus on “hostile forces” is in line with Xi’s emphasis on ideology, which raises concerns that some domestic organisations that are deemed to have connections with “hostile forces” may face “renewed harassment and threats from the authorities” (Human Rights Watch 2016). He Qinglian (2014) wrote on the Voice of America that the making of the enemies serves to deflect people’s attention away from the CCP’s failure in regard to the domestic economy, real estate bubble, and environmental pollution.

In the context of the counter-terrorism discourse, the phrase “hostile forces” is not used to give a clear meaning in terms of who the speaker is referring to. It is difficult to identify a particular political entity merely from the text in which it is used. This highlights the importance of considering the framing in the context of the political antagonism that China has been reinforcing in its pursuit of legitimacy. It contains a package of ready-made assumptions that save the audience from thinking deeply about the causes of terrorism. The package of assumptions draws on the narratives of the Century of Humiliation, which makes the irreconcilable attitude towards territories sound more palatable.

Chinese political elites and intellectuals have reinforced this political antagonism by drawing links with other cases of Western involvement in regime changes in socialist countries.

First, they consider NATO’s air campaign in Kosovo in 1999 evidence of US hegemony, as well as the “News invasion” or “propaganda invasion” in the name of “freedom of the press” (Husheng Zhang 1999, 19). Zhang Ruizhuang (2002, 111), a scholar at Nankai University, argues that the West, especially the US, framed the “small-scale, low-intensity civil war” as “ethnic cleansing and genocide” to justify the intervention of NATO. The CCP did not hesitate in expressing its opposition against the intervention in Kosovo for fearing that it could be established as a precedent for intervention in separatist movements in Xinjiang, Tibet and Taiwan (Choedon 2005, 54; Jing Chen 2009, 158; Z. Pang 2005, 88; Snetkov and Lanteigne 2015, 128; Hirono and Lanteigne 2011, 248; T. Liu and Zhang 2014, 406; Xiao 2003, 28). This concern is reflected in the link that some scholars (Y. Fan 2000, 41) made between the Kosovo conflict and the independence claims of Lee Teng-hui, a former political leader in Taiwan. Officials’ and intellectuals’ anxiety about the framing of ethnic conflict might have been intensified when the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan framed the CCP’s response to terrorism in Xinjiang as “genocide” (*Reuters* 2009), which could be used to justify humanitarian intervention in China.

Second, Chinese political elites and intellectuals believe that Western media are aligned with “Western hostile forces” in toppling socialist regimes. Zhang Husheng (1999, 19) alleged in 1999 that “Western mainstream media are close allies of Western monopoly capitalist class in launching invasion, intervention, subversion and peaceful evolution”. As discussed earlier, they believe that Western media have played an important role in inciting ethnic conflict by targeting the Uyghurs and framing China’s governance as colonisation. Chinese political elites and intellectuals are concerned about the impact of the media like Radio Free Asia, because Radio Free Europe influenced the Revolutions of 1989 (J. Qian 2008; Y. Hu 1994; Y. Wu 2013). Huang and Gu (1991) articulated the ability of the Free Radio to manipulate public opinions and its impact on subverting socialist regimes. Liu and his colleagues (1991) and the Journalism Research Centre of Xinhua News Agency (1993) elaborated the causal relationship between the Revolutions of 1989 and the American strategy of peaceful evolution. Similarly, Liu Ming (2006) and Bi Bo (1991) discussed the catalysing effect of the mass media on the collapse of the Soviet Union. In short, Chinese political elites and intellectuals are highly vigilant about the media such as Radio Free Asia due to its ties with the alleged Western hegemonic strategy of causing disturbances in socialist countries by supporting their separatist movements (E. Han 2013, 8).

These assumptions have led Chinese political elites and intellectuals to believe that the West has been, and will continue working on inducing regime change by encouraging a “colour revolution” in China (Y. Gu 2009, 304; X. Mao and Hu 2010). Gu Yiqun argues that following the democratisation in the Middle East, the US will turn to promote a “colour revolution” in China (Y. Gu 2009, 304). Ma Xinjuan (2006, 107) argues that colour revolution has had an exemplary effect for the radicalisation of nationalism in Xinjiang (X. Mao 2006, 107).

The possibility of intervention has always been a source of anxiety for Chinese officials and intellectuals. Zhang Ruizhuang (2016), a scholar at Nankai University, views the US military strikes in the name of human rights in Libya and Syria as the main cause of the ensuing violence after the colour revolution. Chinese political elites and scholars believe that human rights accusations serve a hegemonic agenda, as they are aligned with political issues such as most-favoured-nation-treatment, accession into the WTO, economic aid, technical cooperation, family planning, religion, national self-determination, arms control, judicial system and China’s bid for the Olympic Games (Y. Yao 1996, 33). In addition to the case of Kosovo, the Western involvements in Chechnya (Y. Fan 2000, 41) is also seen as a precedent in regard to using human rights as a pretext for intervention.

Human rights issues are at the forefront of the Uyghurs' claim for independence. To Chinese political elites and scholars, the affinity between some Uyghur organisations and the US indicates an alignment based on the same interests in undermining the unity of China. Some Uyghur organisations have been receiving financial support from the US government in the name of human rights. The National Endowment for Democracy provided the Uyghur Human Rights Project and World Uyghur Congress with a total of \$ 610,000 to support the human rights activities (National Endowment for Democracy 2016). The indirect support Uyghur and Tibetan organisations outside China reminds Chinese scholars of the peaceful evolution of Poland and Hungary (G. Tian 2008, 32), which once again convinced China of the Western intention to induce a peaceful evolution in China after the Revolutions of 1989.

The anxiety about human rights activities has partly contributed to the tightened grip over non-governmental organisations in China. In 2012, the China Charity Information Center, affiliated to the Ministry of Civil Affairs, published a report on the activities of NGOs based in the US. The report questions the intention of the National Endowment for Democracy because many of the receivers are "organisations opposing the Chinese government and attempting to separate Xinjiang and Tibet" (Jianmei Peng and Liu 2012, 22). According to the report (Jianmei Peng and Liu 2012, 64), the financial support from the National Endowment for Democracy has "sabotaged the national security, unity, peace and solidarity" by providing financial support to civil movements (民运, *minyun*), Tibet separatism and the "East Turkistan forces". When asked about the news about the National Endowment for Democracy providing \$ 96,520,000 financial support to 103 anti-China organisations, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying replied that this proved the need for the Law on the Management of the Activities of Overseas NGOs within Mainland China (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2016).⁵⁵ The law (National People's Congress 2016) denounces the activities of non-governmental organisations that "undermine national reunification or subverting State power".

The strict control over non-governmental organisations has limited the ability of human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International to obtain information legally in China, particularly because many of these groups are already considered "hostile", as discussed earlier. This makes it more difficult for third parties to function as mediators, as they can only seek information from those who are already unsatisfied with the Chinese government. This has further reinforced the

⁵⁵ Law on the Management of the Activities of Overseas NGOs within Mainland China: 境外非政府组织境内活动管理法

perception of Chinese political elites and intellectuals that human rights groups have a political agenda because they only speak for dissidents one-sidedly.

The CCP's framing of the Uyghur issue is confronted with other framings, which are compounded by the internet. The CCP's security discourse has to compete with the discourse provided by the Uyghur exile community for the alignment of the individuals. According to Gladney's (2003, 15) research in 2003, there are over 25 international organisations under the banner of the independence of "East Turkistan", whose target readers and contributors are mainly from Turkey, the US, Canada, and Australia. Throughout the years some have merged into one under the umbrella organisation – the World Uyghur Congress, which is based in Germany (World Uyghur Congress 2010). Some organisations, such as the Uyghur American Association and the Uyghur Human Rights Project, are supported by the US, either through the exemption of tax (The Uyghur American Association n.d.) or grant from the National Endowment for Democracy (Uyghur Human Rights Project n.d.). Most of these organisations use "East Turkistan" instead of "Xinjiang" to imply the legitimacy of the independent claims of some Uyghurs. Chinese scholars such as Gu Liyan (2013, 3) believe that the "internet infiltration" of these organisations has sustained separatist movements and escalated ethnic tensions.

The control over the internet placed the CCP in an advantaged position in the competition of framings in China. The state is, as liberal/democratic regimes are, under pressure to convince the individuals of the legitimacy of the heavy-handed counter-terrorism measures. But unlike them, the CCP has limited the presence of alternative framings in China by promoting the "correct" outlook on history and *minzu*. In doing so the state has reinforced the line between friends and enemies and suppressed what could potentially be peaceful demonstrations over genuine grievances, precluding the possibility of understanding and dealing with Uyghurs' concerns.

4.6 The "East Turkistan forces"

As discussed in earlier, anxious about the separation of Xinjiang from China, political elites and intellectuals label those who have separatist aspirations as "East Turkistan forces" – a group of anti-China forces that conspired with other external hostile forces to divide China. As Chinese political elites and intellectuals do not want to endorse the idea of "East Turkistan" as a political concept, when referring to the political struggle for "East Turkistan" as a state, they always put the phrase in quotation marks to

indicate its illegitimacy.⁵⁶ In this section, “East Turkistan forces” are put in quotation marks together to indicate its function as a label. This section provides a background of “East Turkistan forces” and how the Chinese government perceive them.

In history, the area known today as Xinjiang has shifted between a protectorate of China and an independent state. After 1759, the Qing Dynasty strengthened its control over Xinjiang by sending troops and encouraging migration (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China 2009). The shared sense of Turkic and Muslim identity and NATO’s intervention in Kosovo encouraged the Uyghurs to envision their own independence (Bovingdon 2010, 3). Two short-lived “East Turkistan Republics” were founded in 1933 and 1944 respectively (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China 2009). The tensions between the CCP and the Uyghurs became increasingly irreconcilable as the assimilationist policies created a situation where the Uyghurs had little freedom to express their identity. The Baren Township Riot in 1990 and the Yining incident (also known as the Ghulja incident) in 1997 are two cases of the confrontation between the Uyghur separatism and the Chinese policy of assimilation (Bhattacharya 2003, 363).

The CCP believes that the East Turkistan forces have never stopped their conspiracy against China. According to the CCP, the “East Turkistan forces” fled China after they were cracked down on and continued to be involved in violent uprisings in China (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China 2009). The CCP claims that after the 9/11 attacks, the “East Turkistan forces” sought to get away with the punishment by framing their cause around the narratives of “human rights”, “religious freedom” and “ethnic interests” in order to rally international support (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China 2009).

Uyghur separatist movements have gained various support from the international community and the ways in which they frame political incidents in Xinjiang are sympathised with outside China. Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan showed great sympathy towards Uyghur separatism because of the Turkic ties – “Eastern Turkestan is not only the home of the Turkic peoples but also the cradle of Turkic history, civilisation and culture... The martyrs of Eastern Turkestan are our martyrs” (Eastern Turkestan Union in Europe 1995). Uyghur organisations, such as the Uyghur Association of America, Uyghur Human Rights Project and World Uyghur Congress, promote the use of “East Turkistan” instead of “Xinjiang” (The Uyghur American Association n.d.; World Uyghur Congress 2017; Uyghur Human Rights Project n.d.).

⁵⁶ Chinese political elites and intellectuals believe that “East Turkistan” should be used only as a geographical term.

This support from abroad has added to the anxiety of the CCP that framing the Xinjiang issue in the context of human rights would will continue to undermine its legitimacy.

Uyghur militants not only target China but also work in broader international terrorist networks. In China, most of the attacks have taken place in Xinjiang, but recent years have seen an increase in the fatalities in inland cities such as Beijing (2013) and Kunming City in Yunnan Province (2014).

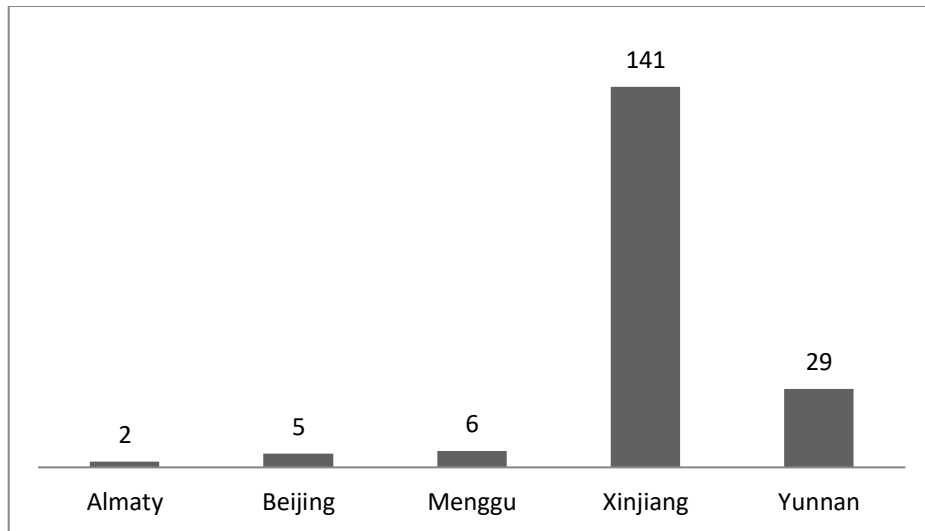


Figure 11 Fatalities in terrorist attacks by location from 1990 to 2016 (author's data compiled from English and Chinese media reports)

Nodirbek Soliev (2017) produced a detailed report on the link between Uyghur militant and international extremist networks. He observes that Uyghur militants are mainly fighting in Syria and Afghanistan. The Syrian division of the Turkistan Islamic Party is reportedly fighting with protection and support from al-Nusra Front, while he division in Afghanistan is much weaker and struggling to survive (Soliev 2017). The US forces' attacks against the ETIM in Afghanistan in 2018 further weakened the Taliban training camps that supported operations by the ETIM (*Reuters* 2018a). In addition to Syria and Afghanistan, Uyghur militants are also reported to operate in Pakistan (Ramachandran 2018), Indonesia (RFA 2016), the Philippines (Banlaoi 2016), and Thailand (Fuller and Wong 2018).

The CCP attributed at least 200 terrorist attacks from 1990 to 2001 to the "East Turkistan forces" (State Council Information Office 2002a). The framing of these incidents has always been consistent with the assumptions of how external enemies have conspired to divide China, driven by ulterior motives. Building on the assumptions discussed in Chapter 4, a number of specific assumptions about the "East Turkistan forces" can be summarised as follows from official documents on terrorism in Xinjiang.

1. The “East Turkistan forces” have a history of colluding with other “foreign forces” or “anti-China forces”.
2. They are connected with international terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda. In particular, the East Turkistan Islamic Movement cooperated with Bin Laden to establish a caliphate in Xinjiang.
3. They advocate the use of force in achieving their goal.
4. They have contempt for development and the improvement of living standards in Xinjiang.
5. Terrorist attacks are usually organised and premeditated outside China; they send terrorists who have received training outside China to carry out terror attacks in China.

However, as Chinese officials and academics do not usually differentiate between “East Turkistan forces” and individual terrorist groups, there has always been some confusion, especially considering that the media outside China usually refer to them separately. The state describes the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) as an organisation that aims at separating Xinjiang from China and setting up an “East Turkistan” by means of violence (United Nations Security Council Subsidiary Organs 2014). The ETIM has been listed as a terrorist organisation by the UN (United Nations Security Council Subsidiary Organs 2014), the EU (eur-lex.europa.eu 2002), the US (Office of the coordinator for counterterrorism 2004), the UK (Home Office 2017, 17), Pakistan (Dawn.Com 2013), Kyrgyzstan (Ansari n.d.) and Turkey (CNTV 2017). Yili Xiati (also known as Dilshat Rishit), the spokesperson of the WUC, indicated on the Boxun website that the organisation ETIM has been “fabricated” by the Chinese government (Yili 2010).⁵⁷

The accusations of the World Uyghur Congress partly explained why the CCP put it in the same category as the ETIM. On the Epoch Times, an anti-CCP media outlet, Yili Xiati went further, saying that “as long as the terrorist CCP is not eliminated, East Turkistan will never live in peace...Because the CCP which controls the Chinese regime is a terrorist organisation, they know how to produce terrorist organisations and terrorists!” (Yili 2010). This statement threatens to eliminate the CCP, and completely denounces it by calling it a “terrorist organisation”. This is something that would be considered “inciting ethnic hatred” and “subversive”, which the CCP seeks to ban.

Contrary to the CCP’s designation, data from the Global Terrorism Database based on reports from various open media sources indicate that in China, from 1989 to 2016,

⁵⁷ Boxun website was partly funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (Associated Press in Beijing 2012).

more than half (57%) of the time, the identity of the perpetrator was unclear. 41% of the incidents were (suspected to be) carried out by Uyghurs and Muslims.

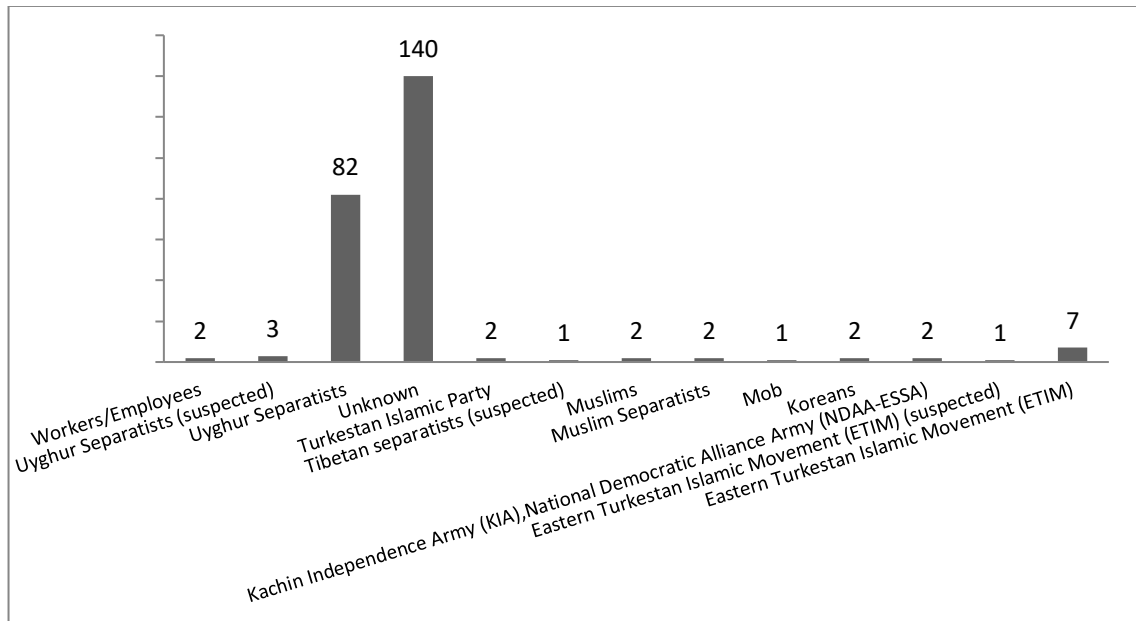


Figure 12 Identity of the perpetrators of terrorist attacks from 1989 to 2016 in China.
Source: Global Terrorism Database

In addition to the terrorist attacks that have already taken place, a large number of individuals and entrepreneurs have been arrested or detained for a lack of proper preparedness plan for terror attacks. Furthermore, the criminalisation of non-violent separatist activities has also been criticised by human rights analysts (Becquelin 2004a, 43). Some scholars also question the grouping of non-violent separatist activities as terrorism. Elizabeth Van Wie Davis (2008a) has stated that: “[t]here is no single Uyghur agenda”. Nicolas Becquelin (2004a, 39) questions the labelling of “non-violent resistance” as terrorism.

Although the CCP claims to have “conclusive evidence” of the criminal acts (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2001), it is not always in a position to disclose the details of the evidence in order to protect the source of intelligence. This has added to the existing speculation that the CCP uses its counter-terrorism strategy to suppress dissent. In response to the doubts of the international community about the nature of the terrorism in China, the CCP has highlighted the link between “non-violent resistance” and the terrorist attacks in China. The CCP has made provides based its claims regarding the terrorist nature of Uyghur dissident groups for two reasons.

First, according to the CCP, the networks of the two are closely connected (Xinhua 2003a). As the World Uyghur Congress (2010) claims, it was formed based on the merging of two organisations, the East Turkistan National Congress and the World Uyghur Youth Congress (Xinhua 2003a). The East Turkistan Information Center has

been accused by the CCP of planning the attacks on the railway from Lanzhou to Hami in 2003, in addition to planning the attacks against oil and gas pipelines and the railway (Xinhua 2003a). The founder of the Center, Abdujélil Qaraqash, took the roll of Vice-President of the World Uyghur Youth Congress (Xinhua 2003a). The CCP ascribes the two bombings in Kashgar and Shache in 1993 to the East Turkistan Youth League, affiliated to the World Uyghur Youth Congress.

Second, those who were convicted for terrorism-related crimes took important positions in these Uyghur organisations after they fled China. Dolkun Isa, a co-founder and current president of the World Uyghur Congress, is among the first 10 terrorists designated by the Ministry of Public Security (Xinhua 2003a). Abudujelili Kalakash was convicted of providing terrorist training, including the use of toxic chemical weapons and bombing techniques, in preparing and planning a terrorist attack in China (Xinhua 2003b). He is also believed to be the founder and first president of the East Turkistan Information Center and a key member of the World Uyghur Youths Congress (Acharya, Gunaratna, and Wang 2010, 87).

In addition to these two reasons, the close ties between the “East Turkistan forces” and other anti-China forces has exacerbated the anxiety of political elites. In 2009, the Dalai Lama formed the Chinese Alliance for Democracy – an “anti-China, anti-CCP community” in the eyes of the CCP. The group include the Overseas Chinese Democracy Coalition and the Uyghur, Mongolian, and Taiwan separatist organisations (*People’s Daily Online* 2010).⁵⁸ According to Zhao Guojun, the World Uyghur Congress deliberately linked their claims with human rights issues, catering for a Western audience by adopting their values to rally support from politicians and anti-China forces (Hao Li 2009). In response to the efforts of the Uyghur dissidents in rallying support from human rights activists, a Xinhua commentary (2009c) argues that any form of support for the World Uyghur Congress is “extreme short-sighted and irresponsible”.

Framing external enemies as a threat, the CCP has deflected people’s attention away from domestic causes of terrorism. The framing of the “East Turkistan forces” demonstrates the CCP’s rationale for grouping different criticisers as its enemies. China’s official discourse of “East Turkistan forces” shows that the political elites perceive terrorism differently, compared with officials in liberal/democratic countries. They believe that separatist movements, together with other so-called democracy movements, pose a severe threat to the regime’s security; and these movements are often supported covertly by external enemies who share the same agenda to

⁵⁸ Overseas Chinese Democracy Coalition: 中国海外民运联席会议

undermine or even subvert the CCP. Considering other cases of democratisation, the CCP has very little tolerance for any forms of separatist ideology.

4.6.1 Foreign fighters from Xinjiang to Syria

The different ways in which the issue of foreign fighters is framed in Chinese and Western media demonstrate the different assumptions that underpin these frames. Some critics describe the journey to flee China as the result of a “political awakening” and the backfiring of the CCP’s repression against religious freedom (Page and Peker 2015; Sulaiman 2015). In the eyes of the CCP, the fact that the terrorist networks were able to assist the Uyghur who fled China is evidence to support its claim that domestic terror attacks are remotely controlled by “external hostile forces”. The following analysis will demonstrate the framing of the issue of foreign fighters in the Chinese political discourse.

As discussed in Section 3.2, the official media dictate the discourse of counter-terrorism and ensure that alternative “wrong” accounts of terrorist incidents cannot spread via the Chinese media. The discussion over the issue of foreign fighters relies heavily on the investigation conducted by a war correspondent Qiu Yongzheng, the chief correspondent of the *Global Times*. Based on his investigation, Qiu has identified the routes of foreign fighters from Xinjiang into Syria. According to Qiu and his colleagues (2014), those who wanted to join the self-proclaimed ISIS saved money for the journey by doing business themselves, and through donations. Most of them chose to sneak out of Yunnan, Guangdong or Guangxi, three border provinces in the south. Qiu and Xing quote intelligence from Indonesia, showing that the 4 suspects first sneaked out into Cambodia, and then into Thailand, where they each spent 1,000 USD to purchase fake Turkish passports. They flew to Kuala Lumpur, and then to West Java, before transferring to the Makassar port of South Sulawesi (Qiu and Xing 2014).

They were taken care of all the way to Turkey, which shows that the IS has already established their networks in Indonesia... they were offered free accommodation in Palou, and were assigned the next task. At the Makassar airport, a 29-year-old local teacher brought the 4 suspects to the terrorist camp led by Santoso [also known as Abu Wardah, author’s note], the highest leader of Mujahidin Indonesia Timur, who publicly pledged allegiance to the IS in July [in 2016, author’s note] (Qiu and Xing 2014).

After entering Turkey, they flew to airports near Hatay, Gaziantep and Antalya and were picked up by an “intermediary” (Qiu and Xing 2014). The counter-terrorism operations in Turkey forced them to alter their routes towards Syria (Qiu and Xing 2014).

As discussed in previous chapters, some organisations abroad, especially a number of East Turkistan groups based in Turkey, are on China’s watch list. The CCP is vigilant

about the support for “East Turkistan forces” received from the Turks, as they share a similar Turkic language and culture. Xu Jianying (2014), a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, believes that the shelter and even support that the Turks have provided make Turkey the “base camp” of the “East Turkistan forces”. Indeed, the East Turkistan Education and Solidarity Association (ETESA) has publicly praised militant attacks and the assassination of a pro-Communist imam in Kashgar (Jacob 2014; Qiu 2014c). Political elites and intellectuals also question the role that the Turkish government has played in the growth of “East Turkistan forces”. Qiu and his colleague accuse the Turkish government of deliberately loosening up the border control to allow pro-opponent journalists and militant opponents to enter via the Syrian border, as evidenced by an interview with a local in Syria: “it is not hard at all to cross the border” (Qiu and Xing 2014; Qiu 2014c). The official report on the visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan repeatedly emphasises that Erdoğan does respect China’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and that Xinjiang is an integral part of China (*Tianshanwang* 2012). The CCP wanted to have the support of the Turkish government, especially considering Erdoğan’s framing of the 2009 Urumqi Riot as “genocide”. However, the resemblance of Erdoğan’s alleged remarks to the Chinese official position suggests that this statement might have been no more than a self-deceiving propaganda, particularly in the light of the reports on Turkish support for Uyghur refugees (Pamuk 2015; Xinhua 2015d).

Official media link the far-right groups, politicians and Western anti-China forces in Turkey with the East Turkistan separatists, aiming at containing China’s rise by undermining the Belt and Road Initiative and creating disturbances in Xinjiang (Heiniyati 2015; *Global Times* 2013b). The following quote fleshes out China’s response to the Turkish support for Uyghur separatists.

The so-called “support for Xinjiang Muslim” farce in Turkey... shows the attempts by some Turkish far-right politicians with ulterior motives to relive the dream of the “dual-pan” [pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism, 双泛, *shuangfan*, author’s note] which had been cast aside... For many years, these “East Turkistan” separatists have taken advantage of the far-right organisations in Turkey to carry out activities to split China (Heiniyati 2015).

In relation to the number of foreign fighters, there is no agreement on the number of Uyghurs who have joined the IS. The estimation of the scale of foreign fighters differs according to the source and the political agenda of the source. China’s official estimation of the number of foreign fighters from Xinjiang is based on Qiu Yongzheng’s investigation. His interview with senior officers from Iraq, Syria and Lebanon reveals that there are around 300 combatants in the “ETIM battalion”, in addition to their families (Qiu 2014b). This estimation has been questioned by Uyghur

dissidents and some scholars. Alim Seytoff, the President of Uyghur American Association, has stated that this is a “baseless propaganda”, designed to “justify China’s cruel suppression of Uyghurs” (Si 2015a). Dru Gladney says that the intent is “to make the Uighurs look as if they’re a threat, an Islamist terrorist organization” (Drennan 2015). Nicholas Bequelin, who works with Human Rights Watch, comments that the number is “implausibly high” (Drennan 2015). Sean Roberts said “I assume there are Uighurs joining IS, but I also assume the numbers are quite small in comparison to other groups throughout the world. We’re probably talking about 20 to 30 people max.” (Drennan 2015)

Other sources outside China show that the number is likely to be much higher than Sean Roberts’ estimation. A *Reuters* report (Blanchard 2017) quote Syria’s ambassador to China Imad Moustapha, who stated that there were up to 5,000 Uyghurs fighting in Syria. A report by the Israeli Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center (2014, 49) estimates that there are around 100 Uyghurs fighting alongside the rebels in Syria. Nata Rosenblatt’s (2016, 23) research on foreign fighters found that from mid-2013 to mid-2014, there were 118 combatants from China, 114 of which were from Xinjiang, who joined IS, almost entirely via the Turkish-Syrian border. Clint Watts used four data sets from 2014 to 2015, and estimated that between 0.6 to 4.3 percent of the foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria were Chinese nationals (Watts 2016). The estimation of 114 fighters based on Nate Rosenblatt’s analysis makes Xinjiang “the fifth highest source of foreign fighters in the Muslim world” on a provincial basis (Rosenblatt 2016, 26).

The difficulty in reaching an accurate estimation of the number of foreign fighters from Xinjiang highlights the political element in the discourse of the Xinjiang issue, not only regarding the Chinese government, but also its critics. The number helps the speaker to justify counter-measures (the Chinese government), and accusations (Uyghur dissidents). The latter is evident from the fact that regardless of the actual number, Uyghur dissidents have linked the number to the same conclusion about the suppression of the Chinese government. On the one hand, Dilixiati Rexiti, spokesperson of the World Uyghur Congress, has criticised the CCP for exaggerating the number to justify the suppression of Uyghurs (*The News Lens* 2017). On the other hand, The Uyghur Human Rights Project posted an article citing Imad Moustapha’s estimation of around 5,000 foreign fighters to argue that such a large number of Uyghurs were trying to escape to Turkey from the CCP’s suppression (Uyghur Human Rights Project 2017). Given that none of the other observers gives an estimation that is over 500, Moustapha’s estimation still needs to be verified. Considering that his statement highlights the shared interests between China and Syria and that China “should be extremely concerned”, it is likely that the number of Uyghurs in Syria has

been exaggerated in order to drag China into the conflict to counteract the influence of the West (Blanchard 2017).

China's counter-terrorism propaganda on the issue of foreign fighters can better be understood by considering it as an example of de-glamorisation. Gordon Clubb (2016, 851) discussed de-glamorisation as a tactic of de-radicalisation. The concept of glamorisation refers to the ways in which violence is "glorified" and the perpetrators are constructed as heroes in the terrorist narrative (Clubb 2016, 851). In the context of terrorism in China, extremists use a distorted and glorified interpretation of the *hijrat* to incite "religious revenge" (Zang 2016b, 77). They used the Uyghur word *hijrat*, which originated from the Arabic "*hegira*" or "*hijrah*", to refer to the migration from China to a place where they joined the jihad. In attempting to de-glamorise terrorism, the state media provide competing narratives to counteract extremist propaganda. To this end, the state media retold the story of how innocent people were deceived by terrorists and bankrupted because of the journey, showing the disillusion of those who chose to join the *hijrat*. The counter-narrative serves to de-glamorise the story of heroic acts of *hijrat*. Framing those who joined *hijrat* as innocent people who only committed the crime because they were deceived also helps the CCP to highlight the importance of the correct guidance from the CCP. The following section provides a summary of the counter-narrative provided by the state media and intellectuals. Such a narrative also allows the state media to manipulate the concept of the enemy, and justifies that the capturing of these individuals does not end the war on terror, and thus further counter-terrorism measures are needed to deal with the *real* enemies.

4.6.2 Counter-narratives on *hijrat*

According to the state media, beginning in 1996, ethno-separatists and religious extremists fled China, and colluded with international terrorist organisations in fabricating stories of religious persecution (*Xinjiang Daily* 2015a). They encouraged believers to carry out *hijrat* and instigate jihad (*Xinjiang Daily* 2015a).

Since 2012, there have been reports on Uyghurs in Xinjiang travelling to Syria to join the self-proclaimed Islamic State (Qiu 2013). The counter-narrative on *hijrat* emphasises that a large number of individuals were deceived and forced into the *hijrat*. The CCP is portrayed not as a suppressing regime but as a helping hand that offered help for rehabilitation. By emphasising the "evilness" of the *real* enemies, the official discourse has downplayed the differences between those who pursue *hijrat* blindly and ordinary citizens.

The explanation provided by Yang Shu (*Xinjiang Daily* 2015a), senior consultant to Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, is an example of how the framing points to the

conclusion about the *real* enemies. He has made the following three points which explains the logic of the framing.

1. Many convicted terrorists have not read the Quran and do not have much knowledge of religion – they are not the *real* enemies.
2. They committed crimes simply because of the influence of religious extremism – the crimes were masterminded by the *real* enemies.
3. Most of the convicted terrorists are less educated, and they lack knowledge about law and Islam – those who were captured are simply the puppets of the *real* enemies.

The story of a farmer called Alim on *The Last mile* demonstrates this rationale in more detail (MqMsMx 2015a).⁵⁹ According to the report, Alim was struggling to make ends meet when he met Aijiamali who told him about how heavenly it was outside China. With little knowledge about geography and law, Alim thought that Turkey bordered China, and it would be very easy to get back if things went wrong. He was determined to bring all of his family to Turkey. However, during the journey, they were not provided with enough food. Before long, they had spent all of their money. But the traffickers kept asking for more money from them. He, together with his family, was arrested in Afghanistan and deported back to China after serving sentence of 17 months. Considering that he was deceived and had already served the sentence, he was exempted from penalty that he would have received otherwise in China. But without a place to live and no land to farm, Alim and his family were desperate. Village cadres helped him to apply for government-subsidised housing and redeem the land he had sold for the journey. He was able to start a new business because a policeman offered to be his guarantor. In this story, Alim is portrayed as a nice but naïve farmer who simply wanted to go to Turkey to make more money. He is not considered one of the enemies, and even received help from the government and the police. The story highlights his disillusion of the “heavenly” place outside China and that some of those who joined the *hijrat* did so because their lack of basic knowledge made them easy targets for human trafficking.

Another story of Tursun (MqMsMx 2015b) shows how educated young Uyghurs could also be deceived and coerced into joining the *hijrat*. Tursun is a candidate for College Entrance Examination in Xinjiang. He was among the six students in his school who were admitted into the Xinjiang Class in inland China. Before the College Entrance Examination, he got acquainted with a person called Mexmut who told him: “I have no

⁵⁹ *The Last Mile* (最后一公里, *zuihou yi gongli*) is the WeChat Official Account for Xinjiang Internet information office (新疆互联网信息办公室).

objection against you pursuing knowledge. But you can't go to 'pagan' university which will drive you further and further from religion. Let me get you a passport for you to go to a college in Egypt". Soon afterwards, Tursun came to the realisation that Mexmut had deceived him into joining the jihad in Afghanistan, Iraq or Syria. When he wanted to withdraw, Mexmut threatened to kill him. Faced with this threat, he told his own parents that he had been admitted into a university in inland China, and asked for 30,000 RMB from them to pay Mexmut for his journey. He was forced to assist the terrorist network to facilitate human smuggling. Stories of those who died from escaping scared him. When he was arrested in February 2015, he was overwhelmed with remorse. This story again highlights that it is not those who joined the *hijrat*, but those who deceived them into it, that are the *real* enemies. They are, in fact, victims of terrorists who hate the secular CCP regime.

A third story on *People's Daily* (Qiu 2013) reveals the role of East Turkistan groups in facilitating human trafficking. In 2011, Memet Eli left Xinjiang to pursue further education in Turkey, where he was offered "help" by the East Turkistan Education and Solidarity Association (ETESA). After a background check and a series of brainwashing sessions, he was selected as an official member of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) to fight in Syria. Brainwashed by ETESA and ETIM, he considered it an "honour" to be able to fight in Syria.

Memet travelled from Istanbul to Hatay Province in Turkey, and entered the Syrian border from Reyhanli to Aleppo, where he received a seven days' intensive training under the Al-Nusra Front, a coalition of Uzbekistani, Caucasian and Russian foreign fighters that has existed since May 2014, and pledged allegiance to IS in July 2014 (Qiu and Xing 2014). Memet's experience in Syria disillusioned him.

According to Memet, their lives was under constant threat due to the lack of food, medical care and attacks by the Syrian government. In addition to the plight from which they suffered physically, the disillusion of the jihad was a heavy blow to their faith.

What is worse than the harsh living conditions was the indifference and despise we suffered from the Syrian people. We used to believe that our arrival into Syria for the cause of "Jihad" would be welcomed by the locals. However, many people in Northern Syria said to us: "you are welcome to subvert Bashar, but you are not welcome to stay here after the war! We don't want to change our lifestyle inherited from hundreds and thousands of years ago" (Qiu and Xing 2014).

Because the terrorist networks in Syria hardly care about the survival of the Uyghur militants, they have suffered heavy casualties. Memet had to return to Istanbul after 2 months of fighting in Syria, with the hope of continuing his education in Turkey.

However, the ETIM and ETESA assigned him the new task of continuing the “jihad” in Xinjiang. “They made it clear that I should return to Xinjiang to create disturbances, and improve our ‘fighting skill’”.

The state media portrays the Uyghur militants in Syria as “cannon fodder” whose lives are not valued at all by local terrorist networks. When they die, they are “buried as if they are trash” (*Guanchazhe* 2014). Quoting a senior member of personnel in Iraq’s intelligence system, Qiu Yongzheng (2014d), said that the Uyghur militant members were treated as “second class citizens”. He also argued based on intelligence that “newcomers” such as the ETIM struggled to gain the trust of the seniors (Qiu 2014d). They were dragged into war reluctantly (Qiu 2014a). At least one Uyghur militant member was captured and decapitated upon escaping (Qiu 2014a).

The three stories above share a number of assumptions. First, unlike the Uyghur dissidents’ claims that the Uyghurs fled China as a result of suppression (*The Guardian* 2015), the Chinese state media focus on the personal purpose, rather than the political purposes of those who joined the *hijrat* – economic benefit and education, rather than freedom from suppression. Second, they were disillusioned with their (voluntary or non-voluntary) experience in the terrorist networks. Third, the real enemies masterminded these crimes outside China, and the capture of those who were the de facto victim cannot eliminate the possibility of future terrorist attacks. The ramification of this assumption is that the CCP needs to continue fighting against terrorism.

Given the dominance of the official counter-terrorism discourse and the government’s insistence on the “correct” narratives, Chinese citizens have little access to alternative accounts of the stories of those who fled China. Through the counter-narrative on the *hijrat* the state sought to establish credibility by incorporating stories of individuals and Uyghurs’ voices in the official counter-terrorism discourse. Third, hardly any alternative accounts of these stories have been found in Chinese mainstream media, which reflects the CCP’s efforts to “occupy the ideological high ground” (Wan 2014) and keep the party line as the only legitimate source of counter-narrative. The framing of these stories reinforces a dichotomy between the “terrorist” narrative and the counter-narrative. The dichotomy becomes problematic when the separatist narrative that does not instigate violence is also categorised as a “terrorist” narrative. The following section will focus on the mass mobilisation especially against the separatist propaganda that is not explicitly advocating violence.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter problematised the concepts of unity and the enemy in China's political discourse, policy and practice. These two concepts are at the core of China's political history. In imperial China, political philosophers developed different theories about the causes of political unrest and the role of unity. As times has gone by, the mainstream political elites and scholars have gradually pushed the concept of unity to the core of China's politics. The ideal of the "Grand Union", albeit controversial due to its associations with tyranny and dictatorship, has been important in social mobilisation both during the Republic China and contemporary China in creating an imagined community with which to differentiate Chinese people, including all its different ethnic groups, from the external enemies. The discussion over friend and enemy became more contentious in the late 1930s when scholars began to question the translation of *minzu*.

The discussion over *minzu* is important to understand how Chinese political elites and scholars perceive unity and separatism in the context of Xinjiang's separatist movements. *Minzu* can be translated into either "nation" or "ethnicity", which gives rise to a series of question relating to the legitimacy of the Uyghurs' claim to national self-determination. Modelled on the Soviet experience, China's followed the Soviet Union in naming its *minzu* nations; at the same time, Chinese political elites and scholars refuse to see *minzu* as a distinctive nation based on which a group can form a state. This ambiguity has rendered all of the separatist aspirations illegal, as it is clearly unacceptable for Chinese political elites and scholars to challenge the CCP's claim of sovereignty over Xinjiang. Those who dared to do so are considered "separatists", who colluded with "external enemies" driven by "ulterior motives". To counter-act this, Chinese scholars have developed the paradigm of "diversity within unity", through which to approach ethnic relations in China. Adopting this paradigm, the CCP has constructed unity as the prerequisite for the diversity of ethnic groups – ethnic groups can only enjoy diversity if they submit themselves to the CCP's authority and recognise that the unity of China must not be undermined.

The ways in which the CCP defines its enemies in the context of its counter-terrorism strategy are contingent upon its understanding of China's national unity. As the CCP is hostile towards all attempts to facilitate the independence of Xinjiang (what Uyghur dissidents call East Turkistan), anyone who sympathises with this goal is deemed suspicious. The concept of the enemy has differed throughout in China's political history in order to justify different political agendas, but overall, there has been a fundamental distinction between China and the West. The discussion surrounding the enemy has always been revolved around the concern that the West, led by the US, will continue its Marshall Plan in other forms to contain communism. The anxiety about peaceful evolution has played a central role in Chinese political elites' and scholars'

attitudes towards ideas and views that pose a challenge the CCP's legitimacy. As the history of humanitarian intervention demonstrates, interference in the state's sovereignty has always been intertwined with human rights. Learning lessons from the intervention in other parts of the world, the CCP is particularly strict in controlling the discourse regarding how Uyghurs are treated.

In order to control the discourse, the CCP has relied on history as the source of its legitimacy with regard to the claim of sovereignty over Xinjiang. History has been politicised and used by the CCP as the criteria to test one's loyalty. Establishing an official version of the history of Xinjiang, the CCP has monopolised the counter-terrorism discourse and alienated all those who question the "correct" outlook on history.

Against this backdrop, the ways in which the CCP frames and defines terrorism is a source of contention between Chinese elites and observers outside China. The labelling of the "East Turkistan forces" demonstrates how Chinese political elites and scholars deploy the concept of the enemy in China's counter-terrorism discourse. The CCP has loosely grouped all individuals and groups that challenge its rule in order to facilitate the independence of "East Turkistan" under the umbrella of "East Turkistan forces", blurring the line between the Uyghurs who have genuine grievances and the "East Turkistan Islamic Movement", which has been designated a terrorist organisation by the UN and many countries.

While the issue of foreign fighters was politicised by the CCP, the dissidents equally demonstrated their bias against the CCP. The self-contradictory citation of different numbers of foreign fighters indicates that they are concerned primarily with putting the blame on the CCP, rather than discussing the real situation of the Uyghurs with verified sources. This shows that the hostility of the Uyghur dissidents is not entirely imagined by the CCP, although it is undoubtedly an exaggeration to link Uyghur dissidents with violent terrorist attacks without clear evidence and a transparent designating process.

Mao's two types of contradictions provide a guideline for the CCP to treat friends and enemies. Nevertheless, when it comes down to practice, the CCP is aware of the danger of creating a self-fulfilling prophecy by labelling too large a population as its enemy. The manipulation of the concept of the enemy is evident in the case of counter-narratives on the *hijrat*. In order to isolate "real" separatists from the majority of the Uyghur population, the state media has portrayed those who joined the *hijrat* as being deceived or coerced. In doing so, the state media has been able to still categorise them as "one of us", who were just in need of proper guidance. As they were not the enemies, the CCP's treatment was merciful and benevolent, as it helped

them reintegrate into society. This rationale also helped the CCP to justify its policy of transformation through education, through which it imposed indoctrination upon the Uyghurs in the name of proper guidance and education.

Chapter 5 China's overall counter-terrorism approach

This chapter will demonstrate how different aspects of China's counter-terrorism policy are embedded in its quest for legitimacy. The discussion over China's counter-terrorism strategy in this chapter will demonstrate the links between the framing of the counter-terrorism policy and the prioritisation of national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. On the one hand, the ways in which China's counter-terrorism approach is carried out demonstrate some authoritarian characteristics of the governance of China. It is highly state-centric and condescending, which can be seen from the discussion of the overall security principle, the counter-terrorism discourse, the counter-terrorism legal framework, the actors involved, the development policy and the religious policy. On the other hand, there is some evidence of political elites' and intellectuals' awareness of the deficiencies of the state-centric approach and attempts to share power and engage the public. This can be seen from the revision of the Anti-Terrorism Law, the adoption and development of the Mass Line approach in counter-terrorism, and the mobilisation of the community and family members for de-radicalisation purposes. However, under the single-party regime, these efforts had limited success, because much of the criticism that could have helped to improve them has been deemed hostile and therefore silenced by the CCP. Although the CCP has been encouraging the participation of ethnic minorities within the Party, Uyghurs, particularly those within the Party system, are not invited to challenge the "correct" views.⁶⁰ Under Xi Jinping, China's counter-terrorism discourse has become more hostile to views that do not fall under the category of "correct". By laying out China's overall counter-terrorism approach, this chapter will highlight the dilemma with which it is struggling with in the context of counter-terrorism. Like liberal/democratic countries, China faces pressure to justify its counter-terrorism measures to the public to maintain its legitimacy. However, instead of improving the transparency of policy-making and terrorism designation, it relies on propaganda, mass mobilisation and coercion.

5.1 Guiding principle: Overall Security Outlook

This section focuses on the overall principles that guide security policy-making. The Overall Security Outlook is a loose framework that guides China's counter-terrorism

⁶⁰ A recent example of the CCP's efforts to improve the participation of ethnic minorities can be seen from the *National Human Rights Action Plan (2016-2020)* [国家人权行动计划 (2016-2020)], available at http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-09/29/c_129305934_5.htm.

discourse and policy.⁶¹ It is sometimes used interchangeably with the New Security Concept.⁶² The development of the overall principles of security reflects China's attempt to put forward a non-Western framework to understand the security threat, in order to counter-balance the dominance of the traditional Western security paradigm. The latter, in the eyes of Chinese political elites and intellectuals, constructs a one-sided and zero-sum reality of security, and is inadequate to understand China's security approach (G. Pan 2004, 4).

Jiang Zemin raised the New Security Concept at the Conference on Disarmament (1999). He proposed a "new security concept" as a solution to the conflict that resulted from the security paradigm that prevailed during the Cold War. The following quote demonstrate his understanding of the causes of the conflict and the inadequacy of the traditional security paradigm:

History tells us that the old security concept based on military alliances and build-up of armaments will not help ensure global security, still less will it lead to a lasting world peace. This then requires the cultivation of a new security concept that meets the need of the times and calls for vigorous efforts to explore new ways to safeguard peace and security.
[official translation, author's note]

The initial proposal for the New Security Concept emphasises four core tenets – mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation (Z. Jiang 1999). Jiang also highlighted the five principles of peaceful coexistence that reflect China's concerns about its sovereignty and territorial integrity.⁶³ The attempts by Chinese political elites to broaden the concept of security roughly coincided with the rise of critical approaches to security outside China (Buzan 2009; Crawford 1991; Haftendorn 1991, 15; Baldwin 1995). Like critics such as Krause and Williams (1996), some scholars in China also questioned the excessively broadened scope that rendered the concept meaningless (L. Han 2000, 64; Y. He 2004, 117).

Jiang raised the New Security Concept again at the ASEAN Regional Forum in July 2002 to highlight China's cooperative attitude towards security. The attempt to promote security cooperation with neighbouring countries reflects Deng's emphasis on creating a peaceful international environment to allow China to continue developing. In 2005, when the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation was formed, this

⁶¹ Overall Security Outlook: 综合安全观, *zonghe anquan guan*

⁶² New Security Concept: 新安全观, *xin anquan guan*

⁶³ Mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful co-existence.

new security paradigm became popular. Hu Jintao followed Jiang Zemin in broadening the scope of security by constructing a multi-dimensional understanding of it, including economic, financial, nuclear, ideological, cultural and political security (Y. Zhu 2012, 96).

Some Chinese scholars such as Pan Guang (2004) see the shift in the security paradigm as a critical turn from the focus on state security to the consideration of individuals, groups and communities. Indeed, Hu developed the New Security Concept and constructed a more cooperative and multi-dimensional approach to security, signalling a transition from the unilateral security outlook under Mao, Deng and Jiang, to a multilateral one under Hu. Some may argue that such a concept is over-idealistic, but the normative impact it imposed on policy-makers cannot be dismissed entirely. Such a shift signifies the realisation among political elites' and intellectuals' that to gain support from the masses, it is no longer sufficient to emphasise state security, as in a relatively peaceful era it is the threats to human security that might be linked more directly with the CCP's legitimacy.

At the first meeting of the National Security Commission in April 2014, Xi Jinping proposed the Overall Security Outlook, which became an overarching guiding doctrine for China's approach to security (Xi 2014a). A month later in May, he promoted its variation, the "New Asian Security Concept", which advocated common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security in Asia (Xi 2014).

The current version of the Overall Security Outlook is all-encompassing. Xi points out China's approach to security, stating that a "national security path with Chinese characteristics" must pursue the following aspects: ⁶⁴

- external security through peace, cooperation, and mutual benefit
- internal security through development, reform, and stability
- security of the national territory
- security of the citizens
- both traditional and non-traditional security, including security in the following areas: politics, territory, military, economics, culture, society, science and technology, information, ecology, resource, and nuclear
- both development and security
- both security of China and security of the community

The counter-terrorism strategy guided by the Overall Security Outlook has several features.

⁶⁴ national security path with Chinese characteristics: 中国特色国家安全道路

First, it reflects an attempt to shift the state-centric security paradigm to a more human-centric approach. Xi (2014a) stresses the importance of a “people-oriented” and “human-oriented” security approach, and that the officials must “adhere to the principle that national security serves the people, relies on the people, and truly achieve a solid mass foundation for national security”. The view that policy should serve the people and rely on the people reflects the Mass Line approach inherited from the Mao era. By emphasising a “solid mass foundation” he acknowledges the significance of support from the masses for the national security policy. However, as the Outlook is only normative, in practice the state can still target its own political enemies by including them in a terrorist list.

Second, Xi has further reinforced the perception of the relationship between development and security inherited from Deng (1993c, 354). “Development is the basis of security, and security is the condition of development” (Xi 2014a). Convinced of the link between development and security, political elites rely on economic development to tackle political unrest. However, this over-simplified understanding has had unintended results such as the intensification of ethnic tensions.

Third, the emphasis on the five principles of peaceful coexistence indicates China’s willingness to engage in international counter-terrorism operations, particularly in protecting its overseas interests. It also functions to remind other countries, especially in the West, of China’s irreconcilable attitude towards national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. In the context of counter-terrorism, political elites and intellectuals are highly vigilant about the interference of the Uyghur separatist movements in the name of human rights.

The Overall Security Outlook, of course, is normative and does not reflect how counter-terrorism policies are carried out at the local level. However, it reflects three important aspects of China’s counter-terrorism approach – the revival of the Mass Line approach, the developmental approach to dealing with socio-economic grievances, and hostility towards external intervention.

5.2 Political discourse of counter-terrorism

This section examines the framing of China’s counter-terrorism discourse and the friend/enemy distinction that underpins that framing. Based on the assumptions of external enemies, the CCP has always condemned Western intervention since the founding of the PRC. As discussed in Chapter 4, Chinese political elites and intellectuals see cases of Western intervention as causes of political unrest in many Third World countries. He Wang (2016) believes that these cases have led to a sustained imbalance and instability in some regions, which has provided a “warm bed”

for terrorism. According to the state media, Western countries, led by the US, sent troops to Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria in the name of establishing a “so-called democratic country”, but instead found themselves opening a “Pandora’s box”, causing endless atrocities (People’s Daily 2016). Yang Qingchuan argues that those developing countries that copied the Western system eventually ended up in “hunger democracy” “poor democracy” “order-less democracy” and “bloody democracy”.

Some frame Western humanitarian intervention as “neo-interventionism” which is hypocritical and poses a threat to world peace. Gao Wannan has criticised Western intervention on the state media, saying that the “so-called” human rights violations are rooted in complicated historical circumstances, and it is unfair that the West attributes all of the blame to the government regardless of the circumstances. He has accused the West of ignoring the historical facts and “recklessly” and “arbitrarily” interfere in the domestic affairs of the countries in question, exacerbating the very problem they purport to solve, throwing countries into turmoil, and leading to regime instability, struggles between different parties, grave casualties and the displacement of civilians, thereby exacerbating the humanitarian crisis (W. Gao 2017). Similarly, *People’s Daily* (2001b) frames humanitarian intervention as the pretext for the interference in other countries’ domestic affairs. According to *People’s Daily* (2001b), the essence of neo-interventionism is acquiescence and support for ethno-separatism, which makes it possible for the latter to become one of the major forms of terrorism in the new century. An article in Xinhua (Hong Zhang 2017) states that “experts generally agree” that the wave of rampant terrorism that Europe has seen in recent years is closely related to Western neo-interventionism. Huang Shaoyu (2013) has criticised Western countries for putting those who disagree with Western values and globalisation onto the list of “not democratic” or “failed” states and implementing economic sanctions and suppression against them.

In the context of domestic terrorism in China, as discussed in Chapter 4, the underlying friend/enemy distinction is crucial to understanding the ways in which the CCP attributes blame. The collective memory of China being carved up by imperialists has had great influence on political leaders, from Mao to Xi. As discussed in Chapter 4, anxiety over a regime change through cultural or ideology infiltration has been seen throughout the almost 70-year history of the PRC. Mao believed that the struggle in the ideological battlefield was part of the efforts to subvert a regime (Z. Mao 1962). Deng shifted the focus from a “class struggle” to economic development (Yue 2012, 49), while still paying attention to bourgeois liberalisation. According to Deng (1993c, 344), although the Cold War between the US and Soviet Union was over, another two cold wars had started: the cold war upon the Global South, and the cold war upon socialism. Under Jiang and Hu the government concentrated on economic

development, but political elites and scholars did not forget the potential threat posed by “hostile forces”. The mainstream media portray Western/international/foreign/anti-China hostile forces as those who are “against the people’s democratic dictatorship and the socialist system” (Y. Gu 2009, 304), and “anti-Party”, “anti-Socialist” activists, usually in the disguise of businessman, students, tourists, NGOs, scholars, funding projects, associations, religious groups and charities (Y. Yao 1996, 34–35; Y. Gu 2009, 304), who seek to carry out peaceful evolution by means of espionage activities in the Party, the Chinese government and the People’s Liberation Army (Huanqiu 2016).

In this context, ethno-separatism is yet another case where the friend/enemy distinction is more pronounced. The following quote demonstrates how the CCP attributes ethno-separatism to Western intervention in the name of human rights, which serves the agenda of “Westernising and dividing” China:

Western hostile forces have been attempting to westernise and divide China in the name of ethnicity, religion and human rights. Such a conspiracy has not changed. separatist forces within and outside China will continue to instigate and conduct separatist activities... the struggle between separatism and anti-separatism is not a matter of ethnicity, nor a matter of religion, but a matter of national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Hostile forces have always instigated violent criminal activities under the banner of ethnicity and religion, which to some extent further complicated the issue (United Front Work Department 2009).

In the state media, the articles about separatism and terrorism that have taken place in China are often associated with “hostile forces”. Although the CCP conflates the concepts of terrorism and separatism, the degree to which they are associated with the idea of external enemies is slightly different. In the online version of the *People’s Daily*, from 1995⁶⁵ to 2018, “separatism” was more likely to be associated with “hostile forces” than “terrorism”. The search for “separatism” and “hostile forces” provides 51 results, while “terrorism” and “hostile forces” are found in 24 results. Unlike terrorism which can be at least distinguished by the use of violence, the supporters of the separatist movements in Xinjiang have a more apparent link with the West. According to Li Wei (2009), one of the most eminent counter-terrorist experts in China, support from a “third party” (implying the Western “hostile forces”) is one of the most important factors that has sustained terrorism. Liu Guozhu (2010, 28) considers the support for dissidents against communist countries in the name of human rights and democracy as part of the US’ “Covert Strategy”. In the case of the 2009 Urumqi Riots, Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang stated that there was

⁶⁵ People.cn is the online version of the *People’s Daily* which was founded in 1995.

concrete evidence for the involvement of the World Uyghur Congress and its leader Rebiya Kadeer (Liao, Xu, and Li 2009). The group had received funding from the National Endowment for Democracy (World Uyghur Congress 2016b), which convinced the CCP of the link between dissidents and Western supporters.

A reoccurring theme in China's counter-terrorism discourse is the attribution of terror attacks to "hostile forces". The phrase "hostile forces" serves to ascribe terrorism to the *enemies*, the essence of which is contingent upon the political antagonism between China and the West. In the context of counter-terrorism, this label alone tells hardly anything about the identity of the perpetrator. As discussed in Section 4.5, the use of "hostile forces" does not provide an actual answer to who the "terrorists" are. Instead, it is used loosely as a signifier of all those who align with the separatists' framing and sympathise with their aspirations. By highlighting the connection between terrorism/separatism and Western acquiescence, the CCP puts terrorist threats in the context of China-West antagonism. In this context, the phrase "hostile forces" directs individuals towards a package of ready-made assumptions (provided in Section 4.5) so that they gradually, and unwittingly, align with the frames provided by political elites and intellectuals when they adopt the narratives and labels in the master frame. Using the phrase "hostile forces" allows the government to focus on the "external enemies" and omit the domestic dynamics that have led to the Uyghurs' grievances. By linking what happens now with the master frames that have been used for a long time to explain the suffering of the Chinese people, the users of the master frames help individuals to make sense of atrocities that are otherwise too horrible to understand, such as the 2009 Urumqi Riots. This diagnostic framing then provides the pretext for the CCP to take extraordinary measures against the sympathisers and supporters of those it deems to be the enemies. Adopting Mao's categorisation of two types of contradictions, officials can justify their heavy-handed treatment by categorising their targets as enemies. According to Zhu Zhijie (2017), director of the research centre at XUAR Bureau of Prisons, "the contradiction between us and 'three forces' is one of the confrontational contradictions between us and the enemy which must be dealt with through struggle".⁶⁶ In the context of counter-terrorism in China, labelling a person or a group as "hostile forces" means that the person or group is deprived of the status of a "friend" and marked as "enemy". If the sympathisers are in China, they become the "enemy within". If they are outside China, they become "external hostile forces".

There are several implications of the concept "hostile forces". First, as will be discussed in Section 5.3.1, the CCP has a broad definition in terms of who can be

⁶⁶ Struggle: 斗争

designated as a terrorist, what activities or ideologies can be seen as terrorism and how the designation of terrorism should be carried out. This means that the label “hostile forces” may alienate those who are aligned with the frames provided by the Uyghur separatist movements but do not endorse terrorism. Second, antagonising the “West” as a monolithic political entity with a coherent agenda simplifies the causes of political unrest in Xinjiang, and undermine the trust that is the basis for counter-terrorism cooperation with Western countries. Third, labelling human rights groups as “hostile forces” may hamper the development of human rights in China and prevent them from functioning as third parties to mediate the conflict between the CCP and the Uyghur dissidents, taking away the opportunity for peaceful settlement through dialogue, the very tenet promoted by the CCP. Fourth, labelling overseas Uyghur organisations as “hostile forces” without presenting “concrete evidence” (Liao, Xu, and Li 2009) increases the feeling of injustice, and undermines the credibility of China’s counter-terrorism approach.

Another related theme in the Chinese counter-terrorism discourse is the “double standards” of the West. According to many Chinese scholars and officials (M. Wang 2004, 14; Y. Ma and Wang 2003, 44; Gou, Xiao, and Shen 2014, 239; Hong Zhang 2004, 25; Y. Chen 2007, 25; Kong 2003, 43), the West, led by the US, does not live up to its commitment to international peace and adopts double standards in defining terrorism. Some (Shen 2014; Juyuan Li et al. 2013) argue that the US only defines terrorism according to its own interests. This is partly because the definition of terrorism itself is open to interpretation. The CCP expressed shared indignation when the US governmental officials met Chechen rebels (People’s Daily 2001a). Similarly, Beijing is concerned about the affinities between the US government and the Uyghur dissidents, as evidenced by the meeting between the then US President Bush and Rebiya Kadeer, when Bush called her a freedom fighter against tyranny (Polo 2012; The White House 2007).

Based on similar experience with Russia in fighting against dissident groups that were supported by the US, Chinese analysts (People’s Daily 2001a; Juyuan Li et al. 2013) have great sympathy with the Russian government on issues such as Chechen separatism. Some journalists (Juyuan Li et al. 2013) have pointed out that the US changed its attitude towards Chechnya after the Boston Marathon bombing. They argue that the US had criticised Russia for its crackdown in Chechnya before the Boston Marathon bombings, considering that Chechnya is the gateway to rich reserves of oil and natural gas in Central Asia. After the attacks, the US began to question whether the conflict would threaten its own security. Similarly, according to the Chinese media, the US had supported the Taliban in the anti-Soviet guerrilla warfare, as well as Saddam Hussain, but it turned against them when this no longer

served its interests (Polo 2012; Y. Chen 2007, 25; Hui An 2011). According to Yu Jianhua (2013, 116), out of the considerations of ideology and their own political interests, Western countries often frame the “terrorists” in the Third World countries as “freedom fighters”, while they frame the “national liberation movements” in Algeria, Vietnam, Cambodia and China as terrorists. In the eyes of Chinese officials and scholars, the US has a record of glorifying anti-Socialist activists as freedom fighters and human rights fighters, offering them asylum and hampering international cooperation (Hong Zhang 2004, 22).

According to a commentary on Xinhua (Gui and Lü 2014), American “double standards” can also be seen in the ambiguous attitudes towards terrorist attacks in China. After the terrorist attack in at Kunming railway station in March 2014, the US described the incident as a “horrific and senseless act of violence”, causing rage among Chinese netizens about the double standards of Western media (BBC 2014a; AFP 2014; BBC 2014b). Gui and Lü (2014) accused the American government of being reluctant to call the attack a “terrorist incident” when there was “sufficient evidence” (Gui and Lü 2014). In contrast, America did not wait to label the Boston and Nairobi attacks terrorist attacks (Gui and Lü 2014). According to Chinese analysts, this is evidence for the argument that America defines terrorism based on whether it suits its interests.

The CCP’s concerns about the double standards of the US are not entirely groundless. The terrorism designation process in the US does suffer from inconsistent standards because of its competing priorities in foreign policy (Cronin 2003). China’s response clearly demonstrates how this inconsistency is amplified to reinforce the existing China-West antagonism. The self-interested terrorism designation process in the US is further supported by the “The Guantanamo Files” posted on WikiLeaks. During the Afghan War in 2001, the US army captured 22 Uyghur suspects and detained them at the Guantanamo Bay detainment camp. According to the “The Guantanamo Files”, detainees are either directly involved in terrorist activities or “vulnerable to future recruitment”.

Detainee [Yusef Abbas, author’s note] has had some level of terrorist training, as confirmed by associations with known terrorist group(s), and is highly vulnerable to future recruitment by terrorist groups targeting the US and its allies (Miller 2004, 2).

[D]etainee [Bahtiyar Mahnut, author’s note] is assessed to be a member of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement and the Al-Qaida global terrorist network. Detainee received training at an Al-Qaida sponsored terrorist training facility established for use by the East Turkistan Islamic Party. Detainee provided direct assistance to the Taliban engaged against coalition forces in Northern Afghanistan. It is assessed this detainee is a

MEDIUM risk, as he may pose a threat to the US, its interests and allies (Hood 2005).

In 2008, Ricardo M. Urbina, a Federal District Court judge, ordered the Bush administration to release 17 of the detainees on the ground that they had never fought the US and denied that they did not pose a security threat to it (Glaberson 2008). Declining to grant them political asylum, the US had great difficulty in finding a country that would take them. As Sabin Willett, a Boston-based attorney who was trying to defend for the released Uyghurs, asked, if they were innocent, “why don’t you take them?” (Taylor 2007).

Chinese political elites and intellectuals see this as further evidence for the hostility and hypocrisy of the US. An article in *People’s Daily* states that, “as long as these people do not sabotage America, they are not ‘terrorists’ in the eyes of America” (X. Wen 2014). Shen Dingli (2014) asks why, if the US government truly believed that they were innocent, why did it refuse them entry into the US. The reason given by the US State Department for refusing to send the Uyghurs back to China was the concerns that they would face torture and abuse (Ackerman 2013), which only added to the irony, since prisoners were tortured at Guantanamo Bay (*People’s Daily Online* 2004; Shiping Ji 2014).

5.3 Discourse of stability maintenance in Xinjiang

This section provides a review of the theme of stability maintenance in Xinjiang. It brings together the discussion in previous sections and demonstrates how the rationale for prioritising unity, maintaining control, and ensuring “correct” views is woven into the official discourse of stability maintenance.

Xinjiang is the main target of terrorist attacks. As Figure 19 indicates, out of a total of 247 cases from 1989 to 2016, 79 (32%) of the terrorist incidents took place in Xinjiang. The governance of Xinjiang, therefore, is central to China’s counter-terrorism approach.⁶⁷ As Zhang Chunxian puts it, “Xinjiang is the main battlefield of national counter-terrorism and stability maintenance” (Yaxin 2015). The level of control is unprecedented, with huge expenditure on public security (Buckley 2011), increased police presence (Zenz and Leibold 2017), mass surveillance (Associated Press 2011) and biodata collection from all “focus personnel” who are considered more vulnerable to radicalisation (Human Rights Watch 2017c).

⁶⁷ The governance of Xinjiang: 治疆

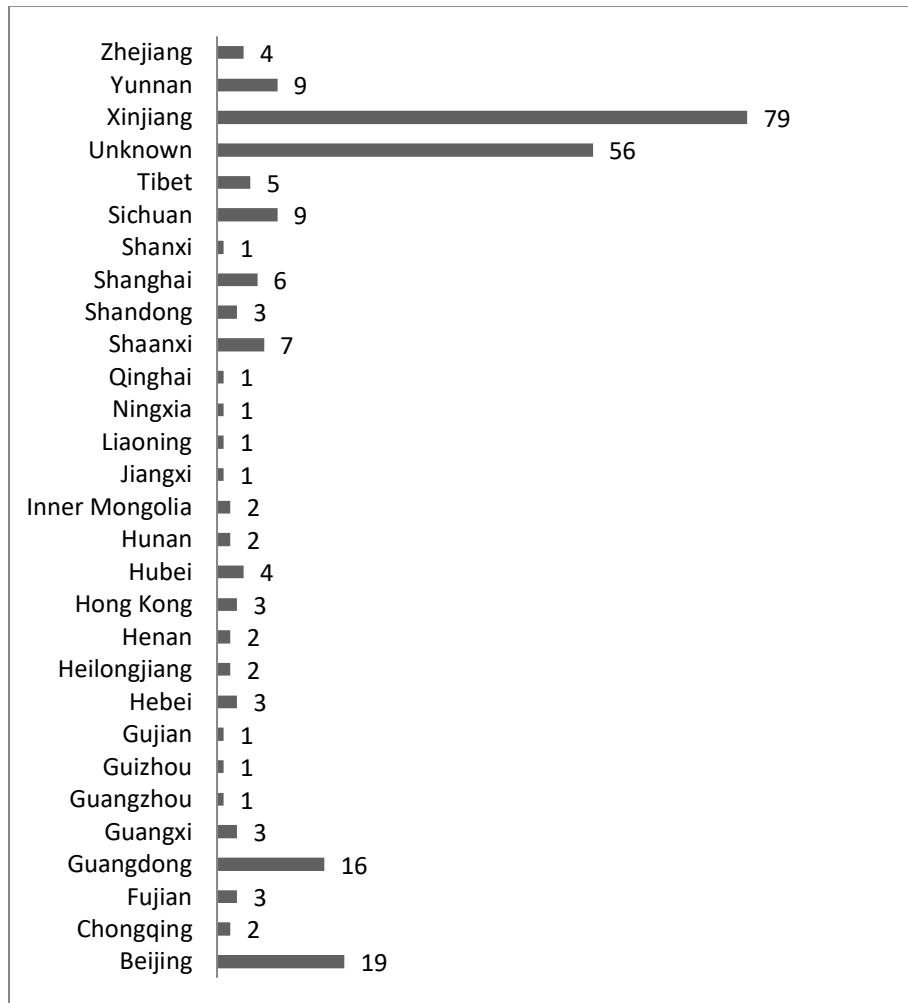


Figure 13 Number of terrorist attacks by province (1989-2016). Source: Global Terrorism Database

A glance at the reports on the level of control in Xinjiang makes one wonder what sort of discourse the government is employing in order to justify to the public the necessity of these harsh measures. The answer to this question may be found from the development of the slogans used for the governance of Xinjiang.

Stability maintenance is a theme that has run through the past three decades of the governance of Xinjiang. The contemporary history of the governance of Xinjiang can be roughly divided into the following three periods according to the political leader at the time.

- Wang Lequan Period (1991-2010)
- Zhang Chunxian Period (2010-2016)
- Chen Quanguo Period (2016-now)

The Wang Lequan Period featured two themes: “stability overrides everything” and the “three economic strategies of black, white, and red”⁶⁸ (Juntao Liu 2010). His style of governance can be categorised as a “hard approach”, which was given credit by the CCP for the absence of large-scale terrorist attacks during 1987 and 2008 which led to his promotion into the Political Bureau (W. Wang 2010). Unsurprisingly, his “hard approach” was also criticised by what the CCP see as external hostile forces. An article in Voice of America (Hua An 2016) accuses his “hard approach” of being a major cause of the Urumqi Riots in 2009.

In the aftermath of the 2009 Urumqi Riots, Wang’s ruthless crackdowns were questioned. His successor, Zhang Chunxian distanced himself from Wang Lequan by advocating a “soft approach”. He started by loosening up the control over the Internet after a complete shutdown of the internet access after the attacks; at the same time, Zhang Chunxian maintained the high-pressure clampdown on terrorism (J. Wang and He 2016). Naming his style of governance a “soft approach” did not give Zhang a reputation for being less repressive outside China. His hard line towards the “three forces” was interpreted as “brutal suppression” by Rebiya Kadeer (Hua An 2016). Under pressure to respond resolutely to terrorist threats, some observers do not believe that Zhang’s “ruthless” approach departed substantially from that of Wang Lequan (Choi 2012).

In 2016, Zhang Chunxian was succeeded by Chen Quanguo, who had previously worked in Tibet for 5 years and gained experience in stability maintenance in an ethnically diverse border region. He brought his innovative policing strategy from Tibet to Xinjiang, and established a network of “convenience police stations” that were part of the “grid-style social management” (Zenz and Leibold 2017).⁶⁹ According to Zenz and Leibold’s analysis, it was Chen’s firm grip and his close tie with Xi Jinping that had won him the position in Xinjiang. It follows that Chen was not very likely to advocate a softer approach which would have required him to relax the control over Xinjiang. Chen’s governance soon manifested his tendency to further strengthen the control in every aspect of life, as discussed in previous sections.

Regardless of variations in the ways in which the leaders branded their approaches, the friend/enemy distinction remains the same. The government has always advocated the need to respond decisively to terrorism/separatism, especially after a series of major terror attacks in 2014 in and outside Xinjiang. In 2014, Xi Jinping’s (Xinhua 2014b) call to build “walls made of copper and steel” and Zhang Chunxian’s

⁶⁸ refers to the economic strategy that prioritise the economic growth brought by oil (black), cotton (white) and tomato (red).

⁶⁹ convenience police stations: 便民警务站; grid-style social management: 社会网格化管理

(2014a) call for a People's War on Terror pointed to a strategy that was decisively intolerant towards any hint of terrorism. Considering the conflation of terrorism and separatism, the war narratives make it particularly difficult and dangerous for the Uyghurs to show any sign of sympathy towards separatism.

Xi's speech at the 14th Collective Study Sessions of the Politburo set the tone for the CCP's position on counter-terrorism. The use of terms "decisive action", "high level of pressure", and "resolutely" in the following passage demonstrate clearly demonstrates the resolution of the CCP in fighting terrorism and maintaining stability in Xinjiang:

The fight against terrorism is a matter of state security, a matter of the vital interests of the people, a matter that concerns the overall situation of the stability of reform and development; it is a fight to maintain national unity, social stability, and people's wellbeing. [We] must take decisive action, maintain a high level of pressure, and resolutely crush the arrogance of terrorists (Xinhua 2014b).

This quote frames terrorism as an existential threat to state security, and highlights that what the state is most concerned about its collective interests ("overall situation of the stability of reform and development"), reflecting the quest for legitimacy and the emphasis on national unity, and calls for extraordinary measures ("resolutely crush").

In the following Xinjiang Work Conference on 28 May 2014, Xi reiterated the strategic importance of the governance of Xinjiang, which needs to be put into a broader context and viewed from a long-term perspective. This quote emphasises the importance of the "Xinjiang work", which, according to the discussion in previous sections, is characterised by a high level of control in various aspects of life.⁷⁰ Xi continued to praise this approach as "correct" and asked the government to adhere to it.

Doing Xinjiang work well is a major issue for the whole Party and the whole state. [We] must consider the situation from a strategic and overall perspective, seek long-term solutions, identify the root causes, build up the momentum of long-term peace, and endeavour for long-term governance. The Party Central Committee has always attached great importance to Xinjiang work, and has made a series of major decisions and plans to promote the reform and development, ethnic solidarity, social progress, improvements of wellbeing, and border defence, where the CCP has made historic achievements. The practice has proved that our Party's strategy of governing Xinjiang is correct. [We] must stick to [this] and maintain our strategic composure. At the same time, we must consider the

⁷⁰ Xinjiang work: 新疆工作

situation of Xinjiang to enrich and improve the Party's governing strategy in Xinjiang, insist on multi-pronged approach and long-term governance of Xinjiang, laying a solid foundation for future work, for social stability and long-term peace and security (Xinhua 2014e).

In line with Xi's view on counter-terrorism in Xinjiang, Zhang Chunxian gave a speech at the 7th session of the 8th Party Committee Plenary session (enlarged session) of the XUAR (C. Zhang 2014b). He emphasised the "grand strategy" of the Xinjiang work: rule according to law, unity and stability, and the long-term construction of Xinjiang to build "a unified, harmonious, prosperous, civilised, advanced and peaceful socialist Xinjiang" (C. Zhang 2014b).⁷¹ In terms of a hard approach, Zhang proposed an "iron-fisted" and proactive approach to contain the spread of terrorism. Echoing Zhang's proposal, the one-year proactive Strike Hard campaign (23 May 2014 – 30 April 2015) was reported to have destroyed 96.2% terrorist criminal gangs "at the premeditation stage" (Yanan Li 2015).⁷²

In terms of soft approach, he highlighted the need to "unify thoughts and behaviour" on the judgement of the central authority of the situation of Xinjiang and on the task of cracking down "three forces".⁷³ The basic principles of the Xinjiang work, as summarised by Zhang, reflect the government's obsession with promoting the "correct" views and gaining legitimacy through the Mass Line approach – "to adhere to [correct, author's note] political direction, focus on the overall situation; to rely on the masses and win over their hearts and minds". To do so, he elaborated on a variety of policies aimed at improving the wellbeing of the people, such as "Employment First", education policy, development policy, sustainable development, and ideology work that promotes diversity (within unity) and a secular lifestyle, so that the masses become more secular and "modernised". As discussed in previous sections, political elites have a very specific/narrow understanding of what can be considered as open, secular, modern Uyghur culture – a culture characterised by singing, dancing and colourful fabrics.

The political discourse of stability maintenance in Xinjiang has evolved and produced a range of sweeping political slogans. Zhang Chunxian (2014b) advocates strengthening "four identifies", which clearly reflect the emphasis on national unity.⁷⁴ The "four identifies" mean identifying with the mother land; identifying with the Chinese nation (the unity of the 56 ethnic groups, rather than the Han); identifying with the Chinese

⁷¹ to build a unified, harmonious, prosperous, civilised, advanced and peaceful socialist Xinjiang: 依法治疆、团结稳疆、长期建疆

⁷² at the premeditation stage: 预谋阶段

⁷³ unify thoughts and behaviour: 统一思想和行动

⁷⁴ four identifies: 四个认同

culture (the unity of the 56 ethnic groups, rather than the Han culture); and identifying with the socialist path (T. Mao 2014).

Zhang Chunxian also emphasised that ethnic solidarity should be included in school education, family education and social education, and that people from each ethnic group should learn about the “three cannot do withouts” (C. Zhang 2014b, 2), which were modified from “two cannot do withouts” in 1981. The modified version included “ethnic minorities cannot do without ethnic minorities” in addition to “Han cannot do without ethnic minorities, and ethnic minorities cannot do without Han” (L. Dong 2009).⁷⁵

Another slogan, the “five keys” approach demonstrates a high level of state intervention in private sphere in counter-terrorism.⁷⁶ At the 8th session of the 8th Party Committee Plenary session (enlarged session) of the “five keys” approach was put forward. It includes five dimensions in preventing radicalisation:

Ideological problem should be tackled with ideological methods, cultural problems should be tackled with cultural methods, issues regarding custom should be tackled with respect, issues regarding religion should be tackled according to religious regulations, terrorism should be tackled according to law and Strike Hard⁷⁷ (M. Jiang 2014).

Apart from the slogans at the strategic level, the government has also developed slogans at the operational level which reflect a limited degree of caution in regard to power abuse. For example, when dealing with illegal religious activities, the government is required to “correctly distinguish normal believer and religious extremists”, and ensure law-abiding believers’ religious needs while fighting against religious extremism (C. Zhang 2014b). To balance the heavy-handed practice of the Strike Hard campaign at the local level, the CCP highlights the need to “combine inducements and repression” (C. Zhang 2014b), paying more attention to the role of education in counter-radicalisation (*Xinjiang Daily* 2014a).⁷⁸

However, as discussed in previous sections, the concern for the broadened scope of counter-terrorism is very limited, particularly in terms of counter-radicalisation, when certain indicators are necessary for security services to identify potential risks. A typical example is the Ordinances on de-radicalisation in XUAR and several documents

⁷⁵ three cannot do withouts: 三个离不开

⁷⁶ Five keys: 五把钥匙

⁷⁷ 思想的问题用思想的方法去解决，文化的问题用文化的方式去解决，习俗的问题用尊重的态度去对待，宗教的问题按照宗教规律去做好工作，暴恐的问题用法治和严打的方式去解决

⁷⁸ combine inducements and repression: 疏堵结合

on differentiating “illegal religious activities” (Appendix 1 and 2). Preoccupied with national unity and stability, local governments tend to include a wide range of daily practices as signs of radicalisation, which has led to criticism from Uyghur dissidents abroad. Rebiya Kadeer claimed that the fifteen forms of radicalisation would be seen as “joke” by people from any country (Y. Tian 2017). According to her, the Ordinance shows “utter contempt” for any religion, different culture, and the rule of law (Y. Tian 2017).

The government’s attempts to contain counter-terrorism measures have been ineffective because as discussed in previous sections, the state continues to promote the “correct” ideas and views and denounce the “wrong”, while the criteria for identifying this “wrong” are underpinned by self-evident differentiation constructed upon assumptions in China’s political discourse. As discussed in Chapter 4, these assumptions are embedded in China’s counter-terrorism discourse and function to identify who are the “enemies”. The depiction of China as an innocent victim of external hostile forces, political officials and intellectuals seeks to justify the use of extraordinary counter-terrorism measures, combining hard and soft approaches, and facilitate frame alignment among the public through mass mobilisation.

5.4 Legal framework

This section discusses how the framing of counter-terrorism is translated into law. The political nature of “terrorism” raises many questions regarding the scope of the Anti-Terrorism Law. It examines the expansion of the power of the executive in designating terrorist individuals and organisations. This expansion allows the executive to function as an evidence-providing agency, which undercuts the power of the judiciary in reviewing the decisions made by the executive. This section also highlights some attempts to revise the law to share the designation power with the judiciary and to minimise the political character of the definition of terrorism, as well as the effectiveness of these revisions. In addition, this section analyses the scope of the Anti-Terrorism Law by examining the terrorism designation practice at the local level.

The first legal document on counter-terrorism, the *Decision of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on Issues concerning Strengthening Anti-Terrorism Work* was passed at the 23rd meeting of the Standing Committee of the 11th National People’s Congress (National People’s Congress 2011).⁷⁹

⁷⁹ *Decision of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on Issues concerning Strengthening Anti-Terrorism Work: 关于加强反恐怖工作有关问题的决定*

On 27 August 2013, the National Counter-terrorism Leading Group held its first conference (The Ministry of Public Security of the People's Republic of China 2013a), marking the increased visibility of counter-terrorism practice in China.⁸⁰

Several serious terror attacks in 2014 prompted the Group – which was later renamed the National Counter-terrorism Work Leading Organ – to draft an Anti-Terrorism Law with the help of experts from various departments, including the National People's Congress Law Committee, the Ministry of State Security, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the People's Bank of China, the Legal Affairs Office of the State Council, and the Armed Police Headquarters (Lang 2014).⁸¹ The Organ became the institution that bears the responsibility for identifying terrorist activities, organisations and individuals and managing inter-agency counter-terrorism coordination across the country (Xinhua 2015a).

In November 2014, the draft Anti-Terrorism Law was tabled for discussion for the first time at the 11th meeting of the Standing Committee of the 12th National People's Congress (The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China 2014). The second deliberation of the draft law took place on 25 February 2015, when the People's Congress amended the articles on the definition, designation, and prevention of terrorism, as well as counter-measures and human rights protection at the 13th meeting (*China News* 2015b). The third deliberation on 21 December 2015 at the 18th meeting further clarified the definition of terrorism (W. Zou and Chen 2015). The official Anti-Terrorism Law was finally passed at the 18th meeting on 27 December 2015 and came into effect on 1 January 2016. The evolution of the Anti-Terrorism Law reveals the struggle of the CCP to allow maximum flexibility for the executive to designate its enemies while demonstrating some respects for due process.

The National Counter-terrorism Leading Organ has issued three lists of terrorist organisations and individuals which include 4 organisations and 25 individuals. The designation of some entities and individuals, such as the World Uyghur Congress and Dolkun Isa, is highly controversial. The legitimacy of China's terrorism designation has been challenged by dissidents and rights groups, raising the question of power abuse by the executive and the appropriation of the counter-terrorism discourse to eliminate political opponents.

5.4.1 Definition of terrorism

⁸⁰ National Counter-terrorism Leading Group held its first conference: 国家反恐怖工作领导小组

⁸¹ National Counter-terrorism Work Leading Organ: 国家反恐怖工作领导小组

In the Chinese political discourse, the concept of terrorism is often conflated with that of separatism. The doctrine document *Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2001) popularised the phrase "three forces" – terrorism, separatism and extremism. "Three forces" is frequently used collectively to refer to the "real" power behind the actual perpetrators (e.g. Commentator 2013; Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN 2009). According to a booklet compiled by the Propaganda and Education Bureau of the Central Propaganda Department, the Ideological and Political Division of the Ministry of Education, and the Policy and Regulation Division of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission (2010), "three forces" are part of the "peaceful evolution" of the "Western hostile forces", to look for "holes" at Chinese border regions.

The definition of terrorism provided by the SCO convention (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2001) draws on existing definitions in the following treaties.

1970	The Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft
1971	The Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation
1973	The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents
1979	The International Convention against the Taking of Hostages
1980	The Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
1971	The Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts of Violence at Airports serving International Civil Aviation (1988) as a supplement to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation
1988	The Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation
1988	The Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Fixed Platforms Located on the Continental Shelf
1997	The International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings
1999	The International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism

Building on these treaties, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2001) defines the “three forces” that are frequently used in China's counter-terrorism discourse.

Terrorism is defined as follows.

[an] act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, or any other person not taking an active part in the hostilities in a situation of armed conflict or to cause major damage to any material facility, as well as to organize, plan, aid and abet such act, when the purpose of such act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, violate public security or to compel public authorities or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act, and prosecuted in accordance with the national laws of the Parties.[official translation, author's note]

In comparison, the definition of separatism is more related to territorial integrity.

"separatism" means any act intended to violate territorial integrity of a State including by annexation of any part of its territory or to disintegrate a State, committed in a violent manner, as well as planning and preparing, and abetting such act, and subject to criminal prosecuting in accordance with the national laws of the Parties. [official translation, author's note]

And extremism is defined as

an act aimed at seizing or keeping power through the use of violence or changing violently the constitutional regime of a State, as well as a violent encroachment upon public security, including organization, for the above purposes, of illegal armed formations and participation in them, criminally prosecuted in conformity with the national laws of the Parties. [official translation, author's note]

Some (Aris 2009; Human Rights Watch 2006) translate the phrase “three forces” as “three evils”.⁸² This translation is inaccurate because the phrase itself does not contain the same pejorative connotation as “three evil forces”.⁸³ It is true that the phrase “three forces” is often associated with “evil” in commentaries, such as nationalist commentary published in the *People's Daily* on the 92th Anniversary of the founding of the CCP (Commentator of *People's Daily* 2013a). It is inaccurate to conflate the CCP's official position with nationalist interpretations of its position.

Human Rights Watch accuses the counter-terrorism cooperation within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation of reinforcing “members' worst practices”, that is, human rights violations, by conflating peaceful advocates of independence with terrorists (Human Rights Watch 2006). Indeed, these definitions

⁸² three forces: 三股势力

⁸³ three evil forces 三股邪恶势力

make it difficult to draw a clear-cut line between terrorism, separatism and extremism. A violent incident carried out by members of a separatist organisation in attempting to intimidate citizens and challenge the secular system of the state can be considered terrorism, separatism and extremism at the same time.

In addition, the definitions enable the governments in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to target enemies according to their own national laws. Like “hostile forces”, the concept of “three forces” is equally vague. In the aftermath of the 2009 Urumqi Riots, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Qin Gang held a press conference at which he was asked to clarify whether the Chinese government actually suspected some “foreign governments” of being behind the World Uyghur Congress. Qin Gang’s reply was simply a re-emphasis of China’s position on foreign support for the “three forces”.

We resolutely oppose any foreign country and foreign force to connive at and support the Three Forces and we urge them to immediately stop their support to the Three Forces including the East Turkistan Islamic Movement forces (Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the UN 2009). [official translation, author’s note]

When he was asked again which countries he was referring to, he once again replied with an affirmation of the connection between the “three forces” and some foreign countries, without naming those countries. He emphasised that there was evidence, but the government never presented actual evidence to the public.

Substantial facts have proven that in recent years, the Three Forces in and outside China have been engaged in activities undermining China's national security. Some countries have harbored and even financed these groups. We hope and strongly urge these countries to stop their assistance and support in whatever form (Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the UN 2009). [official translation, author’s note]

The state media always provide “substantial facts” and “conclusive evidence”, but human rights groups often challenge these allegations, stating that there is a lack of supporting evidence. Undeniably, publicising terrorism-related information could put the sources of intelligence at risk. These phrases are often followed by assertions such as the link between the East Turkistan Islamic Movements and international terrorism organisations, and the link between anti-China groups and Western support, in which case actual evidence is particularly crucial. The inability or unwillingness to present actual evidence undermines the credibility of the CCP.

An increase in the number of terrorist incidents in 2013 and 2014 prompted the CCP to speed up legislation. In 2014, under the leadership of the National Counter-terrorism Work Leading Organ, the expert group started drafting the Anti-Terrorism

Law based on their research and advice from the National Security Council and other relevant departments, local officials and scholars, as well as the lessons learnt from Anti-terrorism legislation in other countries (Lang 2014). The draft defines terrorism as follows.

Any thoughts, remarks or activity that, by means of violence, sabotage, or threat, aims to create social panic, influence national policy-making, create ethnic hatred, subvert the regime, and separate the country (The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China 2014).

This definition raises a few questions about the terrorism designation. First, it criminalises thoughts and speech, which contravenes Article 35 of the Chinese Constitution regarding freedom of speech. Those who express sympathy with “terrorism” can potentially be subject to the terrorism designation. This means that the authorities do not differentiate between “cognitive” radicalisation and “behavioural” radicalisation. In addition, what the authorities consider as “inciting ethnic hatred” might be seen as simply expressing opinions on the separatist movements. In 2015, a Uyghur was convicted of “inciting separatism” and was sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of three years and deprived of their political rights for two years (China Judgements Online, n.d.). He confessed that he had uploaded a map of China which did not include Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia and Taiwan, to his Q-zone (a social networking website), implying that Xinjiang is an independent country. Although his conviction was based on the consideration of other evidence including pictures promoting jihad, the criminalisation of uploading pictures containing separatist ideas at least indicates the level of intolerance to any form of separatism.

Second, the definition conflates terrorism and separatism, disallowing peaceful separatist claims. This means that those who have close ties with designated “terrorist organisations” may be punishable by law. These groups are listed as terrorist organisations in China for their alleged involvement in violent separatist/terrorist attacks in China, although some of these organisations are considered legal outside China. Groups such as the East Turkistan Education and Solidarity Association provide funding and training for Uyghur students overseas. As these groups are grouped under the “East Turkistan forces”, those who have been associated with them are also potentially subject to the terrorism designation in China (Su and Jin 2013).

In 2015, the definition of terrorism was tabled for discussion and revised as follows. Some members from within the legislature contributed to the revision and advised the legislature to remove “thoughts” from the definition (R. Liu 2015a). In the second draft apparent conflation of terrorism and separatism was also removed by deleting “create ethnic hatred, subvert the regime, and separate the country”. The revised

definition demonstrates the considerations about society and individual rights to counter-balance the state-centred counter-terrorism approach. This is evident from the addition of “undermine public safety, infringe on personal and property rights” to the definition. The second revision was criticised by some members of the People’s Congress for omitting the political and ideological nature of terrorism, and the third draft thus stated that the aim of terrorism is to realise political, ideological objectives (W. Zou and Chen 2015). The revised definition has been published in the official version of the Anti-Terrorism Law as follows.

Any advocacy or activity that, by means of violence, sabotage, or threat, aims to create social panic, undermine public safety, infringe on personal and property rights, or coerce a state organ or an international organization, in order to achieve political, ideological, or other objectives (The National People’s Congress of the People’s Republic of China 2015; N. Zhu 2015).

Although the deliberation of the Anti-Terrorism Law reflects a degree of consciousness of the potential danger of criminalising “thoughts”, Zhou Zunyou (2016) argues that the revised definition of terrorism is still vague enough to allow wide interpretation. “Advocacy” can still be referred to by the authorities to punish “thoughts” and “speech” (Z. Zhou 2016).

The broad definition of terrorism has attracted fierce criticism. Human rights activists say that it can be used to suppress dissidents and religious minorities (BBC 2015; McKirdy 2015). Leibold commented that the ways in which the issue of terrorism had been framed in China in the past indicate that it mainly targets the Uyghurs, Tibetans and those who disagree with Chinese policies (McKirdy 2015). Bequelin argues that China’s claims of terrorism are highly politicised and include peaceful dissents (Anderlini and Shepherd 2015). Sophie Richardson (Human Rights Watch 2016), connects the vague interpretations of terrorism with the government’s crackdown on peaceful dissent, as reflected in the doubling of prosecutions for state security and terrorism offences in 2015. As a result of the Anti-Terrorism Law, according to human rights organisations (Amnesty International 2015; Human Rights Watch 2015, 2016), the human rights situation for the Uyghurs has considerably deteriorated.

The conflation of terrorism and separatism means that sympathisers and supporters of the Uyghur separatist claims can be punished according to the Anti-Terrorism Law. Chinese political officials have on various occasions indicated that the Chinese government “resolutely oppose all forms of terrorism”, including the “*dongtu shili*” led by the East Turkistan Islamic Movements (Hua 2014; Bingxin Li, Li, and Yin 2015; Yi Wang 2002, 2002; Xinhua 2009f). The “*dongtu shili*” have been the target of China’s

counter-terrorism strategy from the very beginning and they remained the main target after the 9/11 attacks (G. Pan 2004, 4; 6).

However, the phrase "*dongtu shili*" itself is source of confusion. *Dongtu shili* is literally translated as "East Turkistan forces". According to the White Paper on the development and progress in Xinjiang (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China 2009), "East Turkistan forces" developed from a small group of fanatical separatists and religious extremists who politicised "East Turkistan", an otherwise geographical term, in order to establish an ideological and theoretical framework to promote the independence of "East Turkistan". As discussed in Section 4.1.2, calling "Xinjiang" "East Turkistan", or treating "East Turkistan" as a political entity rather than a geographical concept is seen as an indication of separatist agenda.

According to official documents (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China 2009), in the 1930s and 1940s, the "East Turkistan forces" were supported by "foreign hostile forces". The "East Turkistan forces" remained a serious concern for the CCP after the founding of the PRC (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China 2009). According to a White Paper, supported by "some foreign forces", the "East Turkistan forces" continue to create disturbances in China. The discussion of "East Turkistan forces" is followed by the UN designation of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement as a terrorist organisation, which indicates that the CCP does not differentiate between "East Turkistan forces" and the East Turkistan Islamic Movement.

The CCP (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China 2009) believes that in recent years, in order to get away with the crackdown, the "East Turkistan forces" have evolved and learnt to adopt the banners of democracy, human rights and freedom, in an attempting to legitimise their "terrorist cause". Some scholars add that separatists emphasise these concepts in attempting to rally support from "Western anti-China forces" (Y. Gao and Li 2011). Therefore, in the eyes of the CCP, the World Uyghur Congress, which merged from several organisations of the "East Turkistan forces", is definitely a terrorist organisation that is aligned with the "East Turkistan forces".

It can be seen from the above descriptions that the CCP uses the term "East Turkistan forces" loosely as an umbrella concept for many splinter groups and individuals that share the aspiration of "East Turkistan" becoming independent. The CCP does not differentiate between Uyghur groups that accuse the CCP of human rights violations and designated terrorist groups such as the East Turkistan Islamic Movement. To the CCP, the banners of "democracy" "human rights" and "freedom" are used to disguise their true goal which is separatism (The State Council Information Office of the

People's Republic of China 2009). In documents (State Council Information Office 2002a) that attribute blame to the "East Turkistan forces", the CCP does not provide specific information about the affiliation of individuals or organisations. Instead, they are grouped into the "East Turkistan forces" due to their shared separatist goals. However, in the official list of terrorist organisations, the CCP does clarify the organisations that comprise the "East Turkistan forces". The first list identifies four organisations – the East Turkistan Islamic Movement, the East Turkistan Liberation Organisation, the WUC and East Turkistan Information Center. They are collectively referred to as the "East Turkistan forces".

The broad definition of terrorism, which uses "three forces" and "East Turkistan forces", results in divergence between the CCP and the international community on which groups can be designated as a terrorist groups. The World Uyghur Congress is a typical example of this divergence. The CCP has listed it as a terrorist group (State Council Information Office 2002a), while the international community generally sees it as a legal organisation that advocates human rights. It is also recognised by the UN as the representative of the Uyghur people at the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization 2011). The World Uyghur Congress also plays an active role in various forums at the UN Human Rights Council, including the 2016 Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (World Uyghur Congress 2016c), the 2010 Forum on Minority Issues (Polias 2010), and the 2011 Forum on Minority Issues (Kadeer 2011).

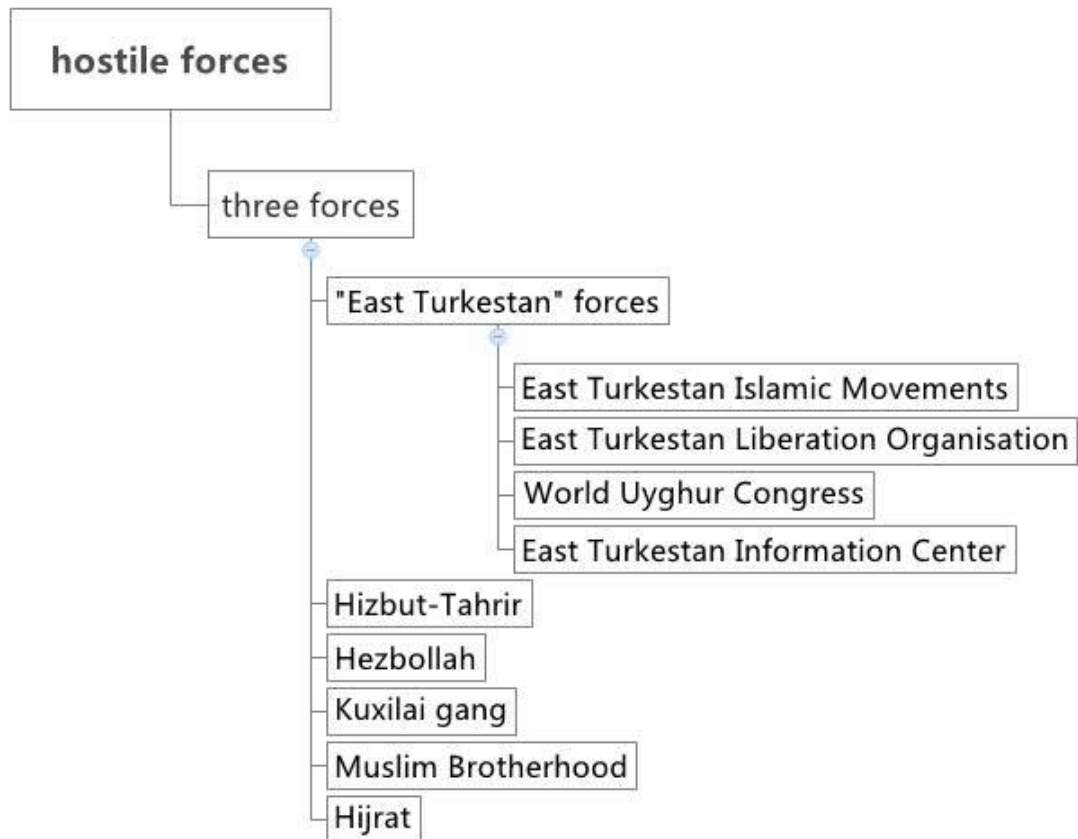


Figure 14 The CCP's perception of terrorist forces that are/were active in China

In addition to the "East Turkistan forces", there are a few groups that are motivated by radical Islamic extremism that concern the CCP. As the crackdown on the "East Turkistan forces" has begun to take effect, some remnants of the "East Turkistan forces" have merged into Hizbut-Tahrir, an international organisation that aims to re-establish "the Islamic Caliphate" (Aierken and Abudumijiti 2013, 49). This group has been developing its network in Xinjiang since 1999 (Aierken and Abudumijiti 2013, 49). It differs from the ETIM forces in that it seeks to incorporate Xinjiang in the "the Islamic Caliphate", whereas the "East Turkistan forces" envision the independence of "East Turkistan" itself (Y. Zhang 2009, 62). However, given their shared interest in separating Xinjiang from the PRC, the Hizbut-Tahrir has merged with the remnants of the ETIM, as well as other organisations such as Hezbollah, the Kuxilai gang, the Muslim Brotherhood and Hijrat (Y. Zhang 2009, 64).

The broad definition of terrorism means that there is a degree of flexibility in the designation of terrorist individuals and organisations. The designation of terrorism is of political importance in China. The state-run media and government websites have a monopoly over the accounts of an incident, as discussed in Section 3.2. One of the "iron rules" of the Chinese media is that sensitive issues involving important matters must cite the Xinhua agency to ensure "unified propaganda wording" (H. Shao and Du

2006). News agencies must follow the order from higher levels, and speak with one voice (P. Lu 2006, 7). This means that the commercial media must align with the mainstream media in the framing of terrorist incidents.

The stringent control over the media reflects the CCP's concerns about the plot of the "enemies" to induce peaceful evolution by promoting "Western values" in China. The CCP considers that framing political incidents from a Western perspective has a destabilising effect on its regime. Scholars (Jialu Zhang 2015; Hongcheng Yang 2015; Y. Yin 2008; Zeng 2004) have pointed out that the "Western" media such as CNN, the BBC, *the Guardian*, and *the New York Times*, have a record of demonising China through the biased selection and reorganisation of the sources. The political context paves the way for the translation from terrorism discourse into legal practice. Its control over the media means that the CCP has the advantage over the competing frames provide by Uyghurs dissidents and human rights groups. This means that terrorism designation is closely aligned with the interests of the state and the Party, and is less likely to be questioned by the public.

The power over terrorism designation is firmly in the hands of the executive. The mechanism for terrorism designation developed from ad-hoc list-making to the "double track" system.⁸⁴

The first list published by the Ministry of Public Security on 15 December 2003 contains 4 organisations and 11 individuals (Department of Public Security 2003). They are grouped under the umbrella term "East Turkistan terrorist organisations". The list was compiled pursuant to the Criminal Law (Amendment 3), National Security Law and its Rules for Implementation, and the international counter-terrorism conventions that China has ratified, including Resolution 1373 (Department of Public Security 2003). An article on the state media gives detailed information about the designation. The article is in line with the Party line, claiming the legitimacy of China's continuous rule over Xinjiang. It portrays the separatist movements in Xinjiang as the colonialists' conspiracy to divide China and the "East Turkistan" terrorists as "vicious devils who indulge in all sorts of evildoings" (Leiming Wang, Shen, and Zou 2003).

According to Zhao Yongchen, the then Vice-Director of the Ministry of Public Security, the designation of individuals must satisfy the following two criteria at the same time (Y. Zhao 2003):

- Association with terrorist groups, and engagement in activities that endanger national security and the life and property of individuals.
- Engagement in any of the following activities:

⁸⁴ the "double track" system of designation: 双轨制认定

- Leading, organising, or participating in the proscribed terrorist group;
- Organising, planning, inciting, propagating or instigating terrorist activities;
- Funding or supporting proscribed terrorist organisations and individuals;
- Receiving funding or training, or participating in the activities of the proscribed terrorist organisations or other international organisations.

The first list also came with some legal ramifications – China issued “red notices” on all the 11 proscribed individuals. Among others, the list includes Dolkun Isa who is accused of theft, robbery and the series of bombing attacks in Khotan county, as well as propaganda, support and involvement with terrorist activities (People.com 2009). Known as a respected Uyghur activist in the West, Dolkun Isa received great sympathy from human rights groups and the Uyghur community in exile. Dilxat Raxit, spokesperson for the World Uyghur Congress, condemned the Chinese government for making such a serious allegation without providing any actual evidence (*Reuters* 2018b). The accusation against him also led Human Rights Watch (2017b) to criticise China for abusing “red notices” against dissidents. The lack of actual evidence eventually resulted in Interpol’s revocation of the “red notice” on Dolkun Isa, which, according to Fair Trials (2018), highlights the political nature of China’s accusations.

The Ministry of Public Security (2008) published the second list of eight “East Turkistan terrorist” individuals on 21 October 2008. The Spokesperson holds that the designation is based on actual evidence of their criminal activities directed at the Beijing Olympic Games pursuant to aforementioned domestic laws and international conventions.

In 2012, the Ministry of Public Security (2012) published the third list of six members of the “East Turkistan Islamic Movement” – a terrorist organisation proscribed in the first list. The third list also added that relevant departments would freeze the assets of the proscribed individuals. Like the first two lists, the latest list provides a detailed description of the criminal activities of the proscribed individuals.

The evolution of the lists reveals two tendencies of China’s terrorism designation. First, the Ministry of Public Security has downplayed the political function of the lists and started to use the lists as a legal instrument. The loaded language in the state media about the first list has been changed to a relatively objective description of the criminal activities of the proscribed individuals. The third list added the legal ramification to freeze the assets of the designated individuals.

Second, no public information suggests that the National Counter-terrorism Leading Organ has issued “red notices” on the proscribed individuals in the second and third lists. This shows at least the increasingly “low-profile” character of the terrorist designation. The second and the third lists clarify the association between proscribed

individuals and an actual organisation. As discussed earlier, the vague use of “East Turkistan forces” to include all Uyghur dissents has been subject to much international criticism (Becquelin 2004a). Given that a number of political entities have added the “East Turkistan Islamic Movement” to their terrorist list, it is likely that the emphasis on the proscribed individuals’ association with this group, rather than the umbrella term “East Turkistan forces”, is a response to this criticism.⁸⁵

Instead of issuing “red notices”, the CCP has been exerting pressure through diplomatic leverage to limit Dolkun Isa’s access to other countries. In 2016, Taiwan blocked him from attending the Asia Pacific Religious Freedom Forum (Underrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization 2016). The World Uyghur Congress (2016a) published a response to this “particularly hostile statement”. In 2017, when he was in Italy, he was briefly detained by the police. This was “severely condemned” by the Underrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization (2017). Dilxat Raxit accused China of being involved and warned that this incident “challenges the bottom-line values of Italian democracy” (*Reuters* 2017b). A Western diplomat based in Beijing holds that China “frequently asks European countries to arrest Isa, but has never provided evidence of the crimes it says he has committed” (*Reuters* 2017b).

Institutional restructuring in the last decade has resulted in some development of the terrorism designation mechanism from ad-hoc list-making to a more comprehensive system. In 2011, the People’s Congress gave the National Counter-terrorism Leading Organ the power to oversee counter-terrorism in China in the form of the *Decision of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress on Strengthening the Work on Anti-terrorism* (Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress 2011).⁸⁶ Initially power over designation was entirely in the hands of the executive. In 2015, the draft law was tabled for discussion, and the revised law gave the judiciary the power to designate terrorist organisations and individuals (Q. Sun 2015). Since then the designation system has been known as the “double-track system”, referring to the executive and the judiciary. Article 12 of the official Anti-Terrorism Law stipulates that the working body of the National Counter-terrorism Work Leading Organ shall designate terrorist individuals or groups, while Article 16 stipulates that the intermediate, or above people’s court, shall determine terrorist organisations and individuals pursuant to the Criminal Procedure Law (The National People’s Congress of

⁸⁵ The designation of “East Turkestan Islamic Movement” in other countries is per se subject to criticism. For example, Eckholm (2002) points out that the US’ decision to put the group on its Foreign Terrorist Organization list is out of political considerations to soften Chinese opposition to its war in Iraq, rather than based on hard evidence. Some human rights activists even claim that the group does not actually exist (Tiezzi 2013a).

⁸⁶ 全国人大常委会关于加强反恐怖工作有关问题的决定

the People's Republic of China 2015). According to the revised law, competent courts at least of the level of the intermediate people's court, are authorised to designate terrorist organisations and individuals pursuant to the Criminal Procedure Law (The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China 2015).

Separating the designation power of the executive and the judiciary is a significant move in the Chinese context, considering that most Chinese political elites are sceptical about the Western model of separation of power. Emphasising the difference in China's "national conditions", Chinese officials propose the differentiation of the decision-making power, execution power and supervisory power with an emphasis on "restriction" and "coordination", instead of "separation" (People's Congress 2007). Some Chinese scholars (S. Xu 2016) argue that the executive and the judiciary are responsible for different aspects of terrorism designation. However, as terrorist cases often require cooperation between the executive and the judiciary, it is difficult to draw a clear line between their functions (M. Du 2017). This system could result in the overlapping, duplication and contradiction of the functions of the executive and the judiciary (M. Du 2016b).

The double track system of terrorism designation relies heavily on the executive. According to Chapter II of the Anti-Terrorism Law (The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China 2015), the National Counter-terrorism Leading Organ is responsible for terrorism designation and its office publishes the designation. To propose a designation, the departments of public security, and state security, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the provincial Counter-terrorism Leading Organ files an application to the National Counter-terrorism Leading Organ. Public security departments and security departments (executive) at all levels oversee, investigate, and gather evidence about the suspected entity, and escalate this to higher levels all the way to the Minister of Public Security who then reports directly to the Premier. The list is then signed by the Premier and published as an official gazette (J. Jian 2011, 168).

Chinese scholars are optimistic about the effectiveness of the double track system, which aims to reduce the pressure on the prosecutors to go through the entire legal procedure (M. Du 2016a, 2016b). Some argue that the double track system is effective because it helps the government to identify potential threats before the actual crime takes place (J. Jian 2011; M. Du 2016b). Jia and Li (2017, 51) argue that the executive designation is pre-emptive, which complements the reactive judicial designation, which is based on facts and evidence.

Given the expansive power of the executive on terrorism designation, some questions about due process remain unanswered. First, the designation of the executive

contravenes the Criminal Procedure Law regarding the presumption of innocence (M. Du 2017; S. Xu 2016, 115). Article 12 of the Criminal Procedure Law (People's Congress 2012) stipulates that no authority can decide whether an individual is guilty without the judgement of the people's court. Xu Shanghao (S. Xu 2016, 115) elaborated on the admissibility of executive designation as legal evidence. He invoked Section 52.2 of the Rules for Criminal Procedure of the People's Procuratorate (The Supreme People's Procuratorate of the People's Republic of China, 2012) which gives the executive the power to collect legal evidence, arguing that the evidence collected by the National Counter-terrorism Leading Organ is admissible in court. Second, the Anti-Terrorism Law does not specify the process through which the executive should accept and publish the judgements made by people's courts. As the latter are made on a case-by-case basis, it is questionable whether such a designation will have any effect on other cases. So far, apart from the three official lists, the National Counter-terrorism Leading Organ has not published any designation that was initially made by the people's courts.

This designation mechanism provides little support for appealing to review the designation. Article 15 of the Anti-Terrorism Law stipulates that designated individuals and organisations can appeal to the National Counter-terrorism Leading Organ – the designation body itself. The National Counter-terrorism Leading Organ shall make the decision about upholding or revoking the designation. The decision made after the review process is the final decision. Some Chinese scholars argue in favour of the need to establish a review process by an external body. Sun (2014) argues that, given the status of the National Counter-terrorism Leading Organ as the highest counter-terrorism executive body in China, allowing the judiciary and society to participate in the review process would undermine its authority. Others hold that the judiciary is the last line of defence between power abuse and justice (S. Xu 2016, 118). Some (Y. Guo 2015) have compromised and argue that the review process should be carried out by a different department within the National Counter-terrorism Leading Organ. Guo proposes the establishment of a committee comprising immigration officers, counter-terrorism personnel from the army, security department personnel, political scientists, criminologists specialising in counter-terrorism and international law experts. Beyond the scholarly discussion, nothing has yet materialised. Without an independent review body, it is not surprising that no publicly available information reveals the reviewing or de-listing process, and no cases of successful or failed appeals have been found.

Another problem with this designation mechanism is the encroachment upon the freedom of association. The official criteria that Zhao Yongchen provided require the designation to be based on both the membership and criminal activities of the individuals to be designated. Like Canada (Jarvis and Legrand 2018, 7), China does not

officially criminalise individuals merely for their association with designated groups. However, in practice, it is not clear to what extent these criteria are followed. A controversial case is the criminalisation of Ilham Tohti, a former professor at Chinese Minzu University. He was accused of associating with foreign separatist organisations and individuals and other offences such as spreading separatist ideology and inciting ethnic hatred. It is not clear what proportion of his association with designated groups and individuals accounts for his life sentence (Xinhua 2014g). He is highly respected among the Uyghur community in the West and he received an American human rights award for his efforts in “fighting oppression” (Publishers Weekly 2014). This shows that what China considers to be a serious offence may be considered a struggle for freedom in the eyes of the Western media. It also shows that it is likely that the official criteria are not strictly followed in practice.

Overall, the development of China’s terrorism demonstrates its struggle between the effectiveness of its counter-terrorism policy and concerns about accountability. It reflects China’s political discourse, which prioritises national and collective interests over individual interests, and in the context of legal practice, substantive justice over procedural justice (J. Gao 2007, 740). Relying heavily on the executive for terrorism designation, the rules of procedure are lacking in the designation process (J. Jian 2011, 167).

5.4.2 Broadened scope of the Anti-Terrorism Law

Since the Anti-Terrorism Law was drafted, there has been a spike in the number of individuals and organisations who have received a penalty for violations that would previously have been penalised under other laws. Among all the cases that are publicly available online, a large percentage (48%) of the cases in which the Anti-Terrorism Law or the terrorism-related article in the Criminal Law have been invoked happened in places such as hotels and gas stations. In those cases, Administrative Penalties were incurred for failing to make preparedness plans or failing to equip the places with counter-terrorism facilities in accordance with Article 99 of the Anti-Terrorism Law.

In 2016, only 20% were directly related to advocating terrorism by distributing audio-visual materials or releasing information to instruct and incite others to conduct terrorist activity [Article 7 of the Criminal Law Amendment (9)]. 3% were related to not cooperating with counter-terrorism work (Article 9 of the Anti-Terrorism Law). 11% of the cases were associated with advocating terrorism, but the circumstances were not serious enough to constitute a crime, so the perpetrators were given Administrative Penalties (Article 80 of the Counter-terrorism Law). 6% of the cases

concerned the possession of terrorism-related materials (often terrorism-related video clips).

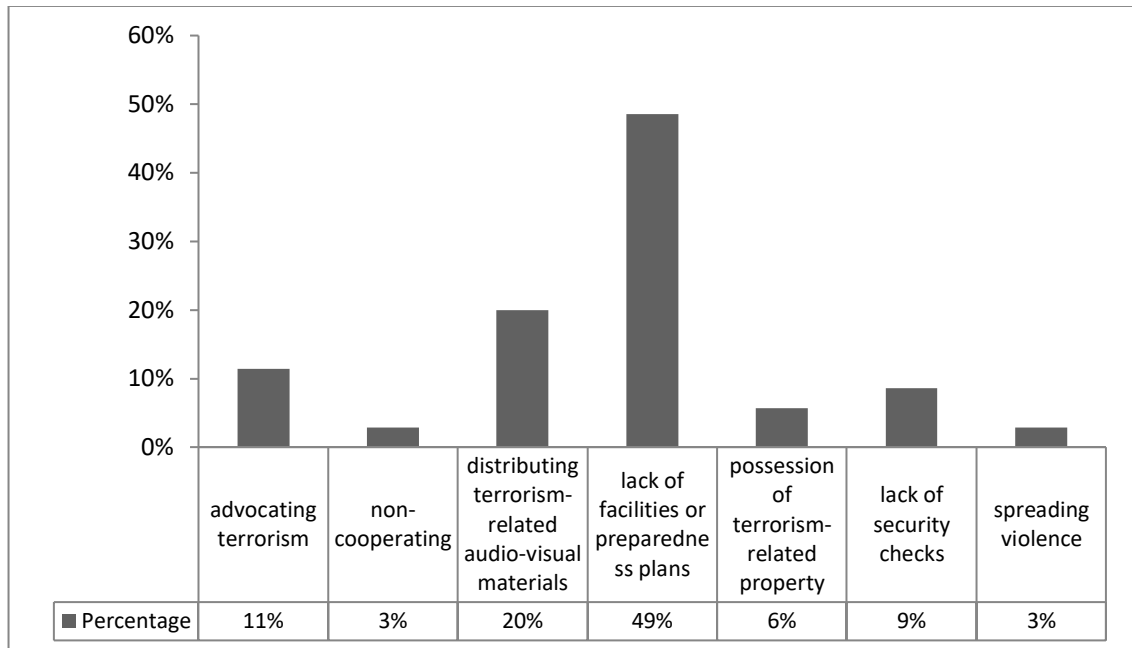


Figure 15 Percentage of types of offences under Counter-terrorism Law and Criminal Law Amendment in 2016 (9)

It is worth noting that in 9% of the cases, postal or express services were penalised for failing to conduct a security check of the transported and delivered items as required by Article 20 of the Counter-terrorism Law. However, some of these cases do not fall strictly within the jurisdiction of the counter-terrorism legislature. For example, on 2 August 2016, the Tianming Express company received a 150,000 RMB fine for failing to conduct security checks as required (Xinhua 2016a). Article 75 of the Postal Law also established the legal liability of postal or delivery entities in terms of implementing a security check system to prevent the posting or delivery of articles that are forbidden or restricted (The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China 2009). The unclear boundary between the two laws makes it possible for the judiciary to make conflicting decisions.

The framing of these cases of nonfeasance demonstrate, in the context of counter-terrorism, indicates the broadened scope of the Anti-Terrorism Law. To tone down the friend/enemy distinction and avoid alienating those who were punished, the media introduced a catchphrase "counter-terrorism ticket".⁸⁷ Clearly cases of nonfeasance usually do not involve external enemies. The phrase "counter-terrorism ticket"

⁸⁷ counter-terrorism ticket: 反恐罚单

normalised terrorism by suggesting a parallel between terrorism and something as ordinary as a parking ticket.

The broadened scope of the Anti-Terrorism Law is likely to make terrorism a “pocket crime” and the law enforcement will be able to label the irrelevant activities in the context of terrorism.⁸⁸ A “pocket crime” is an unofficial legal term that describes the vague definition of an offence that blurs the boundary between different offences (Xun Zhang 2013). Drawing an analogy between an offence and a pocket crime, the phrase refers to such a definition of an offence that can be used to label more than one kind of criminal activity, just like a pocket that contains more than one items. In doing so, the Anti-Terrorism Law is broad enough to allow the CCP to not only criminalise political opponents, but also to strengthen its social control.

5.5 Actors

This chapter examines domestic and international actors. The discussion of the domestic actors indicates the tendency towards power concentration under Xi Jinping, the role of the media in counter-terrorism propaganda and the efforts of the People’s Congress to engage the public. The discussion of the international actors shows how the CCP promotes its counter-terrorism discourse in neighbouring countries based on the assumption of the friend/enemy distinction between Western and on-Western countries through counter-terrorism drills.

5.5.1 Domestic actors

In China, various sectors, industries, and departments are involved in the counter-terrorism strategy and practice (G. Pan 2004, 6). Although the open-ended “relevant departments” can, in theory, include any institution and organisation, it is possible to identify some of the key actors that take most of the responsibility for counter-terrorism practice.

To begin with, as discussed in Section 5.3.1, the following departments were involved in the drafting of the Anti-Terrorism Law.

Table 1 Departments that drafted the Anti-Terrorism Law (Lang 2014).

Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee
Legislative Affairs Office within the State Council
Ministry of State Security

⁸⁸ pocket crime: 口袋罪

Ministry of Industry and Information Technology

People's Bank of China

Armed Police Force Headquarters

New positions and institutions have also been opened to complement the existing security institution. The Central National Security Commission, established at the 3rd Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee in November 2013, is responsible for the overall planning and coordination across departments. A new position, the “Counterterrorism Commissioner”, under the command of the Ministry of Public Security, was created in order to strengthen the leadership and organisation of counter-terrorism work (R. Liu 2015b).

The major actors of counter-terrorism practice under the leadership of the National Counter-terrorism Work Leading Organ are defined under Article 8 of the Anti-Terrorism Law. According to Article 8 (The National People’s Congress of the People’s Republic of China 2015), these actors include the public security authorities, the national security authorities, the people’s procuratorates, the people’s courts, the judicial administrative authorities, the People’s Liberation Army, the People’s Armed Police, the People’s Liberation Army Militia and “other relevant state organs”.

In addition to state actors, the state also sought to engage the public and communities. The CCP follows the principle of “combining specialised tasks with reliance on the masses”, which reflects the revival of the Mass Line approach that was central to Mao’s governance of China.⁸⁹ To maximise the support of the “friends” against the “enemies”, the Anti-Terrorism Law identifies the following types of social institutions that participate in counter-terrorism practice, particularly in terrorism prevention and rehabilitation.

Table 2 Social institutions involved in counter-terrorism practice

village committee

residents’ committee

enterprise and public institution

social organisation

In addition to the Anti-Terrorism Law at the state level, the Mass Line approach is also reflected in regulations at the provincial level. In line with the Mass Line approach written in the Anti-Terrorism Law, the local Public Security Comprehensive

⁸⁹ combining specialised tasks with reliance on the masses: 专群结合

Management Office and Counter-terrorism Work Leading Organs in Xinjiang published the measures to motivate citizens to participate in counter-terrorism (*Tianshanwang* 2016).⁹⁰ According to the *Measures for reporting terrorism-related clues in XUAR*, those who provide the information on terror attacks shall be rewarded. Up to 2016, the local government rewarded 6 citizens in Baicheng and Luopu County a total of 2.2 million RMB for reporting terrorism-related information (Chinadaily 2016).⁹¹ The public security departments in Beijing rewarded 5 citizens 23,000 RMB according to the Measures (China.com 2016).

Table 3 Monetary rewards for those who report terrorism-related information (*Tianshanwang* 2016)

Reward	Content of information
200,000-5,000,000 RMB	information on the activities, inside information, urgent information, or key information on the planning, organisation, premeditation, or implementation of terror attacks, hostage taking, assassination, poisoning, and the destruction of important infrastructure
not more than 200,000 RMB	preventive information on terrorism-related unusual situations that involve social stability, security situations, safety in production, religious affairs, social situations, public opinion, online public opinion

In addition to monetary rewards, the Measures also stipulate that reporters shall be allowed to apply for “non-monetary rewards”, including preferential treatment in regard to joining the army, enrolment in school, social welfare, land contracts and legal aid (*Tianshanwang* 2016).⁹²

The institutional restructuring of the armed police reflects the concentration of power under Xi Jinping. The daily enforcement of the counter-terrorism policy is usually carried out by the People’s Armed Police, which was under the dual leadership of the State Council and the Central Military Committee. In January 2018, the Armed Police was brought under the control of the Central Military Commission completely (Xinhua 2017). This means that the Party has absolute control over counter-terrorism

⁹⁰ The Central Committee for Comprehensive Management of Public Security and its office was abolished on 31 March 2018 (Xinhua 2018b).

⁹¹ *Measures for reporting terrorism-related clues in XUAR* : 《新疆维吾尔自治区群众举报涉暴恐犯罪线索奖励办法》

⁹² policy reward: 政策性奖励

enforcement and the Armed Police Forces are not simply serving the “state security”, but more specifically, the “Party security”.

The People’s Armed Police has two Special Forces that are known to deal with terrorism: the Snow Leopard Commando Unit (“People’s Armed Police Beijing General Corps” 2008), formerly known as the Snow Wolf Commando Unit, and the Falcon Commando Unit. The former participated in the Cooperation-2007 China-Russia counter-terrorism military exercise (Zuokui Wang and Guo 2007), and the latter is specialised in aircraft hijacking and participates in international exchange and training programmes annually (Ni 2014). Little information is available about the workings of these units or actual cases of their counter-terrorism practice. Also, given the distance between Beijing and Xinjiang, it is questionable whether they could respond in a timely manner to terror attacks that are statistically more likely to take place in Xinjiang.⁹³ Considering Xi’s emphasis on their loyalty to the Party (Zhi Cao and Zhang 2014), it is likely that the Commando Units were established to deal with potential political coups rather than individual terrorists.

The major development of counter-terrorism institutions at the local level has taken place in Beijing and Xinjiang. The Counter-terrorism Unit of the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau is equipped with riot guns and revolvers to ensure 24-hour patrol in the capital city. The Beijing police have also established a “one-minute response” system at 14 prosperous downtown areas to ensure quick response in less than one minute in the case of an emergency (Beijing Public Security Bureau 2014). In Xinjiang, the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) bears the responsibility of border security, national unity, social stability and the prevention of terrorism and other crimes. Since the 1980s, the XPCC has focused on the prevention of, and crackdown on the “three forces” (State Council Information Office 2014).

The Ministry of State Security bears the responsibility for intelligence collection and analysis. Due to political sensitivity, the organisation does not publicise any official information about its work online. This reflects that the single-party regime does not face the same challenges that are faced by liberal/democratic countries face. The CCP is able to justify its decision based on classified information without being challenged by an opposition party.

The mainstream media and research institutes are also important actors at the frontline of counter-terrorism propaganda. They dominate the counter-terrorism

⁹³ Some sources (Hei 2017) say that the Snow Leopard Commando Unit has moved to Guangzhou, but the state media has not responded to this speculation.

discourse in China in the form of the news report, commentaries, academic conferences, and research papers. Commercial media must use the wording in the mainstream media in reporting politically sensitive incidents. Scholars affiliated with state-owned research institutes produce a substantial proportion of the research on counter-terrorism. The People's Public Security University of China and The Chinese Armed Police Force Academy are two of the academic institutes affiliated with the State Council. The former established a School of Counter-terrorism in 2014 with an emphasis on intelligence and counter-terrorism tactics. The Counter-terrorism Research Centre at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations was established in 2000, and focuses on research on international terrorism, extremism, transnational organised crime and weapons of mass destruction et cetera.⁹⁴ This centre has established its own database of the geographical information regarding international terrorism and it produces the *Yearbook of International Terrorism and Counter-terrorism* annually (2017). At the local level, there are two university-based research centres, The Centre for Counter-terrorism Research at Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, established in 2016, and the Counter-terrorism Research Centre at Northwest University of Political Science and Law established in 2014. The latter has its own website, *Anti-terrorism Information*, where it publishes terrorism-related news, research reports and commentaries.

The discussion on the domestic actors shows two characteristics of China's counter-terrorism policy. First, the state has the monopoly on the counter-terrorism discourse through the media and research institutes. However, due to the ambiguous definition of terrorism and the criteria for measuring the penalty, it is likely that similar offences could receive different punishment across provinces. For example, although the central authority provides basic legal documents that guide the local authorities in practice, the vague criteria in determining the "circumstances" of the crimes allows the local authorities to interpret the law as they see appropriate. An offender in Hunan province was given 13 days in detention and an 8000 RMB fine for uploading terrorist videos to a Wechat group, while in a similar case, an offender in Sichuan province was given 10 days in detention, and another offender in Shanxi province was given 5 days in detention for uploading terrorist video clips (Jiangxi Provincial Public Security Department 2017). This may be justified by the difference in the level of economic development across provinces. However, there are no official documents that provide the instructions on how the punishment should reflect the level of local

⁹⁴ China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations is a think tank that provides reports for the government upon request.

economic development. Essentially, the criteria for the measurement of the severity of “circumstances” are not clear enough to prevent the abuse of power.

Second, the revival of the Mass Line approach under Xi indicates some attempts by the government to engage the public. It is not clear to what extent this move is designed to balance the state/Party-centric counter-terrorism practice with a human-oriented security paradigm. However, it does reinforce the norm that the CCP aims to attract support from the people, which was central to Mao’s governance. At the early stage of the counter-terrorism strategy, state institutions played an important role in drafting the Anti-Terrorism Law. The National Counter-terrorism Work Leading Organ oversees all of the work related to counter-terrorism. The revival of the Mass Line approach facilitated a transition from treating the people simply as the beneficiaries of the counter-terrorism practice to treating them as contributors to state security. The rhetoric of the Mass Line approach is accompanied by incentives for those who reported terrorism-related information.

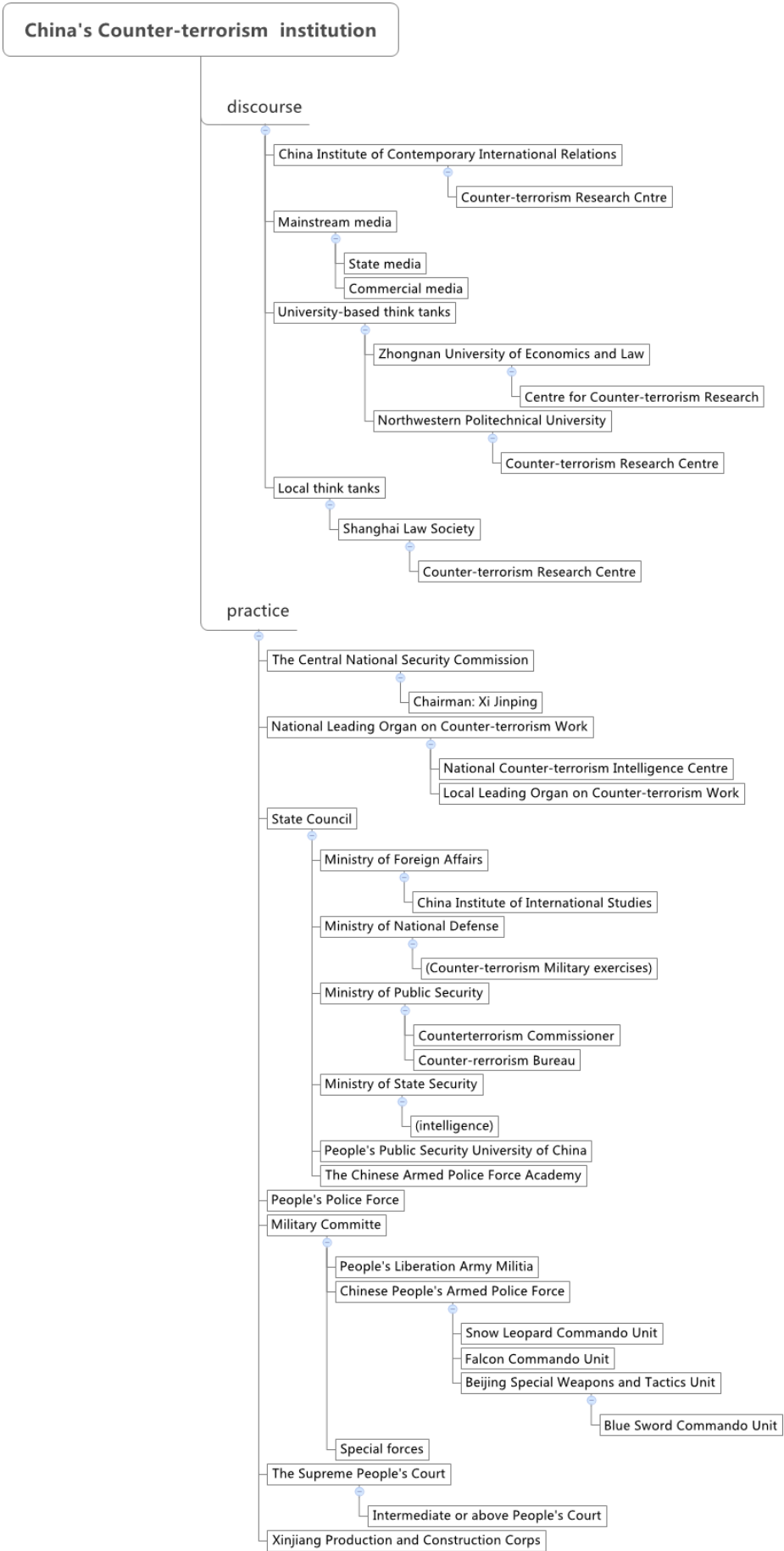


Figure 16 Structure of the counter-terrorism institutions in China

5.5.2 International actors

An analysis of China's counter-terrorism cooperation with neighbouring countries shows that it has been promoting its counter-terrorism discourse through joint military drills. In particular, the cooperation within the framework of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) highlights that the common interests between China and bordering countries helps to normalise its perception of the "three forces" among SCO member states. On the other hand, the lack of cooperation in the anti-terrorism military drills with the West also highlights the divergence between China and the West in terms of their attitudes towards terrorism and separatism.

The CCP has been developing its counter-terrorism strategy from a domestic event-driven emergency plan into a more comprehensive strategy that not only improves its capability to deal with domestic terrorism but also enables it to rally support from other countries. Pan Guang (2004, 4) observes that China's counter-terrorism strategy has moved beyond simply fighting against the East Turkistan Islamic Movement to a more comprehensive mechanism that facilitates cooperation with neighbouring countries. This shift in attitude can be seen from China's accession to international treaties. Since the 9/11 attacks, China has acceded to the *International Convention on Stopping Terrorist Explosions* and signed the *International Convention on Severing Financial Aid to Terrorism* (Yi Wang 2002).

At the same time, China has sought to bring its own values to its cooperation with other countries. According to Wang Min, Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, on 29 June 2012, China expressed its full support for the UN Global Counter-terrorism Strategy, with an emphasis on respect for the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, and abandoning double standards (Q. Lin and Wang 2012). The emphasis on national unity, sovereignty and territorial is consistent with its overall security agenda in the context of its political discourse. Wang's statement also indicates the divergence between China and the West on issues such as Uyghur separatist organisations, which are considered legal outside China.

From 2002 to 2018, 34 anti-terrorism drills involving China were identified, based on a triangulation of the state media, English-language media, and other commercial media. Among all of the drills, 38% were explicitly associated with the SCO. Among them, some (2009 China-Russia Peace Mission-2009 and 2017 China-Kyrgyzstan Tianshan III) were observed by SCO officials. 28% of all of the drills explicitly mentioned the "three forces". The drills outside the framework of the SCO were driven by specific concerns. For example, the China-ASEAN anti-terror drill in 2016 was aimed at maritime security. In the 2016, the Rim of the Pacific Exercise, China was focused on anti-piracy. In the

Dragon Gold 2018 China practised its ability in terms of humanitarian assistance. Some drills (Hand-in-Hand China-India drill in 2015 and Red River No. 2 China-Vietnam in 2016) were carried out based on bilateral or multilateral cooperation, with more focus on maintaining or improving foreign relations.

The anti-terrorism drills within the framework of the SCO are more closely associated with the concept of the enemy. The SCO has grown into an increasingly influential regional counter-terrorism body from the Shanghai Five group. Cooperation within the SCO framework covers a range of security issues, including border security, military cooperation, and counterterrorism with provisions for joint law enforcement operations, police training, and intelligence sharing (Xinhua 2016b). The SCO established the Regional Antiterrorism Structure in Tashkent as its standing body, which indicates that counter-terrorism is at the core of its agenda of SCO. The following table provides an overview of the major anti-terrorism drills between China and its neighbouring countries and their scale. The Peace Mission has become regular since 2005.

Table 4 Major anti-terror drills between China and its neighbouring countries (2002-2018)

2002	Exercise-01	China-Kyrgyzstan	the border of the two countries	Hundreds
2003	Coalition-2003	China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan	border city of Ucharal and Ili in Kazakhstan, northwest Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, China	1,300
2004	Friendship-2004	China-Pakistan	Taxkorgan Tajik Autonomous County, Xinjiang, China	200
2005	Peace Mission-2005	China-Russia	Vladivostok-Shandong Peninsula	10,000
2006	Coordination-2006	China-Tajikistan	Kulyab, Tajikistan	500
2006	Friendship-2006	China-Pakistan	the hilly area of northern Abbottabad, Pakistan	400
2007	Peace Mission-2007	China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan	Chelyabinsk in Ural Mountains region in Russia and Urumqi	4000
2007	Strike-2007	China-Thailand	Guangzhou, Guangdong, China	60
2007	Cooperation-2007	China-Russia	Moscow, Russia	Unknown
2009	Peace Mission-2009	China-Russia	Far east area in Russia and the Shenyang Military Area	2600

				Command in northeast China
2010	Peace Mission-2010	China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan	Kazakhstan	5,000
2012	Peace Mission-2012	Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan	the "Chorukh-Dayron" shooting range near the Khujand city of Tajikistan	2000
2013	Peace Mission-2013	China-Russia	Chelyabinsk in Ural Mountains region in Russia and Urumqi	1,500
2013	Border Coalition Resolution-2013	China-Kyrgyzstan	the border between the two nations	1075
2013	joint military exercise	China-India	Chengdu Military Area Command	160
2014	Peace Mission-2014	China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan	Zhurihe Training Base, in Inner Mongolia in North China	7000
2015	The Hand-in-Hand 2015 counter-terrorism drill	China-India	Yunnan province in China	175
2015	Red River No. 1-2015	China-Vietnam	Hekou, China	170
2016	Peace Mission-2016	China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan	Edelweiss training area in Balykchy of Kyrgyzstan	1100
2016	Red River No. 2-2016	China-Vietnam	Hekou County, Yunnan province in China; Lào Cai in Vietnam	Unknown
2016	Blue Strike-2016	China-Thailand	Sattahip Naval Base, Chon Buri province, Thailand	Unknown
2017	Cooperation 2017	China-Russia	Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui autonomous region	64
2017	Tianshan III	China-Kyrgyzstan	in Artux, Kezilesu Kirgiz autonomous prefecture	700
2018	Dragon Gold 2018	China-Cambodia	Maras Prov Mountains	496

The anti-terrorism drills with neighbouring countries highlight the utility and limitations of the friend/enemy distinction in China's counter-terrorism discourse. First, the lack of counter-terrorism cooperation between China and the West indicates

the lack of consensus on the definition of terrorism and its conflation with separatism. As Duchâtel and Ekman (2015, 1) point out, terrorism is understood mainly in the context of separatist movements in Xinjiang, while many Europeans perceive terrorism in the context of the attacks on values such as freedom of speech. In a word, the West does not agree with the friend/enemy distinction in China's counter-terrorism discourse. The general positive attitude towards separatists such as Rebiya Kadiya and the Dalai Lama in the West forestalls China-West counter-terrorism cooperation.

Second, as Aris (2009, 457) argues, the focus on terrorism has won favour among other member states of the SCO. In particular, member states share an interests in tackling ethnic-based separatism and Muslim fundamentalism (Lanteigne 2005, 129). Among 13 SCO drills, 8 (62%) were associated with the goal of the "three forces". Because member states share an understanding of separatism as potentially linked to external enemies abroad, they seldom challenge each other upon the designation of terrorist organisations, which makes it easier to target groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Hizb ut-Tahrir, the Islamic Jihad Union, the East Turkistan Islamic Movement, and the Eastern Turkistan Liberation Organization as terrorist organisations, some of which are not recognised by the West.

In addition, the cooperation between China and its neighbouring countries on terrorism underlines the shared anxiety over "colour revolutions" (Yuan 2010, 862). As Piekos and Economy (2015) point out, China and Russia have the same fear of colour revolutions that have overthrown several post-Soviet governments, and this has shaped the overall mission of the SCO. Russian and Chinese officials regard US-led democratisation as part of its "peaceful evolution" that threatens their interests (Weitz 2006, 161). According to Yuan Jingdong (2010, 863) the "colour revolution" in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, and the 2005 Andijan incident in Uzbekistan have made Russia re-assess the role of the SCO and engage more actively in counter-terrorism cooperation. The SCO annual meetings in 2005 became an opportunity for its member states to "vent their frustration with the US in general and US critiques of their non-democratic political systems in particular" (Olcott 2006, 2). A month before the military exercise of the SCO in 2005, Uzbekistan gave a notice to the US to leave its military base in Uzbekistan.

Some observers (Turner 2005; Aris 2009) question whether the SCO constitutes an anti-Western bloc. Although it remains uncertain whether China's aim is to seek to undermine the Western dominance in the international community, it is clear that it is utilising the shared anti-Western sentiment to rally support from its neighbouring countries to fight against terrorism. The development of the SCO and China's active

participation in anti-terrorism drills illustrates China's growing reliance on international institutions to justify and promote its own concept of security and terrorism. As Lanteigne (2005, 2) argues, doing so helps the CCP create a more effective foreign policy, and protect its valuable domestic interests.

5.6 Development policy

This section examines how the CCP has combined economic development with counter-terrorism efforts based on the assumption of a developmental approach to security discussed in Section 4.2.2. Political elites perceive development as a key to solving non-traditional security problems and have sought to temper the often-heavy-handed counter-terrorism measures with economic growth. Wang Yi, China's Foreign Minister, elaborated the CCP's position on terrorism based on his perception of the causes of the threats at the Munich Security Conference. According to Wang Yi (2002) China's security policy is designed in response to the causes of non-traditional security challenges that are rooted in its complicated historical background. In response, China's security policy is primarily about national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. It also serves to ensure stability and development, which in turn creates security. According to Xi Jinping (2014a), "development is the basis of security, and security is the condition of development".

The rationale of the developmental approach to security is also reflected in the short-term and long-term counter-terrorism efforts. According to Wang Yi (2002), China's counter-terrorism strategy deals with both the "symptoms" that are apparent at the present and the "root causes" in the long run. This means that political elites believe that there are more profound reasons for terrorism other than the causes that terrorist groups claim. In China's political discourse, this implies that terrorism is caused by the complicated "international situation" in which some Western countries interfere in other countries' domestic affairs in the name of ethnic and religious issues (see discussion on Jiang's understanding of the "international situation" in Section 4.2.3).

In Chinese academic writings, the root causes are more explicitly associated with American hegemony, globalisation, colonialism and power politics (M. Yang 2002, 57; C. Wang 2006, 102). The scholarship on root causes of terrorism provides the context in which to understand what Wang Yi calls the "complicated international environment". Yang Mingjie conducted interviews with a number of leading scholars specialised in terrorism research and ethnic studies. The opinions of the interviewees reflect the propensity of Chinese scholars to blame the West, especially the US for causing and exacerbating terrorism. Fang Jinying states that the nascence of terrorism

is to a large extent related to the colonialism of the European countries, and that the colonial rule in many countries sowed the seeds of ethnic and religious conflict. Li Wei adds that Western countries have always been more tolerant of the right wing than the left, which has partly led to the growth of extremist right-wing terrorism (M. Yang 2002, 56). Chen Jiejun argues that the unjust in international politics due to some US foreign policies that impose its own values on others provided the pretext for some organisations to resort to terrorism (M. Yang 2002, 56). Wang Cungang highlights the direct and indirect US involvement in anti-communist activities that used terrorism as a tactic, which has resulted in retaliation by the victim countries (C. Wang 2006, 103).

In the light of the “complicated international environment”, Xi established at the Second Central Xinjiang Conference that “the goal of Xinjiang work is social stability and long-term peace. We need to adhere to this goal, and use it as a guiding principle. All the other work needs to be developed around this goal” (Hongxiao Wang 2014). At the second session of the 9th Party Committee Plenary session the relationship between economic development and social stability was emphasised. It was explicated that economic development and the improvement of wellbeing should be the basis of governance in Xinjiang, which should contribute to the goal of social stability and harmony (*Fenghuang* 2017).

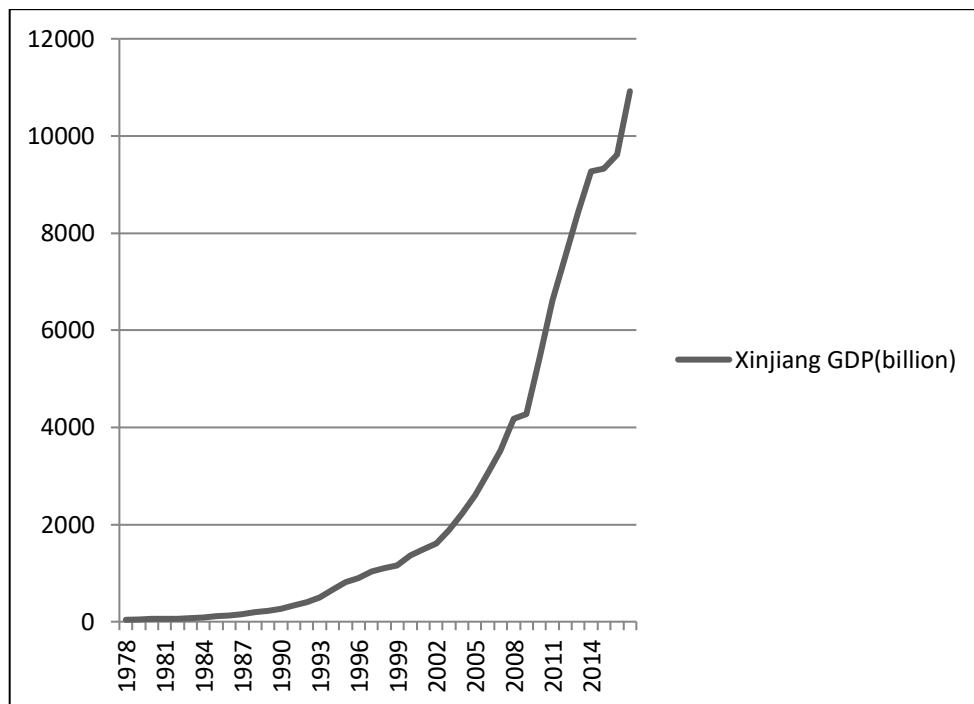


Figure 17 Xinjiang GDP from 1978 to 2017 (Statistic Bureau of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region 2016; T. Sun and Gu 2018)

The central authority pays great attention to the development of Xinjiang as a source of long-term stability. The achievements in economic development have been used as

a major source of legitimacy (see The Information Office of the State Council 2003). As the above figure shows, the GDP of Xinjiang has skyrocketed over the last three decades.

The government's emphasis on economic development in order to achieve peace and national unity can be seen from the two Xinjiang Work Conference. At the first Conference in May 2010, the CCP decided to reinforce the extant policy of "leapfrog development and long-term security".⁹⁵ Based on this, the second Xinjiang Work Conference emphasised the Counterpart Assistance to enhance ethnic solidarity at the national strategic level (L. Wu 2016, 10).

Xinjiang is among the less developed regions in China and contributes to the high level of regional development imbalance. The government's remedy for the imbalance is pouring resources into Xinjiang in the form of Counterpart Assistance to Xinjiang.⁹⁶ This national aid programme covers support projects regarding the economy, science and technology, education, health care and culture (China Youth Daily 2015). The Counterpart Assistance to Xinjiang is one of the major national programmes that targets a particular province over the long term. So far Xinjiang remains the only recipient region on this programme. Until 30 September 2013, 19 provinces and cities contributed 3.449 million RMB, which consists of 61.1% of the twelfth five-year plan in Xinjiang (2011-2015) (Statistic Bureau of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region 2015). In line with the CCP's developmental approach to security, political elites focus on the economic development as the core of the overall Xinjiang governance strategy (Xinhua 2014a).

The rapid rate of economic growth in Xinjiang has improved the government's legitimacy and counter-balanced the erosion of its legitimacy due to its heavy-handed counter-terrorism measures. An article in the *South China Morning Post*, a Hong Kong English-language newspaper, points out that "[e]conomic development alone will not solve the problem of terrorism" (Jun 2015). Despite the efforts to reduce the income inequality between the coastal east and the landlocked west in China, the inequalities within Xinjiang remain.

Chinese scholars have sought to normalise the inequalities in Xinjiang by arguing that they are part of a broader problem in China. They see the inequalities in the context of economic growth which is rooted in the society that is in a period of transition (Wenwei Tian 2011; Houdi Yang 2006). Some scholars consider the problems caused by unequal development in Xinjiang within the broader social dynamics in terms of

⁹⁵ leapfrog development and long-term security: 跨越式发展和长治久安

⁹⁶ Counterpart Assistance: 对口援疆

the regional gap between western China and the coastal areas, the gap between the urban and rural areas, and the differences between sectors and communities (Jie Li 2012, 11).

Framing the inequalities in Xinjiang as part of the inequalities in China deflects people's attention away from the negative impact of the policies targeting Xinjiang. Indeed, according to official statistics (National Bureau of Statistics of the PRC 2017), the Gini coefficient in China in general is showing a general improvement in terms of equality. However, the uncritical acceptance of the developmental approach to security might over-simplify the causes of the violence in Xinjiang.

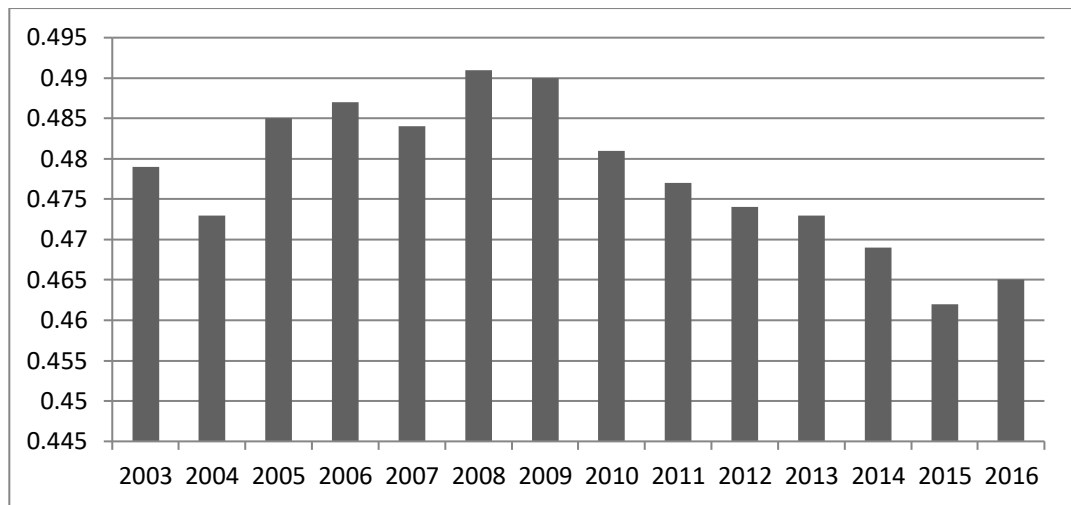


Figure 18 Gini Coefficient in China from 2003 to 2016 (created from data by National Bureau of Statistics of the PRC)

The government is not entirely insensitive to the inequalities within Xinjiang. In the context of counter-terrorism, a local official in Xinjiang, Zhu Xuebing said that de-radicalisation is a “systematic project” that needs to be implemented in conjunction with other development policies (F. Chen 2015e). Local official Zhang Jisheng argues that young Uyghurs who wander on the streets are usually jobless and from a lower educational background, and have poor skills in mandarin Chinese, and low employability (F. Chen 2015e).

To improve employment, the CCP has proposed “Employment First”, which aims to provide at least one person with a job in families in which no-one is employed (Xinhua 2014d).⁹⁷ The fact that the government support is provided to families, rather than individuals, reflects China's culture, which prioritises collective interests over individual interests. “A family can receive almost 2500-3000 Yuan from national, regional or local government subsidies” (F. Chen 2015e).

⁹⁷ Employment First: 就业第一

The CCP has introduced some policies to improve the employability of individuals who are deemed vulnerable to radicalisation. Local governments have provided more job opportunities by opening clothing and carpet factories, and the locals are recruited by the public services, for example as security guards, sanitation workers, and urban management officers (F. Chen 2015e).

Zhu Xuebing also raises the issue of gender inequality in de-radicalisation. He argues that jobless women are particularly vulnerable to religious extremism if they are from a lower educational background and enjoy a lower status at home. His argument demonstrates some limited attempts to improve women's status, though their understanding of the problem is still based on the assumption of women's role at home. Zhu states that these women are an important target for de-radicalisation because they "have a direct influence on children".

Zhu also implies that it is not enough to simply fund unemployed people; it is the responsibility of the government to cultivate people to be diligent. He states that the local government has done "everything it can think of", and it is important to encourage people to "get rich from their own labour" (F. Chen 2015e).

To encourage jobless young Uyghurs to improve their employability, the local government provides them with free vocational training (F. Chen 2015e). In some cases, the government even provides incentives to achieve this goal. Local official Zhang Jisheng designed an incentive mechanism to award each trainee a bursary of 10 RMB per day. If they are able to obtain the certificate after three months of training, they will be awarded another 5 Yuan per day. The training usually takes place in the slack seasons when young labours are not likely to be recruited for farming. All of the trainees are gathered in November for a month of military training, and then half a month is spent on public policies, for example, on the Marriage Law, birth control policy, and prevention and treatment of AIDS, before they are given training on specific skills (F. Chen 2015e).

In addition to vocational training, preferential policies in education have also been introduced to improve the employability of the Uyghurs. The preferential policy for college entrance varies slightly each year, but in essence it lowers the requirement for ethnic minorities to enter higher education. For example, in 2017, the 11 minorities in Xinjiang who took the exam in Chinese were given an extra 50 points out of 750 if both of their parents were from ethnic minorities. An extra 10 points were given to the examinee if one of his/her parents was from an ethnic minority (Admission Office of XUAR 2017).

Despite the government's intention to minimise the inequalities between ethnic groups, this positive discrimination has inadvertently reinforced the division between

the Han and the Uyghurs. Chen and others (2009, 110) argue that because of the lower entry requirement to the college, Uyghur students are less competitive in the job market than their Han counterparts. Some Uyghurs parents have also criticised such policies for making their children “sluggish” and “incompetent” (L. An 2011).

The division caused by preferential treatment can be seen from a case of “inland Xinjiang class”.⁹⁸ The “inland Xinjiang class” is a mechanism aimed at providing better access for Uyghur students to higher education and improving the integration of the Uyghurs into the current education system. Since 2000, 1000 middle school graduates from Xinjiang have been admitted every year into the cities, where more advanced educational resources are available (Ministry of Education 2000). High schools of good quality and with good facilities are selected to admit these students (Ministry of Education 2000). Priority is given to those students in less developed areas as well as ethnic minorities and girls (Ministry of Education 2000). The number of admitted students has increased by 11 times in the last decade. As of 2015, 37,000 students had graduated from the Xinjiang class (K. Ma 2015a). The official documents repeatedly emphasise that the function of the Xinjiang class is to improve national unity and state security. Some schools explicitly treat the Xinjiang class as the “opportunity to promulgate the Party’s ethnic policy and Xinjiang work” and set up a fund for education of political ideology (Jiangsu Kou’an Middle School 2018). Some schools emphasise their efforts in resisting the infiltration of the “three forces” into the Xinjiang class (Zhengzhou 7th School 2012).

However, self-segregation remains after these students enter the inland school where they are surrounded by Han Chinese. According to an interview with a minority student in a school that has a Xinjiang class, compared to other students, those who are admitted into such a system enjoy better facilities in the same school, and have different teachers (Che 2016). Some students are not able to return home during the holidays because of the long distance between their home and the school, so the schools organise tours to local tourist spots especially for them. Uyghur students are usually gathered in a class that is separated from other Han students, though the official document does require mixing attendance with other students “when conditions permit” (Ministry of Education 2000). Some Uyghurs have experienced a change of perception of their own identity in such circumstances as a result of the Xinjiang class. As the interviewee observed, because they were gathered as a small group, the difference between themselves and the rest of the Han students was highlighted. In this context, some moderate Muslims have to behave radically in order to be able to better integrate into the Muslim community, due to peer pressure and

⁹⁸ inland Xinjiang class: 内地新疆班

group polarisation. As a consequence, most of them become more radical in terms of religious inclination than they were before entering the Xinjiang class. This echoes another interviewee (Zhang Lili 2016) at the Minzu University, who stated that because Uyghur students are targeted as the key for the stability maintenance work, once there is an incident in the city, they are among the first to have their movement in and out of the university is to be limited.⁹⁹ These interviews demonstrate that the impact of the Xinjiang class on ethnic relations remains controversial.

Language is another aspect that has been assigned special importance in the context of de-radicalisation. The bilingual education in Xinjiang has been criticised by Uyghur dissidents such as Rebiya Kadeer. She (2011, 3) accused the Chinese government of eradicating the “religion, language and identity” of “her people”. Ilshat Hassan, spokesperson of the World Uyghur Congress, claims that the Chinese government aims to eliminate the identity, tradition, and belief of the Uyghurs through bilingual education (Si 2015b). As discussed in Section 2.2.1, scholars such as Smith (2002) and Dwyer (2005) also believe that China’s assimilationist language policy contributes to the exacerbation of ethnic tensions.

However, from the perspective of Chinese political elites and scholars, language is the very key to improving the employment rate of young Uyghurs, which in theory should lead to the appeasement of the socio-economic grievances of the Uyghurs in general. This perception echoes a quantitative study on the income gap between the Uyghur and the Han in Xinjiang which shows that the language barrier is one of the causes of the low employment rate among the Uyghurs (Jiabin Han and Yu 2009, 75). To improve the employability of the Uyghurs, in 2014, 530 million RMB was allocated for bilingual education and relevant training (L. Zhang 2014). Both financial and human resources have been allocated to improve the bilingual education in Xinjiang (X. Zhao 2016). A local official refuted the allegation of assimilation that promoting national language is not a form of Han chauvinism (F. Chen 2015b). According to him, bilingual education reflects the responsibility of government regarding the prosperity of the ethnic groups.

We implement bilingual education from the kindergarten level. From the end of last year, all the children above three years old must attend kindergarten, all fees exempted. Where it is insufficient I use the budget (F. Chen 2015b).

The local government provides free bilingual education and officials believe that this is the key to facilitating better communication between ethnic minorities and the Han majority, and thus the key to improving the employability of the former. This reflects

⁹⁹ stability maintenance: 维稳

the officials' condescending rationale that the government knows better than the minorities themselves and therefore it is entitled to coerce individuals to receive a public service that is likely to be bundled together with patriotic education that emphasises national unity. This coerced patriotic education might be one of the reasons for the resistance of the Uyghurs.

The government's efforts to improve integration are not focused on the Uyghurs alone. Local government also require their officials to learn local minority languages in order to ease the existing tensions between the Uyghur masses and the Han cadres. An official document requires government officials at all levels in Xinjiang to learn the local ethnic language (XUAR People's Congress 1993)¹⁰⁰. The governments at the local level are required to support the ethnic minorities to learn the national language in order to improve their ability to engage in social affairs (XUAR People's Congress 1993).

From the analysis above, it can be seen that although Chinese political elites and scholars do not see economic growth alone as the solution to the socio-economic grievances of the Uyghurs, they attach great importance to equality and the employment of the Uyghurs. Local officials have sought to improve the inequalities by introducing preferential policies, vocational training and language training. However, such efforts do not always improve integration and social cohesion. They reflect the condescending rationale of government officials in dealing with ethnic relations which has mixed consequences. The preferential policies in terms of the College Entrance Exam may also be counter-productive because lower standards for college admission risk making the Uyghurs less competitive in the job market. In order to improve the employability of the Uyghurs, local governments have implemented a series of policies that involve both coercion and incentive mechanisms. Officials discuss these development efforts in the context of de-radicalisation, which indicates that they place employment at the core of de-radicalisation at the local level.

5.7 Religious policy

The discussion of China's religious policy helps to understand Chinese political elites' and intellectuals' understanding of the impact of religion on national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as their perception of "illegal religious activities".

The religious policy in China is based on the assumption of an absolute separation of religious affairs and politics (National People's Congress 2004). As discussed in Section

¹⁰⁰ There are 53 identified ethnic groups other than the Han and the Uyghur.

4.3.3, Jiang Zemin (1993) was especially concerned with Western sympathisers and support for religious groups that are hostile to the CCP. Jiang believed that with the support of external hostile forces, domestic separatists develop their underground networks and compete for the leadership with patriotic believers. According to Jiang (1993), the interference in the executive, the judiciary, education, marriage and life have hindered the development of some regions. Worrying about the ability of religious groups such as Falun Gong to rally support from sympathetic groups and publications such as Amnesty International (2016), Freedom House (2015), and *The Diplomat* (Browde 2016), the CCP has always been concerned about the loyalty of religious groups within China. Although the Constitution advocates religious freedom for all, the CCP officially forbids Party members from adopting any religious faith according to the Marxist view on religion. Jiang (1993) required Communist party members to “firmly establish the Marxist outlook on religion” and fulfil their obligations to promote atheism. Xi (2016) emphasised this at the National Religious Work Conference in April 2016, stating that “Communist Party members must be firm Marxist atheists”. The following quote from Sang Linfeng (2016) illustrates the difference between “citizens” and “Party members”. It implies that by pledging loyalty to the Party, an individual chooses to agree with the Marxist understanding of religion, reject religion and promote atheism.

Citizens have religious freedom, but party members must not believe in religion, they must not take part in religious activities. This is determined by the nature of the Party and the worldview of the Communists.

Many observers outside China have accused the CCP of violating religious freedom based on it banning its the Party members from fasting during Ramadan which resulted in increased ethnic tensions (VOA 2015; RFA 2015). Alim Seitoff, spokesperson of the World Uyghur Congress, argues that the ban targets all of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang particularly those who receive pensions from the government (VOA 2015). A report by the Uyghur American Association (2013) pointed out that the ban actually affects all of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Human Rights China (Meng 2014) points out that the extension of the ban to the entire Uyghur population started after the Urumqi Riots in 2009, indicating the government’s attempt to contain the spread of terrorism by restricting religious activities.

In a broader context, political elites and intellectuals are concerned about the impact of the growing religiosity of Muslims on radicalisation. Their concerns can be understood in the context of the development of Islam since the Cultural Revolution. The global Islamic resurgence in the 1970s and 1980s (Esposito 1992, 11) coincided with the last few years of the Cultural Revolutions in China (W. Yan 2006, 138). The Cultural Revolution was notorious for the suppression of religious practice. According

to Shichor (1994, 77), the Cultural Revolution “victimized Muslims, hurt their feelings, ridiculed their beliefs and customs and upset their institutions”. Bhattacharya (2003, 371) suggests that during the Cultural Revolution, the CCP pursued a brutal policy of destroying non-Chinese cultures.

The end of the Cultural Revolution was not only the end of suppressive religious policies but also a turning point for inter-ethnic relations. Islam boomed when the CCP attempted to remedy the worsened ethnic relations due to the repression of religion. According to Yan Wenhui’s (2006, 138) study, after the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the CCP in 1979, Islamic practice was gradually brought back to normal. The CCP has rehabilitated the reputation of 7,000 Muslims, provided economic compensation, and recruited believers in the People’s Congress, the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, and encouraged their participation in religious groups (W. Yan 2006, 138). 15 million RMB was allocated to rebuilding religious venues that were damaged during the Cultural Revolution (W. Yan 2006, 138).

In the interim period of relaxation of religious policy, Islam was able to develop at a high rate. According to Ma Pinyan (2003, 74), currently the number of mosques has exceeded far exceeds the normal needs for religious activities, and the density of such buildings exceeds that in many countries that have a large Muslim population, including Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt and Iran. Until 1998, there were 24,000 mosques in Xinjiang (P. Ma 2003, 74).

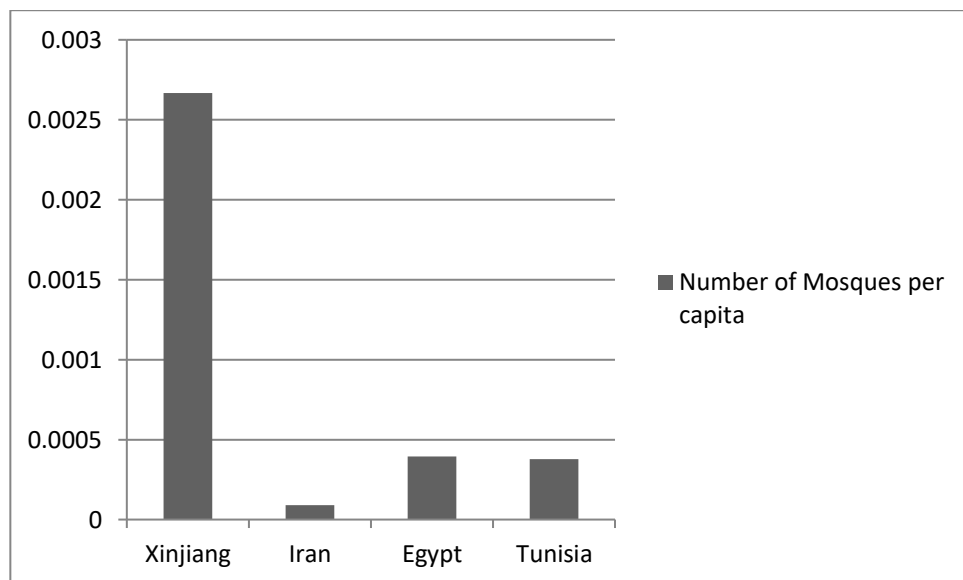


Figure 19 Number of mosques per capita, adapted from Ma’s (2003, 74) data

Besides the number of mosques, the extravagant architectural style of the mosques has raised concerns among Chinese officials regarding the influence of the Islam on the Chinese secular political system (State Bureau of Religious Affairs 2017). Zhang

Yantong, Vice-Director of the State Bureau of Religious Affairs, expressed his opposition to mosques “blindly copying” foreign architecture. Yang Faming, the Chair of the Islamic Association of China, maintains that the Association must guide the Muslim masses to understand the importance of sinicising Islam in China. “Islam can take root in China only if it adjust itself to the Chinese society and integrates into Chinese culture” (State Bureau of Religious Affairs 2017).

Although the number and architectural style of the mosques alone cannot explain the radicalisation of China’s Muslims, some Chinese scholars consider the sheer scale of the demand for so many mosques an indicator of the increased degree of religiosity of China’s Muslims. They believe that the Islamic revival across the world is associated with the evolution of international Islamic organisations such as the World Muslim Congress (Jie Chen and Zhang 2016, 74). The revival has notably been marked by an increase in the Muslim population from 43 million, or 17.06 % of the world’s population (Kettani 2010), to 1.6 billion, or 23.4% of the world population (Pew Research Center 2011). Interviews with several scholars at Peking University indicated that many of them are concerned about the growing assertiveness of Chinese Muslims in identifying themselves with the international Muslim community. In particular, Scholar B argued that there has been an apparent tendency to align with Arabian culture in western provinces such as Xinjiang and Ningxia which might be linked with external funding from Arabian countries for building mosques.

In the broad context of Islamic revival, the CCP was cautious about religious freedom in general. Fearing that ideological infiltration through the channel of religion could be utilised by external hostile forces to undermine the CCP, political elites and scholars considered religious infiltration a “political question”, rather than a religious one (Zhiping Wang 2010, 59). Citing internal archives from the Headquarters of the Xinjiang Military Region, Yan Wenhui argues that from 1996 to 2000, Xinjiang saw 270 terrorist attacks and armed conflicts supported by international hostile religious organisations (W. Yan 2004, 61–62). This figure clearly points to the government’s understanding of religious activities as something that must be strictly regulated to prevent contact with external enemies.

In recent years, the CCP has further strengthened its control over religious affairs in response to the increasing Islamisation and politicisation of Islam. On 22 and 23 April 2016, Xi Jinping and other members of the political bureau attended the National Religious Working Conference (Xinhua 2016c). Previous conferences had usually been chaired by the Bureau of Religious Affairs. The sudden “level-up” of the religious working conference reflects that the leadership were paying more attention to religious affairs and sought to mobilise community members – who are believers

themselves – to work towards national unity (Xinhua 2016c). In 2018, the former State Administration for Religious Affairs was dissolved and religious affairs were brought under the control of the United Front Work Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (Xinhua 2018a). The restructuring served to “adhere to the direction of the sinicisation of religion... and take active measures to adapt religions to suit socialist society” (Xinhua 2018a).

In this context, Chinese political elites frame religious extremism as the distortion of religion and even blasphemy. In response, China’s de-radicalisation programmes are framed as the efforts to protect legal religious activities and religious freedom. As Shewket Imin, a member of the Standing Committee of the Xinjiang committee (Q. Cui and Wang 2016) puts it,

Religious extremism is not religion, nor is it a religious sect. It is a group of political forces promoting religious extremism under the guise of religion. The nature of it is anti-human, anti-social, anti-civilisation and anti-religion. In Xinjiang, the ideological basis of violent terrorist activities is religious extremism.

Although there is not been a widely agreed definition of religious extremism even within China, it is generally agreed that religion has been utilised as a tool to spread an extremist ideology aimed at a regime change to a theocracy. Ma Pinyan has written extensively on Chinese religious policy. He argues that under the guise of religion, religious extremism is a set of social ideological trends and theoretical framework aimed at creating a theocracy by distorting religious doctrine, and inciting and instigating religious fanaticism, through the use of extreme methods (S. Liu 2014).

Based on the assumption of the relationship between religion and terrorism, Chinese political elites and scholars are particularly vigilant about “illegal religious activities” and their impact on stability in Xinjiang. Many Chinese scholars had elaborated cases of illegal religious activities in Xinjiang. Chen Chao (2009, 104) observes that in Southern Xinjiang villages where religious tradition prevails, atheist party members were isolated and even forced to convert to Islam by means of slander and threats. A survey conducted in the county of Shule in Southwest Xinjiang shows that of 293 Party members, 160 (54.6%) converted to Islam; and 83.3% of the senior members were converted (W. Yan 2006, 148). According to Li Jiansheng (2004b, 33), since the 1980s there have been 9,000 cases where believers interfere in state administration, the judicial system, education and the marriage registration systems. Li’s (2004b, 33) study shows that from June 1996 to June 2006, the number of underground religious students increased by 8.84 times, and 80% of them were still attending school. In 1998, 1,320 people were investigated for “underground religious study”, 892 of whom were

involved in various kinds of illegal activities linked to ethno-nationalist separatism (Jiansheng Li 2004b, 33).

Their research highlights the link between illegal religious activities and terrorism. The following quote from Li (2004b, 33–34) is an example of both diagnostic framing and prescriptive framing. It identifies “underground religious classes” as opportunity factors that enable individuals to move a step further towards terrorism, and calls for stricter measures to ban them:

[A]s long as the underground religious classes and unregistered religious students are not banned, they will continue producing cadres who will organise illegal religious activities, and even the successors of the “three forces”, which will greatly jeopardise social stability.

Yan Wenhu (2006, 148) provides a more detailed account of the impact of religious infiltration in education among younger generations. The following quote not only elaborates the extent to which religious activities have affected the secular state system but also indicates the connection between illegal activities and radicalisation among young people:

What is worrying is that some of the Tarqas¹⁰¹ members offer basic religious courses in kindergartens organised by believers contravene state policies, claiming “we should influence children with religious belief, and plant a seed of belief in their heart”. Schools have become an important battlefield where we fight against ethno-nationalist separatism. Extremists and separatists believe that students and intellectuals are the future of the “East Turkistan”. This is why they have intensified the ideological infiltration among university and college students and teachers. Many universities and colleges in Kashgar, Khotan, and Aksu witnessed students disseminating reactionary books and pamphlets and reproducing audio-visual products. Some students even publicly wrote and disseminated reactionary pamphlets, articles and audio-visual products. Some teachers and staff supported and orchestrated these activities overtly or covertly. Islamic extremist separatists instil in these young students and teachers the so-called state of “East Turkistan”, “pan-Turkism”, and “pan-Islamism”, and lead them astray so that they would be the cat’s paw of violent incidents... Some students, influenced by the separatist propaganda, boycotted official education, and even participated in ethno-nationalist separatist activities, and became the cadres. Some students openly called the Xinjiang area in the Chinese map the “East Turkistan Republic”. In some schools in South Xinjiang, [we] often see middle school and primary school students writing reactionary poems and diary. Some teachers even

¹⁰¹ A *tarqa* is a school of Sufism that emphasises the mystical teaching and spiritual practices in seeking of *Haqiqah* (ultimate truth), brought to China in the 17th century (T. Ma 1989, 117).

hold a concurrent post as an Imam. Reactionary propaganda and its infiltration among schools have greatly corrupted school students. Some students are increasingly affected by ethno-nationalist extremism. A student in Kashgar said he wanted to piss and shit on Han Chinese, “[I] want to fight the moment I see a Han student”. According to a survey, in recent two years, in Khotan area, 47 teachers were involved in separatist organisations, 380 teachers were involved in illegal religious activities. Among underground religious students investigated by the Xinjiang Public Security Departments, most are school students. In May 2003, Xinjiang security departments have uncovered a case in which a terrorist network led by Alapati Aierken instigated university students to go abroad to receive terrorist training. This case involved 23 people from universities including Xinjiang University (W. Yan 2006, 148).

The narrative in Yan’s study clearly depicts a threatening scene where the religious outreach has begun to challenge the foundation of the rule of the CCP. His description of ethnic hatred reflects the anxiety among intellectuals about radicalisation among young generations of Uyghurs. The following assumptions can be identified from the quote.

- Uyghur parents who are devout Muslims themselves may interfere in their children’s education by resisting secular education provided by the government.
- Schools are ideological battlefields in which frames compete for legitimacy. In response to the enemies’ propaganda, the government must promote its correct ideology.
- Enemies seek to influence young generations of Uyghurs by infiltrating China’s education system.
- Framing Xinjiang as “East Turkistan Republic” is a sign of radicalisation.
- Those aligned with the enemies’ framing receive training abroad.

These assumptions reflect the fact that the threat posed by believers has been overstated by the government to justify its indoctrination. As religion is an essential part of the Uyghur identity, it is unlikely that parents will bring up their children without any influence on their choice between religion and atheism of the latter. The assumption about schools as battlefields has changed the function of education from informing to indoctrinating. The friend/enemy distinction and the label “East Turkistan Republic” have served to reconfigure the political discourse in order to justify the marginalisation of religion.

The sensitivity about the framing of Xinjiang is in line with the assumption that “East Turkistan” can only be understood as a geographic concept, and the politicisation of the terms poses a challenge to the regime (discussed in Section 4.1.3). The quote also

indicates that radicalised students receive “terrorist” training abroad. Although the author does not provide details about this, it is likely that he is referring to the East Turkistan Education and Solidarity Association which is known to have provided “scholarship” for Uyghur students to prepare them for joining the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (Qiu 2013).

The government’s stringent control clashes with Islam. The government was concerned that the religious extremists were “coercing” women into wearing the veil, while the Uyghur activists were concerned with the government’s policy of “coercing” women to take off the veil (Meng 2013). Indoctrinating patriotism into believers through coercive measures may result in resistance among devout Muslims. Dissident Meng Yuanpei (2013) argues that requiring believers to be “patriotic” itself is a distortion of religion. Some human rights organisations and scholars outside China believe the label “illegal religious activities” is used to justify “religious oppression policies” against what they see as “peaceful criticism, dissent or dissatisfaction” (Boehm 2009, 94; Becquelin 2004a, 41; Amnesty International 2004, 5; Human Rights Watch 2005, 6).

The confusion caused by labelling certain religious practices as “illegal religious activities” is also questioned within China. To clarify the concept, Li Jiansheng (2004a, 32) advocates a two-fold definition: Type 1) interfering with the secular legal system, such as building mosques without formal formalities and not registering marriages and divorces in the administrative system;¹⁰² and Type 2) illegal activities that use religion to disguise other criminal offences. According to Li, Type 1) can be categorised as a “contradiction among the people”, and cases of Type 1) usually falls under the Marriage Law, the Land Administration Law, the Regulation on the Administration of Publishing, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Assemblies, Processions and Demonstrations, or the Regulations on Administration of Sites for Religious Activities. Treating them as a “contradiction among the people” shows that Li is aware that some of these cases could have been caused by a lack of knowledge about state laws and regulations, rather than deliberate resistance to authority.

On the other hand, cases of Type 2 may involve both a “contradiction among the people” and a “contradiction between ourselves and the enemy”. These cases usually

¹⁰² Some Muslims tend to follow the Islamic tradition in holding weddings and funerals and do not register at the state’s administration system. This may impede the government’s ability to keep a record of demographic information. Without the record in the household system (户口制度), the government loses the track of many aspects of individuals’ life, such as how many houses can an individual purchase, and which school their children go to. It may also result in polygamy and child marriage.

fall under the Criminal Law or the Regulations on the Administrative Penalties for Public Security. Li (2004a, 32) believes that these cases are, in essence, political, given that such activities are often “manipulated” and “utilised” by ethno-nationalist separatists. The categorisation according to Mao’s idea of two types of contradictions indicates Li’s rationale in identifying “friends” and “enemies”. First, as discussed in Section 4.2.1, the categorisation justifies the different treatment based on the perception of the friend/enemy distinction, which contravenes the principle of equality before the law. Second, in the Chinese legal system, the penalty may vary according to the “circumstances” of the offence, as discussed in Section 5.3.2, which places pressure on the judiciary the pressure to maintain justice by correctly identifying the “circumstances”. Third, the judiciary follows the principle of “combining leniency with severe punishment”, and in the context of counter-terrorism, some cases are subject to a “severe penalty” simply because of the alleged link with terrorism.¹⁰³ This may also result in a violation of the equality principle and undermine due process.

Some scholars believe that the cases that Li categorises as Type 2 should not be considered as “religious activities” at all due to their political nature. According to Ma Pinyan (P. Ma 2003, 73), if religion is only used to disguise the nature of the activity, then this activity cannot be defined as “illegal religious activity”. He identifies the following cases as “purely political activities”.

- cultivating separatists and counterrevolutionary cadres in the name of religion
- causing disturbances, and inciting the masses who are ignorant of the facts to have an illegal assembly and demonstrations, assaulting and robbing the Party, political, military, and public security departments in the name of religion
- undermining ethnic solidarity and challenging national unity in the name of religion (P. Ma 2003, 73).

In addition, Ma proposes that the fundamental difference between politically motivated activities and genuine religious activities is whether the believer is seeking to seize power and realise religious rule. Ma argues that we should pay attention not only to what the ideology says, but also to what it does; as long as its goal is the regime, it is not a matter of religion, but a matter of politics (S. Liu 2014).

Although he attempts to separate politically motivated cases from purely religious activities, his criteria for identifying the political nature of the cases are still vague. Many activities can be interpreted as political in the Chinese political context, such as posting a video of kindergarten children reciting the Quran, using the *halal* logo on

¹⁰³ combining leniency with severe punishment: 宽严相济

daily necessities such as water, paper, toothpaste and cosmetics, and using Arabic script on road signs. These cases are interpreted as signs of radicalisation in China (Ye 2016b). Using Ma's criteria, these cases can be considered as politically motivated and thus should be regulated, which clearly reflects the obsession with keeping every aspect of life under control.

Scholars are aware of the deficiencies of the current policies that control religion as a political issue. Ma recognises the risk of blurring the boundary between a "religious issue" and a "political issue". He is concerned that not making a distinction between politically motivated incidents disguised as religious activities and genuine religious activities puts the legitimacy of China's counter-terrorism strategy at risk and feeds into the sentiment that separatists use to recruit sympathisers, which is the very aim of separatists (P. Ma 2003, 73). Furthermore, Feng Xiaozhi (2014) points out that criminalising all religious activities outside state-sanctioned religious venues contravenes the commitment to religious freedom written in the Constitution.

However, undoubtedly, it is not always easy to draw a clear-cut line between religious activities and politics. For example, in many cases, an unregistered religious school is used as a venue for separatist and terrorist activities (Jiansheng Li 2004a, 33). Using Li's categorisation, starting a religious school without registration is categorised as Type 1, while carrying out separatist and terrorism activities is categorised as Type 2. According to an estimation based on internal data, in 1998, among 1,320 unregistered religious students, 892 were involved in separatist criminal offences (Jiansheng Li 2004a, 33). This concern is also seen in officials' statements. According to Zhang Xiuming (2009, 142), former Secretary of the Central Politics and Legal Affairs Commission, from 1999, many of the underground religious schools have become the venues for terrorism.

Data from China Judgements Online provide some information on the judgements regarding of illegal religious activities. Following several terror attacks in 2014, there was a major crackdown on illegal religious activities in 2015. According to the judgements available online, among all the cases involving illegal religious activities from November 2013 to January 2017, 29.63% were criminal cases, and 19% took place in Xinjiang. and 48% of these cases were judged in 2015, coinciding roughly with the one-year Strike Hard campaign against terrorism. In some cases, illegal religious activities are indeed closely connected to terrorism. In the case of Abudujielili Maitinasier, illegal religious activity refers to renting a house to store terrorist property – remote-controlled bombs (Higher People's Court of Xinjiang Uygur 2014). In the case of Aini Aisan, it refers to watching and listening to violent terrorist video

and audio, terrorist training, inciting attacks on patriotic believers, and assign others to carry out terror attacks (Higher People’s Court of Xinjiang Uygur 2015).

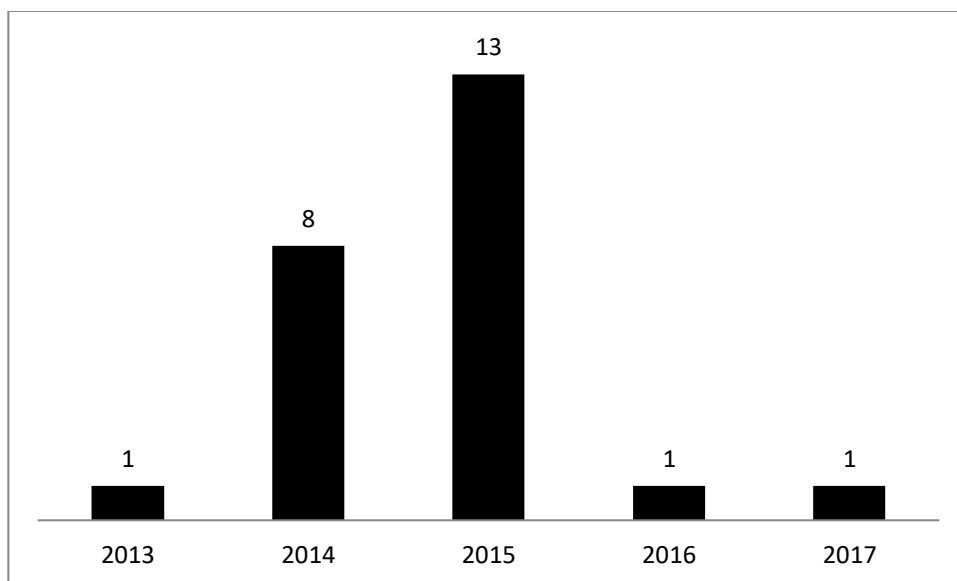


Figure 20 Number of cases involving illegal religious activities, created with data from China Judgements Online

The anxiety about illegal religious activities among political elites and intellectuals is translated into various policies that tighten the control over religion. Local governments’ interpretation of the policy made by the central authorities demonstrates how the guidelines made at the state level can be translated into heavy-handed regulations at the local level. Local authorities make more specific regulations based on the guideline provided at the state level, according to the local circumstances. On 19 March 1996, the central authority released the *Memo of the Political Bureau on the Stability Maintenance of Xinjiang*, also known as *No.7 Document of the Central Government*, which targets illegal religious activities to be the major threat to the stability of Xinjiang. This document is no longer circulated on government websites, but its influence remains, as evidenced by the references made to it in other official documents (Organisation Department of the Communist Party of China 1996) and by Wang Lequan, former Party Secretary of Xinjiang (CCTV 2008). This document is the first attempt to clarify the concepts of “illegal religion” and “reactionary religious groups and forces” (CCTV 2008). It outlaws all religious activities that violate the state Constitution, laws, regulations, policies, ordinances, and rules at both the levels of the state and autonomous regions (Xiaoxia Li 2015).

On 14 June 2017, the State Council passed the amended *Regulations on Religious Affairs* based on the 2005 version. The amended version increases the power of the government in regard to keeping track of religious groups, schools, venues, personnel, activities, and property (see State Council 2017). In essence the *Regulations* further

reinforced the dichotomy between legal and illegal religious activities laid out in the *No.7 Document*.

According to Article 63 of the Legislation Law (People's Congress 2015), the provincial People's Congress shall enact local decrees according to the specific conditions of the jurisdiction. In 2013, the Xinjiang local government released *Several Opinions on Governing Illegal Religious Activities and Curbing the Infiltration of Religious Extremism (Provisional)* to guide counter-terrorism practice (The Party Committee General Office of the XUAR and The People's Government of the XUAR 2014). In accordance with the *Opinions*, local governments issued various documents with the aim of addressing the question of how to identify "illegal" and "extremist" religious activities. Two documents were published, in 1997 and 2011, both of which were entitled *Opinions on Defining Illegal Religious Activities*, but only the one published in 2011 can be found on the government website as part of another document, also known as the *26 Forms of Illegal Religious Activities* (The Party Committee General Office of the XUAR and The People's Government of the XUAR 2014). The translation of this document can be found in Appendix 2.

What is new in this document is that offences that were previously regarded as interference in the secular administrative system can now be punished under the Anti-Terrorism Law. Although the document clarifies that there might be cases in which the circumstances are relatively minor and do not constitute a criminal offence, the cases shall still be handled under *the Anti-Terrorism Law* and *the Law of the Public Security Administration Punishments Law*.

Similarly, Turpan Prefectural Administrative Office published the "21 bans" based on the National Security Law, the Criminal Law, the Marriage Law, the Law of the Penalties for Administration of Public Security, the Administrative Penalties Law, and the Regulation on Religious Affairs (Tulufan Prefectural Administrative Office 2013). Another document published on the government website of United Front in Xinjiang lists 75 manifestations of "extremist religious activities", starting with a declaration that "religious extremism is not religion". In 2017, the *Ordinances on De-radicalisation in XUAR* (People's Congress 2017) listed 15 manifestations of radicalisation that are banned, based on the Constitution, the Anti-Terrorism Law, and the *Regulation on Religious Affairs*. The translation of this document can be found in Appendix 1.

Combined with the broad definition of terrorism and the wide range of legal liabilities outlined in the Anti-Terrorism Law, as discussed in Section 5.3, these documents target a wide range of religious practices as signs of radicalisation and have resulted in further expansion of the state's power in terms of regulating religion by putting it in the context of counter-terrorism.

It is worth noting that many of these documents are not available on the government websites. Some of those that were once published have been deleted. A possible reason for this is that government officials realise that these documents are controversial, given that the published documents are always subject to criticism by dissidents and human rights groups abroad. However, based on the observation and interviews in Xinjiang, these documents were circulated. In particular, political departments (XUAR Party School 2017) and schools (Xinjiang Police College 2017; Xinjiang Normal College 2017) were active in studying and promulgating the *Ordinances on De-radicalisation in XUAR*.

Other evidence also shows the extent to which these documents were circulated. A memo on a the “Religious Policy and Regulations Study Month” at the XPCC shows that 1,200 copies of the *26 Forms of Illegal Religious Activities* were disseminated in the army, schools and religious venues within the first quarter of 2012 (Bureau of Religious Affairs of Xinjiang Production and Construction Corporation 2012).

Despite limited access to the official de-radicalisation documents online, the attempts to identify specific manifestations of religious extremism have caused a firestorm of criticism among Uyghur activists and dissents outside China. As discussed above, the Chinese government’s attempts to identify “illegal religious activities” are sometimes interpreted as the repression of “peaceful criticism, dissent or dissatisfaction” (Boehm 2009, 94; Becquelin 2004a, 41; Amnesty International 2004, 5; Human Rights Watch 2005, 6). However, as the discussion of the scholarly works on the growing religiosity shows, scholars provide sufficient evidence for the government to tighten its control over religion. Therefore, in the eyes of political elites and intellectuals, these policies are a response to, rather than the cause of, radicalisation.

Among other criticisms, Chinese scholars reject the criticism of China’s ban on the *Jilbab*.¹⁰⁴ They point out the complexity of the situation in Xinjiang and the fact that other states, including Western countries, have banned the burqa. Article 9(7) of the *Ordinances on de-radicalisation in XUAR* (People’s Congress 2017) stipulates wearing or forcing others to wear the *Jilbab* is a sign of radicalisation. Dilxat Raxit, spokesperson of the World Uyghur Congress, states that the ban on the full-face Islamic veil is “a typical discriminatory measure...which add[s] to an increasing

¹⁰⁴ Jilbab is a kind of long outer garment worn by some Uyghur women. The Chinese official media use it to refer to the black enveloping garment that covers the entire body except the eyes (*People’s Daily Online* 2014b) which is known as burqa in many Western countries.

confrontation between Uighurs and Beijing” (*Agence France-Press* in Beijing 2014). For Chinese officials, women wearing the full-face veil and men having beards implicate a social phenomenon that is much more complicated than the debate over religious freedom; rather, these symbols are used as a vehicle for the spread of extremism (F. Chen 2015d). Undoubtedly, most people do not intend to influence others in terms of wearing the *Jilbab*, and doing so is merely an act of piety. However, Chinese analysts believe that extremists have been entrenching the dichotomy between Han and Uyghurs by using appearance as a symbol of resistance (F. Chen 2015d). According to Pan Zhiping, many Western countries – including Belgium, France and the Netherlands and Germany – have enacted laws or regulations to ban *Jilbab*, while at the same time they judge other countries for having similar provisions. Chinese scholars believe that such an act reflects their hypocrisy and double standards (Shuangcheng Ji et al. 2015).

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of China’s counter-terrorism approach by examining several key aspects of its counter-terrorism strategy. The discourse, policy and practice in the context of China’s counter-terrorism strategy reflect China’s quest for legitimacy, as evidenced by its focus on state security. China’s counter-terrorism institution is designed to ensure, first and foremost, the security of the regime, which is constructed as a precondition for the prosperity of different ethnic groups in the big family of the Chinese nation. This assumption allows the CCP to reconfigure its political discourse to justify its heavy-handed counter-terrorism approach.

China’s counter-terrorism strategy is guided by a set of overall principles regarding its security policy. These principles have been developed overtime by different generations of political leaders, and reflect a shift from a state-centric security outlook to a human-oriented one. However, China’s counter-terrorism policy and practice have demonstrated that such a shift remains normative. Under Xi, although China’s security agenda has sought to include almost everything, the counter-terrorism agenda has clear targets, which are any threat to national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, all of which concerns mainly concern the state. On the other hand, the normative commitment cannot be dismissed entirely, as it demonstrates the struggle within the Party to balance the internal suppression of separatist movements and the external pressure to conform to international norms.

A close examination of the political discourse of counter-terrorism reveals that the CCP’s framing of terrorism has been developed from the old friend/enemy distinction between “us” and the West. The latter is often portrayed as the source of instability in many Third World countries, which has resulted in chaos and conflicts that incubate

terrorism. The CCP is deeply concerned about the unauthorised use of force in the name of humanitarian intervention by the West, for fear that such interventions in other parts of the world may encourage the Uyghurs to seek help from the West. In the eyes of Chinese political elites and intellectuals, Uyghur exiled communities, human rights activists and some Western scholars, sometimes even backed up by Western governments, share the same political agenda of undermining the legitimacy of the CCP. In order to shore up its legitimacy, the CCP believes that “correct guidance” (read indoctrination) is necessary.

Stability maintenance is an important part of the prevention mechanism in China’s counter-terrorism strategy. The CCP has developed various political slogans to guide practice. An examination of these slogans reveals that the current political discourse regarding stability maintenance has become more comprehensive and covers every aspects of people’s lives. The government has demonstrated its presence not only in the realm of politics but also in the realm of culture. The requirement to identify with the Chinese culture reflects the CCP’s hierarchical understanding of ethnic relations, wherein the national identity comes before ethnic identity.

A legal framework has been developed to allow the CCP to cooperate with international organisations and other states internationally, and to provide legal ground for the designation and trial of terrorists domestically. The friction between justice and the government’s paranoia is highlighted in the context of the vagueness of the definition of terrorism and the broad range of activities that can be punished under China’s Anti-Terrorism Law. First, the revision of the definition of terrorism reflects a certain degree of willingness to move away from legalising the violation of freedom of thought. However, the current definition is still too broad to prevent the power of the executive from targeting political opponents whom the CCP deems as a threat. Second, nonfeasance offences can be punished under the Anti-Terrorism Law, which illustrates the potential overlapping of the functions of different laws. The punishment and the media report of these cases serve to alert ordinary citizens and constantly reminding them that everyone could be the target of the Anti-Terrorism Law if they fail to abide by these stringent regulations.

Domestically, the inclusion of various social institutions, such as village committee and residents’ committee as important partners for counter-terrorism reflects an attempt to combine the mass line with the highly state-centric counter-terrorism strategy. Under Xi, the reemphasis of the mass line has encouraged policy-makers to co-opt with the grassroots in order to gain public support. Internationally, the cooperation with other, mainly SCO countries, has demonstrated the CCP’s willingness and ability to rally international support based on shared interests of anti-separatism.

Chinese political elites and scholars believe that development is the key to addressing non-traditional security threats. Linking instability to underdevelopment, the government has initiated various projects to boost Xinjiang's economy. Such efforts have had mixed consequences. While GDP has soared, inequalities have also increased, particularly between the Han and ethnic minorities. Despite the various preferential policies in favour of the ethnic minorities, the assimilationist assumption that underwrites China's integration model has exacerbated the already existing divisions between the Han and the Uyghurs. In this context, policies designed to improve employability through education and language training have raised some concerns among the Uyghurs about the assimilationist agenda to eliminate their culture.

Chinese political elites and intellectuals have always been concerned about the ability of religious groups to collude with the sympathetic groups in the West to interfere with China's domestic affairs. China has implemented a strict secularism which requires all of the Party members to be Marxist atheists. The CCP claims to protect the legal rights of religious believers in terms of their "normal" religious needs, and severely punishes "illegal religious activities". The official criteria for the latter are extremely vague, and the analysis of the discourse surrounding "illegal religious activities" reveals that this perceived threat is, to a large extent, overstated to justify the control over religious practice.

Chapter 6 Mass Line and mass mobilisation

Those who won the hearts of the people will win the world, while those who lost the hearts of the people will lose the world (Xi 2013).¹⁰⁵

The Mass Line strategy is key to the quest for legitimacy in China's counter-terrorism approach. The above quote reflects Xi Jinping's concern for mass support and the legitimacy of the CCP. The idea that legitimacy is rooted in mass support came from Mencius (Also known as Mengzi), an ancient philosopher whose status is only second to Confucius. This idea was theorised by Mao in the form of the Mass Line strategy, which was crucial to his revolution in China. This section discusses how the current leadership has reused this idea for mass mobilisation in the context of counter-terrorism.

The Mass Line approach has been conceptualised as one of the defining features of contemporary Chinese political thought. Initially raised by Li Lisan and theorised by Mao Zedong (W. Tang 2016, 5), the Mass Line approach is designed to reflect the Party's commitment to "serve the people wholeheartedly". Mao developed his theory of the Mass Line based on Marxist epistemology. The Chinese variation of Marxism focuses heavily on the interpretation of the role of the masses as makers of history. Mao connected the role of the masses with the Marxist view that knowledge should be tested through practice. Mao believed that the opinions of the masses should be gathered to inform the knowledge of the leaders and reflected in the policy-making process, and the policy made based on the knowledge gained from the masses should be tested among the masses, and this cycle should be repeated to enrich the knowledge of the leaders and to serve the people better (Z. Mao 1991b, 899)

The idea of the Mass Line approach came to maturity at the 7th National Congress on 24 April 1945, when Mao ascribed the uniqueness of the CCP to its close ties with the broadest masses of the people (Z. Mao 1945). Mao's follower Liu Shaoqi further expounded the Mass Line approach and enshrined it as the "basic political line" of the Party (Central committee of documentation 2004). However, the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 brought a series of political changes in the Chinese political circles, including the end of the Cultural Revolution and the rehabilitation of those who had been unjustly persecuted during the Cultural Revolution. Within the Party, the reflections over Mao's mistakes during the Cultural Revolution led to a debate in the Chinese political circles on Mao's achievements and mistakes. Ultimately, the "Resolution on Certain Historical Questions since the Founding of the People's

¹⁰⁵ Xi Jinping's speech at the Party's Mass Line Education Practices Working Conference, adapted from Mencius

Republic of China” (CCP 1981) passed at the 6th Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 1981 established that Mao is central to contemporary Chinese political thought. This Resolution established that the Mass Line is one of the “living soul” of the Mao Zedong Thought, the other two parts being seeking truth from facts and independence (*China Daily* 2013).

A revival of the Mass Line approach has been seen under the current President, Xi Jinping. In June 2013, the Chinese government launched a one-year Mass Line campaign to “boost ties between CPC officials, members and the people” (*Xinhua* 2013). At the Party's Mass Line Education Practices Working Conference, Xi revisited the Mass Line and re-emphasised that the close ties with the masses are what differentiates the CCP from all other political parties, the ties with the masses are the reasons for the progress of the party, and therefore the Mass Line approach is decisive in the success of the cause of the Party (Leading group of the Party's Mass Line Education Practices 2013).

Some observers argue that this top-down political movement is likely to be a response to the socio-economic grievances that threaten the legitimacy of the government in an era of economic slowdown. According to Heath (2013), the Mass Line education campaign can be seen as a “major effort to realign party leadership and theoretical concepts with structural changes in the political economy that is likely to persist through much of Xi's tenure”. Tiezzi (2013b) points out that the Party is more concerned with legitimacy rather than according the people power and it could turn into a “mass dictatorship”.¹⁰⁶ He also argues that the revival of the Mass Line approach is not a return to the Mao era, but a vehicle that Xi uses to promote his own legacy of Core Socialist Values.

Regardless of what the real aim behind the revival of the Mass Line approach is, it is clear that the it has become a distinct rival ideology that the CCP proposes as an alternative to liberal democracy, which differentiates China from other surviving authoritarian regimes (Xi Chen 2012, 89). Xi is acutely aware of the benefit of the Mass Line approach in securing legitimacy. He frames the Mass Line as the “lifeline” and the “fundamental principle” of the party (Jingyue Xu and Zhou 2013). The following quote shows his understanding of mass support as a source of legitimacy for the CCP.

People's support concerns the life and death of the Party. Only by linking the heart, breath and destiny of the Party with the people, and always relying on the people to move forward in the history, can the Party be strong as a rock (Jingyue Xu and Zhou 2013).

¹⁰⁶ mass dictatorship: 群众专政

The combination of the Mass Line approach and China's security strategy has given birth to some security principles designed to create a sense of participation among ordinary citizens. The evolution of China's security strategy described below demonstrates a shift in the government's attitude towards de-centralisation.¹⁰⁷

The founding of the National Security Commission headed by Xi Jinping at the third plenary session of the 18th National Congress in 2013 marked the further institutionalisation of the security strategy under Xi. The new commission aims to establish a "centralised, unified, highly efficient, and authoritative national security system" (CCTV 2014). In such a highly centralised system, the role of ordinary citizens may be easily omitted. The evolving nature of security threats, as highlighted by the 9/11 attacks, urged the CCP to reform its security policy, starting with its the discourse, and slowly moving towards its practice. Against this backdrop, Xi advocated the Overall Security Outlook, which, at face value, echoes the concept of human security in the Western context, calling for a "human-oriented" approach to security (CCTV 2014), as discussed in Section 5.1. This principle resonates with the Mass Line approach in two aspects: a) national security is for the benefit of the masses; and b) national security relies on the masses (CCP 1981).

The embodiment of the Mass Line approach in China's counter-terrorism policy is most pronounced in the discourse of the People's War on Terror. In line with the Party's Mass Line Education Practices Activities, Zhang Chunxian called for improvements in the party's ability in regard to propagandising, educating, organising, and serving the masses, uniting all ethnic groups in a People's War on Terror (*People's Daily Online* 2013). The rationale was that the Mass Line approach would enable the CCP to fully mobilise the people, and thus contribute to the "consolidation of the foundation of national security" (G. Zhong 2017). Governments at all levels are required to "contact the masses strategically", and organise, mobilise, educate, and guide the masses, in order to reinforce the momentum of the "people's war on radicalisation" (Z. Zhu 2017, 2).

Since the 18th National Congress in 2012, Xi Jinping has always emphasised the importance of the Mass Line approach. He calls it the "magic weapon" - "no matter how the situation develops, the magic weapons of the people's war can never be abandoned" (Y. Han 2017). At the Politburo's 14th collective study session in 2014, Xi Jinping brought the Mass Line approach into the counter-terrorism discourse (Xinhua 2014b). His speech manifested the two aspects of the human-oriented security

¹⁰⁷ Considering the limitations of a single-party regime and the CCP's anxiety about keeping security under control, the attempts to de-centralise its security policy have been very limited.

approach. On the one hand, he emphasised that the Chinese national counter-terrorism policy is for the benefit of the masses by linking counter-terrorism practice with the vital interests of the people. According to him, the counter-terrorism practice should aim at not only territorial integrity and social stability, but also “the happiness of the people” (Xinhua 2014b).

In addition to *security for the people*, he emphasised that the Chinese counter-terrorism policy relies on the masses, in other words, *security by the people*. Given the clandestine nature of terrorist networks, Xi believes that it is important to organise various forms of activities to mobilise the masses to participate in the prevention of terrorism and security governance. To this end, Xi proposed to build “copper ramparts and iron walls” out of the people and make terrorists “rats scurrying across a street”, with everybody shouting “beat them” (Xinhua 2014b).

The metaphor of rats demonstrates the importance of the political context and historical continuities in which counter-terrorism discourse is embedded. Firstly, the metaphor of rats is symbolic in the Chinese political context. It evokes memories of “Eliminating the Four Pests” and the social structure in which ordinary citizens are empowered to fight against the enemy designated by the state.¹⁰⁸ The Eliminating the Four Pests was a political movement that aimed at eliminating rats, flies, mosquitoes, and sparrows to prevent the transmission of pestilence and disease in the early 1960s. The “rat” metaphor is not necessarily used for its effects in evoking such memories – new generations might share little collective memory with those who experienced the Eliminating the Four Pests movement. However, it saves political elites the trouble of inventing phrases that are as mobilising as the “rat” metaphor (Orwell 1968, 130).

Secondly, framing terrorists as “rats” helps reduce fear, as rats were constructed as something that could easily be defeated by ordinary citizens during the Eliminating the Four Pests movement. By comparing “terrorists” with something ordinary citizens might encounter in everyday life, Xi has turned “terrorism” into something that the public is more familiar with, thus reducing the fear caused by terrorist attacks, and encouraging the participation of ordinary citizens in counter-terrorism. In doing so, the metaphor of the rats helps the masses make sense of the reality that otherwise would be too horrible for them to understand, and develop a coping mechanism accordingly. The metaphor dehumanises “terrorists” and rejects the possibility that there might be a completely rational reason behind their seemingly insane behaviour.

Thirdly, the use of the rat metaphor normalises the official accounts of terrorist incidents and the underlying friend/enemy distinction. When ordinary citizens adopt

¹⁰⁸ Eliminating the Four Pests: 除四害

the rat metaphor, they unwittingly reinforce the dichotomy between friends and enemies and contribute to the political climate in which citizens are encouraged to identify the enemy within.¹⁰⁹ Turning ordinary citizens into intelligence collecting agencies may create a police state where it is very dangerous to sympathise with the separatist cause, considering the vague definition of terrorism and the broad scope of the Anti-Terrorism Law.

Comparing the current counter-terrorism discourse with the Eliminating the Four Pests movement can help explain the “Great Round-up”.¹¹⁰ The Eliminating the Four Pests movement was also framed as a “People’s War”. It mobilised almost the entire population to a shocking extent, whereby participating in the killing of “four pests” became a way to maintain social bonds, and those who did not participate became “abnormal”, and might be isolated from others in the society. Although the political context in China has changed greatly under Xi (see discussion in Section 4.2), the following case provides a vivid illustration of the degree of mobilisation among the public.

A violent incident took place on 28 July 2014 in Shache County in Xinjiang. Police stations and government offices were attacked by knife and axes wielding attackers. The state media framed the incident as a terrorist attack (Bai 2014). In the immediate aftermath of this incident, the state media was filled with reports about how over 30,000 volunteers, who were ordinary citizens, had helped the local police to round up and capture the suspects in Karakax County. Later, during the investigation into the incident, over 70 local residents were reported to have provided tip-offs to facilitate the operation (Bai 2014; Xinhua 2014f).

This case, as well as the propaganda associated with it through reports in the mainstream media, demonstrates the government’s intention to facilitate a transition of the role of the people in the counter-terrorism strategy – to turn the masses from the beneficiaries of the counter-terrorism policy into participants in the counter-terrorism practice (Xinhua 2014f). This case is a result of the discourse of the People’s War on Terror, and it also contributes to reinforcing this discourse. According to Mei Jianming, the participation of the public in the war on terror is an integral part of the overall counter-terrorism strategy (Xinhua 2015b). In the briefing after the investigation, Zhang Chunxian re-emphasised Xi Jinping’s rat metaphor, and the need to rely on and mobilise the ordinary citizens to form a “mighty ocean of people’s war” (Dai 2014).

¹⁰⁹ This often happens when individuals, especially government officials at the local level and students, are required to submit a reading/study note of state policies.

¹¹⁰ Great Round-up: 大围捕

The Mass Line has been written into the Anti-Terrorism Law since 2014. Article 4 of the first draft law stipulates that state counter-terrorism organs shall combine “specialised efforts” (work done by counter-terrorism experts, practitioners, government officials and so on) with the Mass Line approach. The phrase “combining specialised efforts with the Mass Line” has been created as an abbreviation for this approach. To this end, the government shall rely on and mobilise “all the state organs, armed forces, social organisations, enterprises and public institutions, villagers’ (neighbourhood) committees and individuals” (The National People’s Congress of the People’s Republic of China 2014) as discussed in Section 5.4.1.

In the first draft of the law, the focus in terms of the role of the public was placed on raising their awareness regarding the understanding of terrorism, and equipping them with relevant knowledge. At this stage, the public were not expected to do more than demonstrate a “correct” understanding of terrorism. According to Article 14, different departments would educate the public to equip them with the knowledge they would need in the face of terrorism. Some sectors, such as education, religion and propaganda departments, were required to guide the public on counter-terrorism. For example, schools were to include emergency drills into their curricula, and develop students’ knowledge on the Anti-Terrorism Law and the skills needed to prevent terrorism; ethnic and religious administrative bodies were required to guide believers to adopt a “correct” outlook on ethnicity, religion and the state, and to eliminate ethno-separatist and extremist thoughts; in addition, telecommunications, news and publication institutions, and broadcasting, film, television, and cultural institutions were required to propagate the government’s counter-terrorism policy to the public (The National People’s Congress of the People’s Republic of China 2014).

After three rounds of deliberation, the official Anti-Terrorism Law, which was passed in 2015, has further extended the role of the public. Article 5 stipulates that the “combining specialised efforts with the Mass Line” shall be centred on prevention and supplemented by *pre-emptive* and *proactive* measures against possible enemies, thereby urging the public to become more active in identifying enemies. Article 44 specifies that security organs shall improve their work at basic levels and improve intelligence gathering by engaging the public. The combination of the prevention and proactive measures carried out by the public is known as “mass prevention and mass governance” for short.¹¹¹

6.1.1 Channels of de-radicalisation propaganda

¹¹¹ mass prevention and mass governance: 群防群治

This section focuses on de-radicalisation propaganda and the channels through which the propaganda is disseminated. It shows how the official counter-terrorism discourse permeates everyday life. The wholesale control demonstrates the CCP's rationale of guiding the public to have a *correct* understanding of the signs of terrorism and who are the *enemies* are.

De-radicalisation propaganda in China comes in various forms of cultural activities. According to Huang Sanping, a local government official at the Yili Prefecture, the de-radicalisation strategy in the Prefecture is constructed through an annual Folk Festival, vocational training, and soccer and volleyball games (J. Zhu 2015). On 20 November 2014, Xinjiang government held a De-radicalisation Peasants' Art Contest which attracted 14,000 entries (W. Lin 2015). Li Yaotian, one of the judges of the Xinjiang Peasants' Art Contest, linked the talents of the people with de-radicalisation, saying "our ethnic peasant comrades in Xinjiang are extraordinary. They are versatile, talented in both singing and dancing, and they express themselves by wielding their brushes. These talents are the sword that assails religious extremist forces" (J. Zhu 2014).

De-radicalisation propaganda is disseminated through several channels and actors. The Anti-Terrorism Law stipulates that the government, the education and communication sectors, and local villagers' and neighbours' committee shall carry out propaganda on the terrorism prevention (The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China 2015).

In addition to state departments and the local community, the CCP also seeks to engage Uyghur community members, particularly influential individuals. Xi has emphasised the role of "patriotic believers" in uniting believers against religious extremism (Xinhua 2014b). Other important actors are "opinion leaders", "grassroots propagandists" (Q. Han and Zhu 2016), and "cultural workers" (Abudula and Wushouer 2014) from within the Uyghur community. The following quote is an example of an open letter by "cultural workers" (Abudula and Wushouer 2014).

In the past, the cheerful sound of suona filled the air at countryside weddings, playful love songs were full of fun, and enthusiastic meshrep ran throughout the night...while today, excellent traditions and customs inherited from the elders have been wiped away.¹¹² "Those who sing will lose their voice". "Those who play will be handicapped". "To dance is to imitate the devil". Such ridiculous arguments started and spread across [the Uyghur community]. Threatened by the "religious police", beautiful

¹¹² Suona: a kind of musical instrument. Meshrep: a type of Uyghur gathering including poetry, music, dance and conversation.

ladies are afraid to go onto the street and show their faces. [They are] covered with jilbabs except for their eyes. Even the ancestors of the Muslims, as well as our ancestors, have never seen those black robes, while they are now worshiped as traditional clothes of the Uyghurs and Muslims. Some women, and even children are following this trend blindly. Confronted with this, how can we, cultural workers and artists, stand by?

China is not the only country that pays attention to the voices of believers and community members for de-radicalisation purposes. For example, the contribution of community members is a “central and indispensable part of the UK’s Prevent strategy”. However, the way in which the partnership is implemented in China demonstrates a clear tendency to facilitate political conformity, rendering the partnership pointless in terms of improving the credibility of the official discourse. Presumably, the partnership with believers and community members is supposed to enhance the credibility of the official discourse by incorporating different voices. However, as the following discussion will show, their language closely resembles that of officials, which in fact undermines the credibility of the content. It echoes the government’s de-radicalisation policy, which puts strict restrictions on jilbabs, by pointing out the difference between “Uyghur culture” and extremist religious culture. It reinforces the stereotypical image that most Han Chinese have of the Uyghurs – a versatile people and beautiful women wearing colourful clothes.

The government promotes their perception of Uyghurs as the “correct” way that the Uyghurs should live by reinforcing this kind of stereotypical image. The following case of “Little Apple” is another example of reinforcing the “correct” lifestyle.

The government takes advantage of popular culture to disseminate de-radicalisation propaganda. Since 2014, a song called “Little Apple” has gone viral and been adapted for “public square dancing”, a form of workout activity popular among the middle-aged population, mostly the Han population in Xinjiang. Utilising its popularity, local officials believed that this would be an effective way to promote the counter-terrorism message among the locals. They organised several collective dancing competitions, mainly for peasants who had just finished harvesting. A commentary on *People’s Daily* (D. Pang 2015) indicates that this is what people enjoy. It also demonstrates how the perception of the Uyghurs as a group of singers and dancers is constructed as the “correct way”, and the extremist religious culture is seen as “destructive” and backward.

De-radicalisation is not difficult as long as the government combines it with what ordinary people enjoy, and guides the spirit of the people to the correct way with modern culture, so that other destructive forces will decline.

In one of the competitions, the town of Xiamalebage – the Outstanding Winner – presented their version of the song, in which “Villagers’ Convention” and de-radicalisation policy had been added to the lyrics (*Guanchazhe* 2015). It’s Party Secretary said that they had asked the cadres to dance and sing with the peasants, to “lift the veils on their ideas” and to make de-radicalisation policy accessible to them (*Guanchazhe* 2015).¹¹³

Local government officials believed that the peasants in remote villages were preoccupied with their livelihoods, therefore, linking de-radicalisation policy to their livelihoods in plain language would be effective. Officials in Yarkant County emphasised the link between national unity and wealth. The following quote is a typical example of how the concerns of peasants are linked with national unity.

Our farming techniques are outdated...If we become more open to new technologies and learn from the farmers from the inland with an open mind, then we can apply new methods to farming, increase agricultural production, raise incomes, and attract more good farmers to contract the land and teach us new technologies, and then, all we need to do is to sit on the bed and count the money. So, national unity can fill your pockets (with money).

This quote portrays “farmers from the inland” as a group of people with more advanced knowledge and techniques that can “help” the locals to improve their farming skills. This is in response to the resistance of local farmers who are hostile to those who have migrated from inland. This quote draws an over-simplified connection between national unity and wealth. The assumption that local peasants are simply backward and hostile indicates the condescending attitude of government officials towards Uyghur farmers in remote villages.

In addition to plain language, propaganda workers use vivid stories and local language to engage the audience. In a remote village in Khotan Prefecture, propaganda workers realised that it is hard to engage the audience because they are exhausted from long days of labouring. So, propaganda workers used the method of story-telling and made connections with customs that are familiar to the locals. Azhati Sulitan, Vice-Secretary of the local Literature and Arts Association, used the language style of “*Baogunang*” to engage the audience (Duan 2016). *Baogunang* literally means a kind of local food. In the context of counter-radicalisation propaganda, this means using the language that peasants are familiar with in their everyday life to promote de-radicalisation policy.

¹¹³ “The veils on their ideas” is a metaphor for extremism that is like veils that cloud the judgement of ordinary people so that they do not identify with the “correct” way of life the government promoted.

Furthermore, the local governments in Xinjiang launched a series of programmes to provide training for all those who could potentially be recruited as propagandists, to promote de-radicalisation policy. In November 2014, Qitai County trained 45 bilingual propagandists on the minority policies and regulations regarding the differences between illegal religious activities and normal religious activities (Haitao Li and Wu 2014). In January 2016, experts and respected “patriotic believers” provided a 20-day training on de-radicalisation for over 140 cadres at lower levels of the governments in Aksu and Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture (Akenmuhali 2016). As of January 2016, over 2,000 propaganda teams with a total of over 5,000 people have been organised to deliver over 30,000 propaganda talks in the Khotan region (Zainuran 2016). In December 2017, the first de-radicalisation propaganda base was established in Urumqi, to target ethnic “stay-at-home wives”, and provide education and training for unemployed housewives who are relatively less educated, helping them integrate into society through participating in de-radicalisation propaganda (Shi 2015).

6.1.2 Development of the Mass Line approach in practice

As discussed above, government officials have adapted de-radicalisation propaganda at the local levels to suit the audiences who are villagers, peasants and women with little or no education. This requires them to simplify de-radicalisation messages and promote clear and bold slogans. However, due to the lack of understanding of the Uyghur culture, de-radicalisation efforts can be over-simplified and irritating to devout believers. For example, after the “Little Apple” dancing competition, the local government told the media proudly that they had revised the lyrics of the “Little Apple” to include words such as “lifting the veil and shaving the beard will save you” (*Guanchazhe* 2015). This is the epitome of the officials’ condescending attitude towards Uyghur culture. Rather than embracing the diversity of the Uyghur culture as the government claims, local officials are actually promoting their own understanding of it as characterised by singing, dancing and beautiful women wearing colourful clothes. They are in fact promoting this only the “correct” lifestyle which reflects officials’ stereotypical and narrow understanding of the Uyghur culture. Critics outside China have criticised such extensive, yet culturally insensitive de-radicalisation efforts at local levels, labelling them “religious suppression”, and stating that the dancing contest as a whole is an abuse of state power to “force” religious leaders to conform to the values that are regarded as “mainstream”, however distasteful these values are in the eyes of the believers (Desk 2015). Lu Rachel questions the efficacy of such efforts in an article on Foreign Policy. Quoting Uyghurs, he argues that this kind of de-radicalisation is “useless”, and indicates that China’s de-radicalisation efforts such as banning veils and beards are sometimes heavy-handed and culturally insensitive, and ineffective to calm the Han-Uyghur tensions (R. Lu 2015).

Officials within the Party have also acknowledged the inefficacy of these efforts. The Secretary of the Yarkant County, Wang Yongzhe, admits that the “little apple” approach is clearly not enough for the de-radicalisation in the cultural sphere. According to Wang Yongzhe, it is more important to meet the cultural needs of the common people in other ways, including building platforms, and providing venues and equipment for various cultural activities to counteract the influence of religious extremism. Although Wang is reflecting upon their de-radicalisation efforts, in essence, he is calling for a strengthening of the government’s function of guiding the people. The difference between critics outside China and officials like Wang is that the former suggest that tactics other than religious suppression should be employed, implying that the de-radicalisation policy should involve less state intervention, while the latter believe that more guidance and control are needed in the cultural sphere, implying the need for more state intervention (F. Chen 2015b).

Local de-radicalisation efforts have amplified the guidelines made at the state level and more explicitly target a wide range of activities and individuals. The *Ordinances on De-Radicalisation in XUAR* have been disseminated widely at local levels.

Maisumujiang Maimuer, Vice-Director of the Committee for Ethnic and Religious Affairs of Kazak Autonomous Prefecture of Ili, proposed “one-page propaganda” and “pocketbooks” to promote the dissemination of counter-radicalisation (Ding et al. 2017). In addition, Dou Wangui, an official at the Aksu Prefectural Party Committee, clarified that people of different occupations should use different language to disseminate the policy – “party cadres should talk about policy, legal cadres should talk about law, believers should talk about religious doctrines, scientists should talk about science” to create an environment where “every individual participates in de-radicalisation, every individual propagates de-radicalisation, and every individual assails religious extremism” (Ding et al. 2017). This echoes the “five keys” approach to de-radicalisation. The “five keys” requires ideological problems to be solved by means of ideology, cultural problems to be solved by means of culture, folk customs to be treated with respect, religious problems to be solved in accordance with religious rules, and violent terrorism to be combated according to the rule of law and by “iron-fisted actions” (L. Wen 2015). The differentiation of target audiences indicates that local officials are adopting every possible method to make sure that every individual is aware of the illegal nature of some activities that otherwise would be considered as a normal expression of their Muslim identity.

Considering the relative lack of economic development in many of the remote rural areas that are inhabited mainly by the Uyghurs, the local governments have come to see the inefficacy of the old, crude ways of propaganda that are characterised by preaching the same propaganda materials indiscriminately to all of the people. Some

local officials have begun to shift to the so-called “drip irrigation model”. Compared to the old “flood irrigation model” that overwhelmed the public with propaganda materials, the “drip irrigation model” emphasises adapting propaganda tactics according to the audience (Xinjiang Science and technology information service 2015). The Yining County government made a “drip irrigation plan” that specified the lecturer, audience, content and methods of de-radicalisation propaganda and education, which aim was to make sure that every individual fully comprehended the government policies (H. Ren and Yang 2015).

In addition to the ability of the villagers to comprehend the de-radicalisation policy, the local governments are also concerned about the tensions between the cadres and masses, between the police and citizens, and between the Uyghur and the Han. To ease the tensions, the government encourages the cadres at each level to learn the local language spoken by ethnic minorities, and integrate into the local communities by “singing their songs, and dancing their dance” (Xinjiang Science and technology information service 2015). This means that officials are not only required to learn the actual minority language as opposed to mandarin Chinese, but also the way they talk, and their customs and worldviews. Since 2010, civil servants and staff of the public institutions have been required to have basic knowledge of both the Han and Uyghur languages, with the aim of “better service of the masses” and better integration (Zhiheng Cao 2010). The police are also provided with short courses on the Uyghur language by national and local universities, the Ministry of Public Security and the provincial Public Security Department (G. Peng and Li 2016).

Another attempt to ease the tensions between the Han cadres and the ethnic locals is the three-year “Visit, Benefit and Gather” programme launched by Zhang Chunxian in 2014. The title of the programmes means visiting the people to know their situation, benefit the people, and improve integration and social cohesion. The entire programme involves sending around 200,000 cadres at each level of the XUAR government to its lower levels of government, in order to be better informed of the real situations at the grassroots level (M. Li 2014). This is in line with the Mass Line principle of collecting information from the masses and using the information collected to make better policies to benefit the masses. In 2014 alone, the programme sent 43,800 working groups including 275,000 cadres (*Xinjiang Daily* 2017), covering over 8,000 administrative villages and over 700 state-owned farms (G. Du 2017). Officials who were sent to the grassroots levels were expected to address the socio-economic concerns of the local villagers, such as improving their employability and helping them to identify more job opportunities (K. Ma 2015b). Additional support for the villagers was provided in the activity called “Ethnic Groups Unite as a Family”, where officials paired up with villagers, especially impoverished families, old veterans,

cadres, Party members, role models, believers, vulnerable communities, migrants, and less educated individuals, to provide one-on-one support (C. Xiong 2016). The duties of officials include visiting and meeting the target villagers at least once every two months, learning each other's languages, understanding the difficulties in the families of the villagers, helping them to alleviate poverty, and propagating national laws and policies that benefited the people (C. Xiong 2016).

The one-on-one support further ensured that the state policies reached individuals at the grassroots level, so that they were fully informed about the "correct" worldview and de-radicalisation policy. In recent years, these measures have become more forceful. In March 2018, to make sure that every family was covered, the Wensu County government requested that its cadres, who number over 20,000, each visit at least 6 families and stay for no less than 8 days with each family (B. Jiang 2018). Heshuo County required their cadres to stay with each family for more than 14 days, and maintain the pairing relationship for 1 year (D. Jiang 2017). This timing coincided with the publication of the *Ordinances on de-radicalisation*. It is also likely that because 2017 was the last year of the initial three-year plan of "Visit, Gather and Benefit", the government was keen to show the public the results and "achievements" of this programme. Local officials, who were under pressure, were anxious to translate their work into tangible reports that propagate the government's achievements quantitatively. Human Rights Watch criticised that this measure of surveillance, stating that it violated the privacy and cultural rights of ethnic minorities as many cadres posted photos taken with ethnic minorities, which showed intimate aspects of domestic life without their consent, and forced their children to learn mandarin Chinese and the national song (Human Rights Watch 2018).

Although the efforts to deliver de-radicalisation messages are not always effective, and can even be counter-productive due to the lack of cultural sensitivity, the governments at the local level have realised the problems with the traditional crude methods of propaganda and started to reform their de-radicalisation policy with more focus on calming ethnic tensions. Combined with actual improvements brought by governments' support in employment, the drip irrigation model of propaganda and the Visit, Benefit and Gather policy have helped local officials to justify their de-radicalisation efforts, which has decreased the space for religious freedom. However, as a single-party government, the CCP is intrinsically less capable of or willing to allow the Uyghurs to express their diversity, for fear that some uninformed, less-educated citizens will identify with the *wrong* ideology of religious extremism. Promoting the stereotypical understanding of the Uyghurs as a versatile group that loves singing, dancing and beautiful clothes, the CCP is in fact tightening the restrictions on the ways in which Uyghurs can express their identity. On the one hand, the government

repeatedly clarifies that “the combat against religious extremism is neither an ethnic question, nor a religious question, but a combat to safeguard national unity and ethnic solidarity” (Q. Long and Wang 2016, 18). On the other hand, the government is politicising daily cultural events to serve de-radicalisation agenda. Adopting the Mass Line Approach, the CCP has effectively disseminated its de-radicalisation policy to almost every corner of society, asking individuals to demonstrate their loyalty to the Party.

6.2 De-radicalisation through ideological control

As discussed in Chapter 4, after focusing on economic development for a few decades, the CCP under Xi Jinping decided to re-emphasise ideology in an attempt to maintain its legitimacy (*CPC News* 2013b). Some Chinese scholars believe that China’s ideological security is under threat in the light of some Western countries’ promotion of their Western values.

Most of these [Western, author’s note] values are under the guise of academic exchange. [The West] constantly disseminates Western values, viewpoints and propositions and opinions, such as democratic socialism and neo-liberalism. In addition, historical nihilism, dogmatism, neo-Confucianism, and the New Left have gained momentum in China. The dissemination of these ideologies poses great challenges to the mainstream Marxism in China’s ideological and theoretical sphere (Ji Zhang and Zhang 2007, 53).

Some scholars have discussed this threat in great detail. Niu Jinfang and Kong Dehong (2003, 57) argue that developed countries in the West use “maintaining world peace” as a pretext to exert political pressure on developing countries, and interfere in their domestic affairs, in order to ensure political control over these developing countries. Wang Yan and Mao Xiaosong’s (2009, 75–76) article warns against the Westernisation of China’s political system and ideology in the context of globalisation. They argue that the expansion of Western values as “universal values” is a new manifestation of “peaceful evolution”, which poses a severe threat to China’s ideological security (Yan Wang and Mao 2009, 77). This argument clearly links the anxiety of contemporary Chinese political elites and intellectuals about ideological infiltration with Mao’s prediction of peaceful evolution, indicating the same friend/enemy distinction that underpins China’s quest for legitimacy across generations of leaders.

In the context of these ideological challenges, Wang Hongwei (2016) believes that terrorism in nature is a type of ideology based on which terrorists are able to justify their violent cause. The following quote discusses ideological confrontation as a form of war of soft powers, and warns against its “hard” effect, in other words, violent

terrorist activities. It also implies that to prevent radicalisation as a behaviour, it is crucial to first “seal the victory” in preventing radicalisation as an ideology. It further indicates that a hard approach such as Strike Hard may become counter-productive and cause resentment among the Uyghurs if the government does not first persuade them ideologically that the target of the government is doing something *wrong*, which underwrites the government’s strong control over radical ideas. Combined with the *Ordinances on de-radicalisation*, the vigilance against radical ideas may translate into real consequences.

To some extent, the war of ideology is a war of soft power. But soft power always has a “hard” effect, or even a decisive effect. Counter-terrorism strategy needs to be comprehensive and needs to deal with root causes as well as “symptoms”. However, if we cannot seal the victory on ideology, we cannot eliminate the fundamental cause of terrorism.

Counter-terrorism cannot go without the use of force. The prompt proactive strike is necessary to curb the spread of terrorism. However, if it is not in conjunction with powerful ideological tactics, hard strikes may fit in exactly with the wishes of those terrorists who hijacked the nation and religion.

For a long time, the Party’s border policies have facilitated the economic and social development of the Xinjiang region. However, if the ideological problem remains unsolved, terrorists who “refuse to secularise” will create a hostile environment and distort the facts, interpreting policies that benefit people, such as “[counter-part] assistance to Xinjiang”, and “Great Western Development” as factors that “intensified exploitation” and the problems of normal corruption of some officials as “ethnic oppression”(Hongwei Wang 2016).

The above quote highlights the two assumptions in China’s counter-terrorism strategy. First, ideology is considered a battlefield where the CCP needs to “win” in order to prevent the spread of an extremist ideology. The zero-sum assumption of the battle of ideology reflects the friend/enemy distinction that underwrites China’s counter-terrorism policies. Second, in the eyes of Chinese political elites and intellectuals, the use of force, in other words, the hard approach, is necessary, but the hard approach alone may be counter-productive as terrorists may use it to criticise the CCP’s ethnic and religious policies. Therefore, the government must first “educate” and “guide” the public, to make them realise that some of their bandwagon religious practices are “wrong”, so that they will not resist the crackdown on those “wrong” ideas and behaviour.

Local governments have paid much attention to the ideological battle. A report from a conference on Counter-terrorism Work in the Realm of Ideology at Karamay city shows that local officials believe that the control over ideology in the cultural industry,

the media, and the education sector through education and inducement is part of part of de-radicalisation. The following quote demonstrates that officials are keen on maintain a firm grasp on what sort of content goes into the minds of the youth.

...[We should] insist on inducement and have a firm grasp of the leadership and voice in the realm of ideology. [We should] carry out lifelong de-radicalisation education for vulnerable individuals, strengthen the construction of the review panel for literary works and primary school and middle school textbooks, so that different battlefields are dominated by mainstream ideology; strengthen the management of the cultural industry, propaganda material and publications; strengthen the management of the media and the internet; strengthen the management of the Party school and ensure *correct* [author's emphasis] political inclination, ensuring the leadership of the Party school at the frontline of ideas and politics; strengthen the management of schools by consolidating leadership and team building, promoting righteousness on the campus, preventing the infiltration of religious extremism, thus ensuring the harmony and stability of schools. In addition, [we should] further strengthen the role of the Communist Youth League, unite and lead young cadres, mobilise them by carrying out featured activities and improve the charisma of the Communist Youth League (W. Hu 2017). ¹¹⁴

The above quote depicts a situation where the ideological battle is intensified, and the Party is desperately seeking to maintain control in the realm of ideology by strengthening its leadership in education, the cultural industry, and Party schools. Officials want to make sure that the youth are surrounded by the “correct” ideology from various dimensions – team building led by the Party and featured activities organised by the Youth League.

The friend/enemy distinction plays an important role in the narratives of the ideological battle. First, framing ideological confrontation as a war and assuming that external enemies are plotting to undermine China's security allows the central authority to justify the strengthen its the control over ideology. In a meeting regarding the long-term stability of Xinjiang, Politburo did not hesitate to explicate the necessity in “occupying the battlefield of propaganda, culture and education” (Xinhua 2014d).

The meeting aims to strengthen and innovate social governance, strengthen social prevention and control, strengthen the supervision of cyber security, and carry out in-depth legal propaganda and education, carry out focused crackdowns to maintain a high pressure on the “three forces”, in order to effectively prevent the frequent occurrence of terrorist activities and the spread of terrorist activities into inland China. [We should] strengthen ideological work, using a Socialist Core Values system

¹¹⁴ The Communist Youth League of China is the Party organisation that aims to ensure political conformity among youths aged between fourteen and twenty-eight.

to construct the shared spiritual homeland of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang, resolutely occupying the battlefield of propaganda, culture and education (Xinhua 2014d).

The quote emphasises using propaganda and education in the social sphere to ensure political conformity among the majority of the population, and “focused crackdowns” against “three forces”, which clearly reflects the differentiation of friends and enemies in regard to counter-terrorism. As discussed in Section 4.2.1, this differentiation is underpinned by Mao’s legacy of two types of contradictions. Based on Mao’s understanding of the contradictions, officials seek to ensure the “correctness” of the ideology among the friends, and to use a hard approach and high pressure against the enemies.

Second, framing ideological confrontation as a battle allows the CCP to promote the “correct political inclination” and denounce the wrong one. The dichotomy of right and wrong ideas reinforces an over-simplified understanding of the causes of political violence in Xinjiang. The intolerance of alternative ideologies prevents the government from understanding the ideas that are deemed “wrong”. Simply dismissing all separatist ideas as “wrong” undermines the government’s ability to understand the socio-economic grievances that underscore the Uyghurs’ resistance to the CCP rule and their sympathy towards and/or support for the separatist cause.

In a broader context, as discussed in Section 5.6, the anxiety of Chinese political elites and intellectuals about the challenges posed by the increasing religiosity of Islam contributes to their obsession with controlling the spread of religious ideas. Alleging that the religious infiltration is a political issue rather than a religious one, the CCP has politicised its religious policy and justified its control over the expression of Muslim identity. In conjunction with the conflation of extremism, separatism, and terrorism, the CCP has dismissed the Uyghurs’ separatist claims as “wrong political inclination”. The dichotomy of right and wrong prevents the CCP from engaging with those who identify with a non-violent radical ideology. Forced to choose sides, these individuals may decide to be fully aligned with the frames provided by the separatists.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed analysis of the role of the Mass Line strategy in the CCP’s quest for legitimacy. As discussed in previous chapters, the CCP considers it necessary to obtain support from the public as legitimacy is crucial to its survival. To this end, the CCP has developed a set of frames with which to give meaning to current events. These frames necessitate a friend/enemy dichotomy that allows the CCP to justify its policies.

In order to create an imagined community in which the masses of the Chinese people recognise the CCP as the legitimate representative of the unity of the Chinese nation, early communist theorists developed the Mass Line strategy based on the CCP's commitment to "serve the people wholeheartedly".

Fleshed out in counter-terrorism practice, the Mass Line strategy emphasises forging a sense of participation among ordinary citizens. Using various methods and incentives, the CCP has facilitated a shift in the security paradigm from a focus on *security for the people to security by the people*. In theory, this paradigm will improve state-public relations as it seeks to include the public in the decision-making process. However, the implementation of the Mass Line demonstrates the difficulties in including democracy in a highly state-centric authoritarian system. As political elites have decided what the "correct" outlook on history, ethnicity and the state is, and does not accept challenges, the implementation of the Mass Line is top-down and condescending. Although the CCP seeks to co-opt high-profile community members, such as important religious figures and cultural workers, the high level of resemblance between their words and government propaganda has only served to erode their credibility among the Uyghur community.

The cases in this chapter demonstrated how the Mass Line strategy is combined with the counter-terrorism agenda and carried out in practice. There have been some developments in the implementation of the Mass Line. Some government officials have realised that overwhelming the public with propaganda has not worked. However, as an authoritarian regime, the CCP has not given up indoctrination altogether. Instead, it has refined its counter-terrorism policy and tailored the language used for propaganda according to its target communities.

Chapter 7 De-radicalisation

It is notoriously difficult to de-radicalise an individual – it is possible to change a way an individual behaves, but it is far from easy to change how an individual perceives the reality. The assumption that there is one, and only one true version of what has happened is dangerous in practice, as it gives the government a sense of obligation to promote the “correct” version and eliminate all those that challenge it. The CCP has emphasised the role of “education” in China’s counter-terrorism approach. In the context of China’s counter-terrorism strategy, “education” is less about providing the public with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions, and more about reinforcing conformity so that the public will be more receptive to the “correct” version of the truth that is being promoted in the official discourse, and resist the alternative version of the truth presented in the Western media.

In the quest for legitimacy, China’s de-radicalisation strategy also includes the mobilisation of the masses through the media. Based on the assumption that the Uyghur exile community has colluded with the West to undermine the legitimacy of the CCP, Chinese political elites and intellectuals are concerned about how the issue of the Uyghur independence movement is framed in the media. Two types of propaganda are identified: a top-down approach and a bottom-up approach. The former facilitates the dissemination of pro-CCP information from the state media, and results in influencing individual behaviour. The latter encourages grassroots pro-CCP speeches, and brings them into the official discourse.

This chapter will start with a discussion of the role of “education” in China and discuss its role in de-radicalisation. It will then provide a case study of mass mobilisation in the context of de-radicalisation in China.

7.1 The role of education

Education has been an important tactic that the CCP has used to intervene in the radicalisation process of individuals. As discussed in Section 2.1.3.2, authors such as Borum (2003, 8; 2011b, 39) Silber and Bhatt (2007) and Precht (2007, 34) identify several overlapping stages of radicalisation. Although the linear relationship of cause and effect might be oversimplified in practice and has led to unnecessary connections between certain traits or changes in behaviour and intensified radicalisation, the assumption that the radicalisation process is divided into stages helps in analysing the function of education in China’s de-radicalisation approach. The role of education can be seen in two stages of the radicalisation process. First, it functions as a prevention mechanism – it guides the public towards the “correct” views and intervenes where

needed to stop an individual from continuing to align with the frames provided by separatists. Second, it functions as a rectification mechanism – it guides the already-radicalised individuals to adopt the “correct” views. The following discussion will be structured to reflect these two functions of education.

Government officials believe that education can help prevent radicalisation. A senior official in Xinjiang Shohrat Zakir directly attributed radicalisation to a lack of education. He stated that most of the radicalisation cases take place among those who are from a lower educational background. “The less educated a young person is, the more likely that he will be affected and poisoned by religious extremist ideology” (Guo Zhang 2015). Considering that in the Chinese political context, education means to guiding the public towards the official political views, a “lack of education”, in the eyes of Zakir, indicates the non-alignment with the official framing of counter-terrorism.

Officials are determined to establish a regime of truth through education. In order to “occupy the battlefield of education”, the Politburo requires the government to prioritise education, improve the overall quality of education across Xinjiang, increase the building of boarding schools for pastoral and remote communities, and implement free education for high schools in the whole of South Xinjiang (Xinhua 2014d).¹¹⁵

The central authority provides support on education within the framework of Counterpart Assistance to Xinjiang (for example, the Xinjiang Class), in order to implement some more “powerful and effective” policies to promote the mainstream values and resist the spread of religious extremist ideologies (Guo Zhang 2015). The following case study of the education policy in Shufu County provides some detailed information on how the local governments seek to “occupy the battlefield of education”.

One official of Shufu County, Zhu Xuebing, believes that the large number of drop-outs is an important factor that has caused radicalisation in this area. Accordingly, he has designed a series of mechanisms to solve this problem (F. Chen 2015e). According to him, those who do not finish junior high school or high school are particularly vulnerable to the infiltration of radicalisation (F. Chen 2015e). He has proposed to implement the following mechanisms in the following five aspects.

¹¹⁵ The national policy of nine-year compulsory education covers free education from primary school (six years) and junior high school (three years). High school consists of another three years of education before students apply for the National College Entrance Exam.

Table 5 Education policies in Shumi County, adapted from “Secretary of the County Committee Talks about De-Radicalisation: Prioritising Law over Religion and Keeping the Party Secular Does Not Mean Not Studying Religion” (F. Chen 2015e)

Aims	Mechanism	Outcome
Anti-drop-out	<p>Township officials shall ensure the enrolment rate; village officials shall see to the turnout, and school staff shall ensure the maintenance of the turnout.</p> <p>To establish a “five-in-one” mechanism to ensure the participation of township officials, village officials, schools, tutors and teachers, and parents, clarifying each actor’s responsibility in writing.</p>	<p>After the implementation of this mechanism, the turnout remains 96% for junior high school and 99% for primary school.</p>
Keeping students in schools	<p>To prioritise the development of high school education – scale up the schools, improve the quality of education, develop market-oriented and employability-oriented vocational training programmes, collocate with Xinjiang Agricultural Vocational Technical Institute to open a local campus in Shumi.</p> <p>Subsidy: 2,000 RMB for students with financial difficulties</p>	<p>This plan increased the enrolment rate of Shumi High School to 93.1% in 2014.</p>
Making higher education affordable	<p>Subsidy: set up an annual fund of 10,000 RMB.</p>	<p>4,420 students benefited.</p>
Ensuring employment	<p>To carry out cooperation projects with e-commerce, logistics and clothing companies.</p>	
Promoting bi-language education	<p>To ensure the number of bilingual teachers is enough to cover the entire country by September 2015.</p>	

As well as improving the “hardware” – building more schools, providing more subsidies, and allocating more teachers – the CCP has made sure that the content of education reflects the “correct” views on radicalisation. In the education sector, particularly colleges and universities, de-radicalisation is considered an “urgent task” (F. Jiang

2014). As discussed in Section 5.7.1, the CCP incorporates the voice from within communities to boost the legitimacy of its counter-terrorism policy. At Kashgar Normal College, 215 ethnic teachers wrote a joint letter to highlight the responsibility of ethnic minorities to oppose religious extremism, and resist the infiltration of religious extremist ideology into colleges and universities that may “poison” the minds of young students (F. Jiang 2014). Aligning with the frames provided by Chinese political elites and intellectuals, they contributed to reinforcing the dichotomy between right and wrong ideas.

Zhao Fusheng’s (2015) study gives a detailed account of a case of de-radicalisation practice at Kashgar Normal College in Xinjiang. The case clearly shows that ideology control through education has been a key theme of the de-radicalisation activities at this college. When students officially enrolled, the teachers in charge of each class organised a one-week, recorded induction meeting, focusing on the condemnation of violent terrorist activities. Class meetings, organised by the teacher in charge, are held every Sunday evening throughout the academic year. Political study sessions are held on every Wednesday, and are inspected by the cadres of the Students’ Union. In addition, students are required to participate in counter-terrorism propaganda even when they are away from the college. Proof of participation from the residents’ committee is required to show that every student has engaged in the propaganda regarding the “facts” about terrorist incidents, especially to those “who were ignorant of the facts” (Fusheng Zhao 2015, 51). The proof should be accompanied by a 2,000-word report. At this college, the allocation of dormitories is also political. Over 10,000 students of both the Han Chinese and ethnic minorities live together in dormitories. There must be one Party member in every room. There are regular activities aimed at improving ethnic relations and integration, such as friendly basketball matches, one-on-one language learning, and gala celebrations.

In another stage of radicalisation, education is employed to ensure political conformity outside of schools. The CCP’s obsession with ensuring political conformity extends to family and society. Zhu Xuebing, a local official, highlighted that “family education” and “social education” must align with school education in order to consolidate the foundation for social stability and resistance against extremism (F. Chen 2015e). In particular, he pointed out that family and society are crucial to the rehabilitation of terrorists.

In the domestic sphere, according to Zhu Xuebing, “we must help the family members of those who are sentenced. Otherwise, ‘others’ will help them. We must not drive them to the opposite side” (F. Chen 2015e). “If we do not promote a positive ideology, religious extremists will do it [promote an extremist ideology]” (F. Chen 2015e).

In the social sphere, Zhang Jisheng, another local official, accused religious extremists of encouraging the Uyghurs to live an “anti-modern” lifestyle. He believes that extremists induce the masses to follow religious customs in their marriages and funerals, and reject the secular administration system. In response, the village government has established a service team and a service centre to register marriages and funerals. To demonstrate that the government is not hostile to religion itself, it requires the villagers’ committee and the mosque management committee to organise religious rituals for some people.

The efforts of local officials to justify their policies demonstrate the competition of frames between the CCP and Uyghur separatists. In remote villages the government is struggling to promote the official counter-terrorism discourse because the local Uyghurs are culturally more familiar with the frames that some Uyghur separatists promote. The fact that many of them do not speak mandarin Chinese constitutes another obstacle to understanding the government’s frames. To transform those who have already been radicalised, the government has to rely on family and society to promote the “correct” or “positive” ideology.

This reliance on family and society reflects two features of China’s counter-terrorism approach. First, as discussed in Section 5.5, the focus on family reflects the Chinese culture, which emphasises the role of family in influencing individuals. Second, the reliance on social institutions such as villagers’ committees and the mosque management committee reflects the CCP’s determination to keep believers in control through imposing a secular administration system.

Apart from family and society, the Anti-Terrorism Law accords more power to the government to extend the de facto detention of radicalised individuals. Article 30 of the Anti-Terrorism Law requires the detention centres and prisons to assess the level of risk that terrorists may pose to the community in which they live. For those who may endanger the society, after being released from detention centres or prisons, they should be referred to the intermediate people’s court for Settlement and Education (The National People’s Congress of the People’s Republic of China 2015).

Although there have been informal “re-education” programmes, the Settlement and Education policy is the first time that the Anti-Terrorism Law has formalised the mechanism of education as rehabilitation. The mechanism is in its early stage. Chen Zexian (2016), Chair of the Institute of International Law at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, pointed out that the regulations are “far from complete” in terms of the target, behaviour, procedure and mechanism. According to him, the implementation of Settlement and Education policy may result in negative evaluations and condemnation of the people in question.

Zhang Jisheng, a local official, observed that although the traditional hard-approach crackdowns show the effect of counter-terrorism immediately, the government did not focus on education – the transformation of the minds of the radicalised Uyghurs – until the winter of 2014 (F. Chen 2015e). Zhang realised that some of those who were detained after the 2014 Strike Hard Campaign became more radical than they were before detention (F. Chen 2015e). In the detention centre, the Yining government divided detainees into 4 classes according to the “severity” of their “circumstances” of the detainees (F. Chen 2015e). According to Zhang, 70% of the detainees became more “positive” after the education (F. Chen 2015e), which means that these detainees were seemingly more aligned with the “correct” ideas and views promoted by the CCP.

Table 6 Methods of education of detainees in Yining County, adapted from an interview with Zhang Jisheng (F. Chen 2015e)

Method	Explanation
Religious education	Detainees were influenced by an extremist religious ideology. In response (the government) should suppress religious extremists ideologies by a “positive belief”.
Psychological support	“They are human beings too; they may have some psychological obstacles.”
Cultural education	Promoted “real” Uyghur culture.
Trip	(The local government) organised trips for detainees to look at the changes that had taken place in Yining.
One-on-one support	Cadres paired up with detainees to provide one-on-one support. They lived, ate and studies together. The cadres were able to learn that in the past, they had also made many mistakes and ambiguous understandings. After the education, many Uyghur cadres became more confident in their de-radicalisation knowledge.

The above methods provide some insights into how the government treats “enemies”. Many of these Uyghurs were detained after the Strike Hard campaign, which means that they were the target of the hard approach, and were categorised as enemies according to Mao’s ideas of two types of contradictions. The methods the government used also echo Mao’s idea of using coercion against enemies. The explanation of the methods also reflects the Chinese political context in which the government promotes

a set of “correct” and “positive” perceptions and expects all the individuals to manifest loyalty, especially those who are deemed as the enemies.

It is interesting to note that Zhang Jisheng framed them not as the enemies, but as ordinary people that the government considers as prone to radicalisation. This contrasts with Xi’s dehumanising framing of terrorists as “rats”. It is likely that local officials like Zhang realise the number of “enemies” they have to face, and are trying to turn them into “friends” by framing them as individuals who are not entirely clear about what they are doing. This kind of tactic is also evident in the framing of those who joined the self-proclaimed ISIS as individuals who were deceived.

The local government has provided more specific instructions in the “Measures of the Implementation of Anti-Terrorism Law in the XUAR” in Chapter 7 on Education management (Zhiyun Zhao 2016). The Measures specify that prisons, detention centres, and community-based rehabilitation institutes shall carry out the education and reform of those who are assessed as “in need” of Settlement and Education (Zhiyun Zhao 2016).¹¹⁶ The Measures also specify that vocational training shall be included in the content of the education (Zhiyun Zhao 2016).

7.2 Mass mobilisation in the context of de-radicalisation

This section focuses on how the government responds to the “terrorist” threat. Political elites and intellectuals perceive separatism as a severe threat that is associated with other anti-China forces and terrorist networks abroad who are secretly plotting to overthrow the CCP and/or establish a theocracy. To prevent this, the CCP has initiated a series of hard and soft measures to intervene in the radicalisation process of individuals. To understand the government’s approach, it is important to first examine its rationale in differentiating hard and soft approaches.

7.2.1 Hard vs. soft approach in Xinjiang

The implementation of the Mass Line approach is based on officials’ perceptions of the difference between passive and active radicalisation. Government officials believe that most of those who become radicalised are deceived or forced into extremism, and only a small number are “diehards”. It is, therefore, unfair to treat those who have been deceived or forced in the same way as the government treats its *real* enemies. The differentiation of hard and soft approaches in treating “friends” and “enemies” reflects Mao’s two types of contradictions – coercing the enemy, and persuading and educating the friends. However, as the following discussion will show,

¹¹⁶ community-based rehabilitation institutes: 社区矫正机构

even the so-called “soft” approach can sometimes become very harsh, because the CCP allows only the “correct” ideas and views and uses education as a tool for indoctrination.

According to Xiaokaiti Yasheng, Secretary of the Political and Judiciary Commission of Yutian County in Khotan, of those who have been affected by religious extremist ideology, 5% are “diehards”, and 15% are “followers”, while the other 80% of the people follow others blindly (F. Chen 2015a). Zhang Yun, Secretary of the Party Committee of Xinjiang Department of Justice, argues that based on his experience, in a village, usually 70% of the people who have been affected by extremist ideology were coerced by religious extremists, while the other 30% were “contaminated by religious extremist forces”, and very few people have committed crimes and plan to conduct terrorist activities.

The categorisation of “friends” and “enemies” underpins China’s model of counter-measures. As discussed in Section 2.1, the enemy-centric war model could be categorised as the hard approach and the population-centric methods could be seen as a soft approach. The hard approach relies heavily on the use of force. Linking terrorists with the “three forces”, political elites mobilise the Armed Police to make way for the soft approach. On 29 June 2013, Meng Jianzhu gave a speech addressing the Xinjiang Armed Police forces at the Anti-terror Oath-taking Rally, contextualising the security situations in Xinjiang with the assumption that the “three forces” had not given up causing disturbances in Xinjiang (see The Ministry of Public Security of the People’s Republic of China 2013).

Considering the severity of the problem, local officials believe that the soft approach will not be possible without the hard approach to crackdown on the small number of “diehards”. According to several officials in South Xinjiang, 80% of the believers are from a lower educational background, and they do not have enough knowledge about the law and Islamic tenets (F. Chen 2015a). These people choose to follow whichever side that is more powerful. In areas where religious extremism overpowers the government, it is not surprising that people choose to follow an extremist ideology out of concerns for the negative consequences of doing otherwise. This is why, according to local officials, the “soft approach” has been abandoned since 2014 – “without the ‘Strike Hard’ to start off, there is no way to carry out other works, such as de-radicalisation and the mass work” (F. Chen 2015a).

However, the officials do realise the inefficacy of adopting a hard approach alone. According to the local official, there is a 15-year history of radicalisation in Xinjiang, which dates back to the 2000s (F. Chen 2015c). The history of radicalisation makes it difficult to change the mentality of the locals, which was formed during the short time

of the “Strike Hard” campaign, and the extremist ideology is highly likely to rebound since the “Strike Hard” campaign (F. Chen 2015c). Two generations are needed to resolve the issues caused by religious extremism in Xinjiang (F. Chen 2015c). The official acknowledged that ignoring the need for the soft approach would lead to the broadening of the scope of counter-terrorism and inefficacy in preventing radicalisation (F. Chen 2015a).

Self-reflection, however, does not lead to narrowing the scope of counter-terrorism. On the contrary, under Chen Quanguo, so-called “soft” measures were increasingly characterised by coercion and the restriction of individual rights.

Since 2014, local governments have implemented various de-radicalisation “transformation through education” training sessions. Xinjiang’s judicial and executive system has trained 246 cadres from prisons, education centres, and the judicial departments (*People’s Daily Online* 2014c). As of 18 November 2014, Shumi County had trained 3,515 people, 88% (3,096) of whom had been “successfully transformed” (*Tianshanwang* 2014). One official said that the de-radicalisation education and training centre in Khotan, which can accommodate 3,000 people, had already completed 5 sessions of education and training in September 2015 (Q. Fu 2015). The “transformation through education” is formalised in the *Ordinances on de-radicalisation* published in 2017.

The places for transformation through education are often referred to as re-education camps in the Western media. Zenz identifies three types of re-education facilities: centralised transformation through education training centres, legal system schools, and rehabilitation correction centres based on the examination of related construction bids. The propaganda and implementation of the transformation through education at the local level reflects the characteristics of China’s counter-terrorism approach discussed in previous chapters – indoctrination of the “correct” ideology based on the assumption that the masses cannot distinguish between right and wrong because they lack knowledge about government policies.

For example, the one-on-one, close-style training in Chabuhaer County focuses on promoting the Marriage Law, the Family Planning Law, the Education Law, the Law on the Protection of Minors, the amended Criminal Law, the Notices of the XUAR governments, the Notices on forbidding the spread of illegal audio-video materials, policies on anti-violence and adherence to law and order, compiled propaganda materials of the XUAR, local religious policy, and policies that benefit the people (Chabuhaer County 2015). Such a long list of materials must be fully ingrained into the trainees, which is ensured by requiring them to give presentations based on their own experience, and write about their insights and reflections. The County

government has also sought to ensure individual loyalty through activities such as flag-raising, singing the national song, military training, learning “red songs” that praise the CCP, field trips, and patriotic films. After the training, each individual is required to write a personal conclusion, and they received a comprehensive appraisal. An official of the Chabuhaer Country said that the purpose of this “training” is to

make them clearly recognise how they were wrong, raise their awareness of understanding and conform to law. Educate, guide them ... [so that they will] abandon the evil and follow the good, rely on the Party and good policies of the government, [encourage them] to rely on their diligence to get rich, and become a qualified citizen. (Chabuhaer County 2015)

The quote demonstrates that local officials perceive the “trainees” – who are in fact internees because they have no option to refuse the “training” – as a group of people who are unable to distinguish between right and wrong, and are following the “wrong” path without knowing it. They see them as intrinsically “evil” and believe that they must be “educated” and “guided” by making them aware of the truth so that they become a “qualified” citizen. These assumptions are profoundly disturbing, as they establish a regime of truth based entirely on the perception of government officials, which justifies treating “trainees” as something less than a normal citizen.

It is clear that the so-called “soft” approach has already become what Mao Zedong (1957, 1949) used to deal with the enemies – deprivation of individual rights and coercion. This kind of “education” has become a recent focus for critics outside China. Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported several deaths of detained Uyghurs, which further intensified the resentment felt towards the CCP among Uyghur dissidents. Ayhan Memet, mother of Dolkun Isa, the current President of the World Uyghur Congress, died at a detention centre in Keping County (Han Jie 2018). Muhammad Salih Hajim, a Uyghur Islamic scholar died some 40 days after being detained, causing both the Uyghur Human Rights Project and the World Uyghur Congress to call for international pressure on China to reveal information about the conditions of detainees and release those who had been detained (Eckert 2018). Dilixat Raxit, a spokesperson of the World Uyghur Congress, accused the Chinese government of “murdering” this prominent religious leader (Eckert 2018). Another report involved the death of a teenage Uyghur boy who was detained for travelling overseas (A. Seytoff and Lipes 2018). Another RFA report compared the re-education policy to “ethnic cleansing”, saying the number of detained Uyghurs exceeded the number of detainees in Nazi Germany (Wang Yun 2018).

The news has also attracted the attention of other international critics. An article in *the New York Times* (Thum 2018) accused local officials of targeting Uyghurs based on discriminative and arbitrary criteria, making Xinjiang a more dangerous place for

Uyghurs than it was during the Cultural Revolution. Echoing Thum's observation, Gay McDougall, a member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, said that the Uyghurs are treated as "enemies of the state" solely based on their ethnicity (Nebehay 2018).

Human Rights Watch (2017a) has criticised that the Anti-Terrorism Law and the Measures for implementation, stating that they do not clarify whether a person shall be deprived of their liberty under the Settlement and Education policy, or the time limit. This means that in practice, a person can be detained for an unlimited period of time even after serving a full sentence (Human Rights Watch 2017a).

International pressure has once again forced the CCP to confront the dilemma of its own creation. On the one hand, the CCP seeks to improve the efficacy of its counter-terrorism policy by strengthening its control, emphasising the government's role in "guiding" the public towards the "correct" and "positive" ideas and views. On the other hand, the restrictions imposed on every respect and coercive "transformation" backfired and resulted in intensified tensions especially between the CCP and Uyghur dissidents abroad. As in China, few people would challenge the CCP's counter-terrorism approach from within; the deficiencies will remain repressed until they are exacerbated to the point that they cannot be hidden from the public.

China's response to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 14 August 2018 once again demonstrated its consistent position in blaming external enemies.

Certain anti-China forces have made unwarranted charges against China for political purposes, and a few overseas media smeared China's measures to fight terrorism and crimes in Xinjiang through their distorted reports of the CERD [The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, author's note] review, which is out of ulterior motives... Any rumor and slander will turn out to be futile (K. Lu 2018) [official translation].

The blame on "Certain anti-China forces" and "a few overseas media" "out of ulterior motives" indicates the identity and motives of the enemies. The statement continues by justifying Xinjiang's policy as being aimed at "stability", "economic growth" and "harmonious coexistence". A commentary in the *Global Times* (2018) attributes the "peace and stability" to its "high intensify of regulations", and praises the government for "salvaging" Xinjiang from "massive turmoil". However, this façade of peace and stability pales beside the numerous reports on human rights violations and forceful "transformation" of the Uyghurs (Zenz 2018).

At the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Chinese delegate referred to the informative reports that they had prepared to show

their hard-work in implementing the convention of the UN Committee and urged the members of the Committee to take a “comprehensive and objective approach to China’s implementation” (*Hong Kong Free Press* 2018).

The government’s efforts in improving economic development and equality in Xinjiang indicate that the government is making efforts and has good intentions. It is also possible that sometimes statistics may have been exaggerated to show the public the achievements of the government in preventing terrorism. But the implementation of the “re-education camps” highlights some intrinsic characteristics of this authoritarian regime. First, China’s counter-terrorism approach is based on a number of assumptions that help political elites and intellectuals to distinguish “friends” and “enemies”, the criteria for which are rooted in modern and contemporary history and the nationalist sentiments against imperialist invaders. Second, the criteria are therefore irrational and serve the political function of maintaining legitimacy. Third, the assumptions derived from the friend/enemy distinction are dangerous and can be used to justify targeting more individuals than necessary.

The following section focuses on another part of the “soft” approach – propaganda. In July 2009 a series of violent riots took place in Urumqi, the capital city of Xinjiang, resulting in 197 deaths and over 1,700 people being injured, according to the official report (Xinhua 2009e). As discussed in Chapter 5, the official accounts of this incident are radically different from what has been reported in the West based on Rebiya Kadeer’s account. According to Rebiya Kadeer, the incident started with a Han-Uyghur conflict¹¹⁷ in Shaoguan which resulted in at least two deaths, both Uyghurs; and the unjust treatment of the Uyghurs offended Uyghurs throughout China, which led to an initially peaceful demonstration that was brutally suppressed by the Chinese authorities (McCurry 2009; Kadeer 2009). According to a Chinese source, a senior member of the World Uyghur Congress edited a video about a violent incident that had taken place in Iraq, published on CNN, and renamed it “Uyghur girl got beaten”, inciting anti-Han sentiment among the Uyghurs, and reinforcing ethnic antagonism (Xinhua 2009d). The state media linked the riots directly with Rebiya Kadeer, claiming that the World Uyghur Congress was in direct contact with the perpetrators, and incited the people inside the Chinese border via the internet, telephone, and messages. After the attacks, according to “relevant departments” – possibly referring to intelligence departments – Rebiya Kadeer called for an emergency meeting to make a plan to “further instigate the riots and rally international support to exert pressure on China”, resulting in the attacks against the Chinese Consulate General in Munich

¹¹⁷ The conflict was triggered by rumours that Uyghurs had raped two Chinese women, according to Rebiya Kadeer.

and the protest in front of the Chinese Embassy in the Netherlands (Xinhua 2009b). Rebiya Kadeer denied the charges, linking the violence with the “decades of discrimination and persecution directed at Uyghurs, their religion and culture, by the ruling Chinese Communist Party” (Rachel 2014).

7.2.2 Top-down de-radicalisation propaganda

To improve the credibility of the official discourse, a month after the riots, on 3 August 2009, Xinhua reported that Rebiya Kadeer’s son Khahar, Memet, and daughter Roxingul and 9 other close relatives had stated the following in an open letter addressed to Rebiya.

...In earlier years, the Party and the government offered you so many opportunities, created so many convenient conditions to make you one of the richest people in Xinjiang. Afterwards, the Party and the government have treated you well. However, you ended up in jail because of others’ incitement. It is the tolerance of our government that made it possible for you to go to America. Before your departure, you vowed to our government that you would not participate in any form of separatist activities, but in the end, you have broken your promise.

... The big family of Xinjiang has never seen such a cruel violent event like the 7/5 riots [the 2009 Urumqi Riots, author’s note]. Because of you, many innocent people of all ethnic groups lost their lives in Urumqi on 5th of July, with huge damage to properties, shops and vehicles. How come?

... Mum, after all you have done, the government treated us well.

... No-one would hope to destroy this happy family. So please think about the happiness of us and your grandchildren. Please do not destroy the stable and happy life of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang. (Xinhua 2009a).

The blunt propaganda phrasing in the letter portrays a façade of all ethnic groups living happily in Xinjiang. There are a number of assumptions in this letter.

1. Those who are dissatisfied with China’s policy do not know what life is really like in Xinjiang.
2. External enemies incited Rebiya Kadeer to cause trouble for China.
3. The Chinese government is an innocent victim of Rebiya Kadeer’s plot and has been kind enough to grant her leniency.
4. Working against the Chinese government, denying its achievements and undermining the peace and stability it created in Xinjiang make Rebiya Kadeer an enemy of all ethnic groups in China.

These assumptions reveal that the letter reflects the position of the government, more than that of Rebiya Kadeer’s relatives. Instead of improving the credibility of the government, the publication of this letter in fact raised concerns about its authenticity

of the letter itself and the conditions that Kadeer's children and relatives had been put in. Phelim Kine, a researcher for the Human Rights Watch, said in a Guardian report that "what is striking is that the language is boilerplate propaganda department phrasing. It suggests the government authorities had a role in their formulation" (Branigan 2009). Dilxat Raxit, a spokesperson for the World Uyghur Congress, simply told *Reuters* that the letter was fake. "It's not possible that one of her family members would write such a letter" (Blanchard, Blanchard, and Hornby 2009). The authenticity of these letters has been questioned in the context of the reports of the ill-treatment of by Kadeer's relatives. According to the World Uyghur Congress, as many as 30 of her relatives have been detained for various reasons, ranging from tax evasion to talking about sensitive issues publicly (Radio Free Asia 2017). A report by Amnesty International (2017) detailed how these relatives were tortured by the police, and called for "urgent action".

On the very next day, the *Global Times*, a nationalist newspaper owned by the *People's Daily*, responded to the "vicious attack" by the Western media and published the original manuscript of the hand-written letter in the Uyghur language (*Huanqiu* 2009). According to an official from the Xinjiang Public Security Department, "the Western accusation is ridiculous", and this is not the first time that Rebiya Kadeer's relatives and friends have written to the government to express their opposition against separatism and violence (*Huanqiu* 2009). "Even the government was surprised at the letter!" "As long as journalists follow the procedure, they can interview them [Rebiya Kadeer's relatives] to find out whether this is true or not!" (*Huanqiu* 2009)

In 2009, Rebiya Kadeer was invited to attend the Melbourne Film Festival to promote the film about her life, "The 10 Conditions of Love", directed by Jeff Daniels. Before the event, the cultural attaché at the Chinese consulate in Melbourne, Chunmei Chen, phoned the executive director Richard Moore and urged him to withdraw the film from the festival, which was rejected without any justification. The "extraordinary arrogance" of such a "new arrival" was clearly not well received by Moore (Child 2009a). Rebiya Kadeer said at the festival: "[t]he Chinese Government is trying to silence my voice by forcing my family and children to speak up against me. It's hard to imagine what kind of psychological torture they are going through at the moment" (Child 2009a). On 7 of August, Rebiya Kadeer joined 150 or so other Uyghurs in their independence movement protest outside the Chinese consulate in Melbourne during which Kadeer accused the Chinese government of "massacring" Uyghurs during the crackdown in the aftermath of the riots (Donovan 2009).

Chinese communities did not hesitate to fight back. On 27 July, 47 Chinese societies in Australia, headed by the Federation of Chinese Association of Victoria published a

joint statement condemning the politicisation of an art event by the organisers of the Melbourne Film Festival (Y. Jiang 2009). Chen Xiaofeng, a journalist for the News of the World, dug into the background of the politicians who had invited Rebiya Kadeer, saying that her visit had been supported by anti-China politicians Michael Danby and Australian Greens Leader Bob Brown, both of whom are, according to a “senior journalist in Australia”, “typical problem-makers” (Xiaofeng Chen 2009). To protest against the politicisation of a cultural event, three Chinese directors withdrew from the festival (Itzkoff 2009). In response to the suspicion that the withdrawal was due to government pressure, Chunmei Chen said this was “pure nonsense”, and that the government only knew this after seeing the report in the local media (China.com 2009). One of the directors, Tang Xiaobai, withdrew her film after being telephoned by the Chinese foreign ministry and the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, saying that “it was her decision to boycott the festival” (Tran 2009). After the programme of the film festival was publicised, pro-China hackers crashed the website of the festival, replacing the programme information with the Chinese flag and anti-Kadeer slogans (Child 2009b). A hacker named “oldjun” left the following message in English on the official website of the festival, which went viral on Chinese online platforms including Baidu Post Bar (*Baidu Post Bar* 2009) and Tianya Forum (*Tianya* 2009), two popular online platforms.

We like film, but we hate Rebiya Kadeer! We like peace, and we hate East Turkistan terrorist! Please apologize to all the Chinese people! Hacked by oldjun! (original text)

This case demonstrates how the official position, which is backed up by evidence that is far from convincing – letters by Rebiya Kadeer’s relatives – resulted in nationalist sentiments among Chinese communities. It is clear that the government’s role has extended from the purely political sphere into the culture sphere, and from state level into the life of ordinary people. Considering the style of the language, described as “boilerplate propaganda department phrasing” by Phelim Kine, as well as the level of state control in the entire terrorism discourse in China, it is highly likely that the government played a role in formulating the open letter to Rebiya Kadeer. Family members turning against each other is a phenomenon that was seen during the Cultural Revolution, during which the government encouraged individuals to “draw a clear line” between themselves and their “evil” relatives (Jinan Daily 2016). The revolutionary culture that characterised the Cultural Revolution led officials to believe that the “correct” official ideology should be indoctrinated to “transform” those who resisted conforming. Officials dismissed alternative accounts as entirely “wrong” and supported by external enemies to contain China. Therefore, they did not see how unconvincing it is was to ask Kadeer’s relatives to write a letter praising the Chinese

government. In creating an environment in which the official account of events dominates the discourse, the CCP does not focus on addressing the issues that Uyghur dissidents have. Instead, it groups all of the criticism it dislikes into hostile forces, making them the enemies, and undermining the ability of the government to engage in political negotiation to solve the problem.

This case shows how official propaganda affects the public at the individual level. The message left by the hacker oldjun indicates that the government has effectively constructed the image of Rebiya Kadeer as an enemy of the Chinese people. The underlying friend/enemy distinction is translated into simple “hate” and “like”, indicating that even though the propaganda is hardly convincing, the Chinese public may have adopted the same assumptions that underpin the official counter-terrorism discourse – the Uyghur separatists represented by Rebiya Kadeer, as well as all those who support them, are our enemies. The dominance of the official discourse resulted in nationalist sentiments against the separatists and the hostility against Rebiya Kadeer among the public.

7.2.3 Bottom-up de-radicalisation propaganda

On 30 April 2014, the last day of Xi Jinping’s visit to Xinjiang, a knife attack and bombing took place at the exit of the Urumqi South Station. The CCP ascribed the attack to Ismail Yusup, a member of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (B. Gao 2014). The Turkistan Islamic Party claimed responsibility for the attack (SITE Intelligence Group 2014).¹¹⁸ This attack became the focus of attention in China during the following days. According to a public opinion analysis by the official analysts from the *People’s Daily*, from the day of the attack to the 4 May, over 1,200 news articles and over 42,000 microblogs around this topic were published online each day (Xintian He and Shi 2014). On the 1 May, 11 Uyghur students at several universities across China posted a joint letter entitled “We cannot Remain Silent”, condemning this attack. The letter starts with a condemnation of the killing of innocent citizens, which is followed by 11 questions to the perpetrators. It then clarifies that the Islamic doctrines are against terrorist activities, with the wording echoing Xi’s analogy of rats (Dai and Hu 2014). The text concludes with a call for unity, which is emphasised by it being repeated three times, and a call for action against terrorists.

¹¹⁸ In the official Chinese counter-terrorism discourse, the Turkistan Islamic Party is considered the forerunner of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (see Li 2016). However, some question the link between the two (see Xu, Fletcher, and Bajoria 2014).

Violent terrorist activities and violent terrorists will be forever nailed to a historical pillory... ¹¹⁹ [Those who] fight against the powerful state regime will only end up in death. [Those who] become the enemy of the whole peace-loving nation will certainly be destroyed..... We call upon our Uyghur compatriots to stand up and fight against evil extremism and extreme ideology... The enemies are afraid of our unity, which means unity is most powerful. The more the enemies undermine the unity, the more we need to maintain the unity. We need to unite, and all the ethnic groups need to unite!

This quote shows a high level of political conformity. A historical pillory is a typical Chinese expression that is used to show strong opposition, indicating that the person in question is notorious and will be forever hated by future generations. The expression is seen in both CCP and anti-CCP propaganda. For example, pro-CCP individuals believe that historical nihilism must be nailed to a historical pillory (S. Guo 2016). The metaphor of the pillory may be used to justify public humiliation and physical abuse that have been reported in the form of public trial (Lu Yang 2014) and torture (Thum 2018). Anti-CCP individuals believe that CCP leaders such as Deng Xiaoping and Li Peng must be nailed to a historical pillory (Zhou X. 2017). The quote emphasises both the correctness of the CCP and the power of the state. It explicates that those who fight against the state will die and be destroyed. It also portrays younger radicals as innocent children who are in need of guidance in regard to the “correct” ideology.

This case demonstrates a bottom-up model of propaganda. The text was initially disseminated on social platforms such as Microblog, Wechat, and Tianya Forum (jzqtj123 2014). Soon after it gained popularity, a local official phoned one of the authors to express his support and asked for the Uyghur language version (Dai and Hu 2014). Written by Uyghur students, the letter received much attention from the government. As discussed above, Uyghur opinion leaders and the education sector are two of the important targets of the Mass Line approach. Uyghur students represent both Uyghurs and college/university students, and their opinions are supposedly more convincing than pure government propaganda. Therefore, it is natural that the state media would promote the letter to the entire nation. The state media highlighted that the public spoke very highly of the letter. According to an estimation by *China Youth Daily*, under the leadership of the Communist Youth League of China, over 70% of the comments praised and agreed with the authors that “both Uyghurs and Han Chinese are victims. Terrorists do not represent anyone”, and “terrorists have nothing to do with ethnicity”. 20% of the comment joined the authors in condemning terrorisms.

¹¹⁹ historical pillory: 历史的耻辱柱

And 10% followed up by clarifying that terrorist attacks are against religious doctrines. This view is, of course, subject to selection bias as a large proportion of those who read and comment on the state media are likely to already be at least partially aligned with the CCP's framing.

In June, 13 overseas Xinjiang-born students of different ethnic groups published an article entitled "Motherland, Xinjiang, I want to tell you", expressing their indignation against terrorists and their love for the motherland (CRI Online 2014). At around the same time, 15 Uyghur intellectuals, in collaboration with over 200 writers and translators, published another joint open letter entitled "it is our responsibility and obligation to never remain silent – a joint open letter to Uyghur compatriots" (Sui 2014). The letter emphasises that "a small group of mad, inhumane mob" cannot represent any ethnicity or religion, and that the Uyghurs remaining silent will result in the whole ethnic group being stigmatised by what the mob has done (Sui 2014). Portraying terrorists as a "mad, inhuman mob" fits well with the official discourse that demonises the enemy.

In July 2014, a book named after the initial post by 11 Uyghur students was published, followed by other editions in the Uyghur and Kazak languages. The book contains over 40 articles written by over 200 Uyghur writers, poets, and scholars, including the initial post by 11 Uyghur students, joint letters from different sectors and areas such as overseas Uyghurs students, academics from universities, social groups, government officials and believers (*Xinjiang Daily* 2014b). Its publisher, the Xinjiang science and technology press is state-owned, and affiliated with the Publishing Bureau of the XUAR. The publication of this book was supported by the Propaganda Department of the XUAR, who considered that it would to "unify the thinking" and "build consensus" (*Xinjiang Daily* 2014b), indicating the purpose of promoting political conformity and reinforcing the "correct" ideas and views.¹²⁰

The high degree of similarity between the language used in these posts and the official counter-terrorism propaganda shows the uniformity of the language used by various actors, in this case, the Uyghur students and Uyghur intellectuals in China, and overseas students of different ethnic groups. The joint letter by 11 Uyghur students, which started as online posts on social media and then received support from a government official, became an exemplary act for other potential "propagandists" to follow, and was finally published by a state-owned publisher. The possibility of becoming famous through manifesting loyalty to the CCP stimulated other Uyghurs to follow. Because of their identities as Uyghur, students, and intellectuals, their voice is

¹²⁰ unifying the thinking: 统一思想; building consensus: 凝聚共识

valued by the CCP as an important complements to the existing counter-terrorism discourse. Mobilising Uyghurs to align with the official framing helped the government to entrench the official counter-terrorism discourse and the underlying friend/enemy distinction among the groups they represent. It is unclear to what extent those who wrote these letters genuinely believe what they have written. But what is certain is that state propaganda did result in a behavioural conformity with the official discourse of counter-terrorism. The voice of the Uyghurs also serves to emphasise that the government is not targeting the Uyghur population, which, in the context of recent reports on the “re-education camps”, which are disproportionately directed at Uyghurs, only reveals the emptiness of the state propaganda.

7.3 Conclusion

This chapter discussed China’s de-radicalisation strategy with reference to the role of education and a case study of mass mobilisation. Facing the same challenge of transforming the minds of an radicalised individuals, China’s approach seems to be particularly heavy-handed. Based on the assumption that only the official version of the truth should be promoted, the CCP has transformed education into an indoctrinating instrument. On the one hand, education is considered very important as part of China’s prevention strategy, and some local officials have developed various tactics to prevent students from dropping out. On the other hand, education is used to re-integrate former extremists into society. The education of these former extremists relies on community and family, reflecting the Mass Line principle of including citizens in security governance. However, recent reports regarding the incarceration of the Uyghurs in “vocational training centres” highlighted a tension between the Mass Line theory and its practice.

China’s de-radicalisation can be categorised into hard and soft approaches. The categorisation reflects the friend/enemy dichotomy embedded in Mao’s theory of two types of contradictions. In contrast to the sweeping crackdown campaigns, mass mobilisation is considered part of the “softer” approach. However, government officials hold a narrow view regarding what is “correct”, which has turned the “soft” approach into a wholesale indoctrination programme. On the one hand, the government has facilitated top-down propaganda that started from the state media and ended with nationalist individuals hacking the Melbourne Film Festival website. On the other hand, pro-CCP speeches at the grassroots level, especially from within the Uyghur community have been widely disseminated and published.

This chapter portrayed a paranoid party that is overreacting, driven by the anxiety about losing legitimacy. However, it is worth noting that China is not the only state

that overreacts when faced with terrorism and radicalisation. One of the tactics of terrorists is to provoke the state to overreact, so that its legitimacy, which is based on its commitment to democratic values and the rule of law is eroded. The global War on Terror, the PREVENT strategy in the UK, and the Center for Prevention, Integration and Citizenship in France, are all examples of governments' "trial and error" in countering terrorism and radicalisation. There are some shocking similarities between some elements of the counter-terrorism strategies in China and the West. The use of the friend/enemy distinction can be seen in the global War on Terror discourse. The emphasis of the Chinese national identity resonates with the focus on "Britishness" in the UK. The efforts to transform an individuals' minds by making them sing the national anthem are also observed in the Center for Prevention, Integration and Citizenship in France. Highlighting the difficulties in striking a proper balance between state security and civil liberty is by no means meant to justify China's heavy-handed approach. It is important to not isolate China's approach to terrorism as yet another example of intrinsic problems of an authoritarian regimes, as a similar dilemma is seen in democratic countries as well.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

This thesis sought to answer the question of why and how the CCP legitimises its approach to terrorism. Using Chinese official documents and academic publications as primary data, it investigated the ways in which the counter-terrorism discourse, policy and practice are conditioned and shaped by China's quest for legitimacy and historical continuities. It argued that the CCP is concerned about legitimacy as it provides stability and sustains its rule. The CCP's quest for legitimacy in the context of terrorism has been characterised by the following aspects.

First, the narratives of the Century of Humiliation are deployed as a source of legitimacy for the CCP's focus on national unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Written by the CCP, the "humiliating" history of the colonial and imperialist intervention between 1839 and 1949 is crucial to the CCP's claims about the centrality of unity to China's political discourse. It is in the context of the history of a divided China that the CCP has constructed its legitimacy through its commitment to maintaining the complete ownership of, and full sovereignty over its territories. The narratives thus carry with them the connotation of "unity" as something that is specifically constructed by the CCP in the context of the history of "humiliation".

Second, the Chinese notion of "unity" lays out some assumptions that explain China's attitude towards "separatism". These untold assumptions are conveyed to the public by using labels such as "hostile forces", "three forces" and "East Turkistan forces", which enable the CCP to conflate separatism and terrorism. In deploying these narratives and labels, the CCP exercises its power as a defining agency to set the tone for an event, and political officials and scholars then reproduce the official discourse based on ready-made assumptions so that the CCP can propose a solution that requires a further curtailment of civil liberties, which would otherwise be difficult to justify to the public. The labels and narratives allow them to select, organise and interpret events in a way that is conducive to the legitimacy of the regime.

Third, the investigation of the concepts of the "enemy" shows that the way in which it has been used makes it difficult to objectively identify what "terrorism" is, and underscores the fundamentally political nature of the concept and its usage. Political officials manipulate the friend/enemy distinction to ensure the stability and security of the regime. Throughout contemporary history, different generations of leaders have used "hostile forces" to refer to slightly different "enemies" who have been deemed as threats to the rule of the CCP. Under the current leadership, the notion of "three forces", inherited from the Mao era, functions to allow the CCP not only to ascribe right and wrong, but also to mobilise the public to participate in its counter-terrorism practice through mass mobilisation.

Fourth, political elites and scholars are concerned about the likelihood of a regime change because of external intervention. Cases of humanitarian intervention in other countries have reinforced their perception that external intervention infringes upon a country's sovereignty and often results in the exacerbation of conflicts. Linked to this, China's political elites and scholars view its counter-terrorism approach as one of its domestic affairs, and criticisms regarding issues such as human rights are seen by them as a form of interference. Accusations of human rights abuses in Xinjiang remind Chinese officials and scholars of interventions such as the case of Kosovo and the colour revolution in the Middle East. The CCP justifies its increasingly tightened control over ideology in the context of regime change, and dismisses human rights accusations as interference.

Fifth, China faces the same challenges in handling the balance between state security and civil liberties, and the pressure to maintain the legitimacy of its often-abusive counter-terrorism regime. The development of the Anti-terrorism legal framework reveals the struggle between the pressure to conform to international norms and the single-party regime's intrinsic need to consolidate power by curtailing civil liberties. Take the revisions of the definition of terrorism in China's Anti-Terrorism Law as an example; the initial draft of the law criminalises "thoughts", conflates terrorism and separatism, and is highly political and state-centric. The revised definition shows some limited attempts to conform to international standards by deleting "thoughts", and adding an individual dimension into the definition of terrorism. This change indicates some awareness among political elites about the problems with the initial draft, and some attempts to shift the focus from state security to individual rights by complementing the state-centric counter-terrorism strategy with a dimension of human security on a normative level. In addition, the executive has started to share power with the judiciary in designating terrorist individuals and organisations. The National Counter-terrorism Work Leading Organ, the executive body that is responsible for coordinating counter-terrorism practice, has issued three lists of terrorist organisations and individuals. After the revision of the Law, China adopted a "double track" system, which allows the people's courts to carry out the judicial procedure to designate terrorists. However, in practice, the designation still relies on the executive.

Sixth, the Mass Line strategy has been applied widely in counter-terrorism propaganda and mass mobilisation. The application of the Mass Lines principles is a key illustration of how the quest for legitimacy has been reflected in counter-terrorism practice, and an illustration of the historical continuities in the current counter-terrorism discourse. Developed initially by Mao, the notion faded from view for most of the post-Mao era. The current leadership has facilitated a revival of the

Mass Line principles in an attempt to draw support from the public. The combination of the Mass Line principles and counter-terrorism results in guiding doctrines such as “combining specialised efforts with the Mass Line” and “mass prevention and mass governance” in counter-terrorism, emphasising individuals’ ability and responsibility in regard to intelligence collection.¹²¹ Mobilised by the counter-terrorism discourse and economic incentives, ordinary citizens play an important role in China’s “people’s war on terror”. The case of the “Great Round-up” after the knife attacks in Shache County in 2014 provides evidence of how the CCP has mobilised the public, and how this case, in turn, served as part of the counter-terrorism propaganda.

Seventh, based on the assumptions of a “peaceful evolution” and the “enemies” attempt to overthrow the CCP through peaceful means, the CCP has been vigilant in regard to religion and education, as they are the main vehicles for spreading ideologies. In order to ensure the ideological foundation for its rule within China, the Communist Party has implemented stringent regulations that aim at controlling the “ideological battlefield”.

The supranational religious aspirations, such as *Ummah* and the intervention in the secular administration such as with regard to marriage and divorce, have been deemed a threat to China’s ideological security as they are incompatible with its goal of maintaining national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Combined with the Mass Line strategy, the CCP seeks to engage community members by allying with “patriotic believers”. Similarly, education has been seen as a major battlefield for ideology. In the context of counter-terrorism, “education” has been used both for prevention and in rehabilitation as an instrument of indoctrination. To prevent the spread of extremist ideology among less-educated young Uyghurs, local government officials have carried out various measures to keep students from dropping out of school. In addition, the Anti-Terrorism Law requires detention centres and prisons to assess the risk of terrorists after they have served their full sentence. Depending on the result, they might then be referred to the “Settlement and Education” programme to be indoctrinated with the “correct” ideas and views and loyalty to the Party. Those who are deemed a risk are “educated” in prisons, detention centres, and community-based rehabilitation institutes.¹²² As the current Anti-Terrorism Law does not specify the time limit, Human Rights Watch (2017a) points out that this may result in indefinite detention.

¹²¹ mass prevention and mass governance: 群防群治

¹²² Settlement and Education: 安置教育. Human Rights Watch translation: education placement.

Eighth, the case study of the “East Turkistan forces” presents in-depth information about the manoeuvring of the frames, narratives, and labels of “terrorism”. The CCP uses “East Turkistan forces” as an umbrella term for all attempts to pursue independence in what is currently known as Xinjiang. Such an understanding conflates separatism and terrorism, criminalising the Uyghur communities in exile who sympathise with the cause of separatism. Despite the criticisms, the CCP claims to have conclusive evidence regarding the use of force by entities such as the World Uyghur Congress and the alleged link between “East Turkistan forces” and other “enemies” makes it possible for the CCP to explain the ongoing conflicts in Xinjiang with the same friend/enemy distinction that underpinned the previous security discourse. Based on these ready-made assumptions, the CCP has promoted the narratives of how innocent people have been deceived into joining the *Hijrat*, in order to counteract the extremist narratives. Informed by the Mass Line strategy, the CCP differentiates “diehard” terrorists from those who blindly follow an extremist ideology. To gain support from and engage the majority of the Uyghur community, the CCP incorporates community members into its propaganda system. While such a tactic echoes the engagement of community members in fighting against terrorism in liberal democracies, the Chinese Uyghurs’ voice is more visibly characterised by homogeneity with the Party line.

The research question is sub-divided into the following three themes.

8.1 How do Chinese political elites and scholars perceive “unity” and “separatism”?

First, the propensity of the Chinese government to prioritise unity can be understood by examining the two major debates on unity that have existed throughout Chinese history. Ancient philosophers debated the relationship between stability and unity. Philosophers such as Mozi argued for strengthening the role of the ruler – the “wise man” – to establish a set of standards for morality, so that the people had a better understanding of right and wrong. Although scholars such as Laozi argued against strong government intervention, contemporary Chinese scholars who are loyal to the Party have sought to interpret his ideas as being in line with supporting the “unification of diversity and homogeneity” under the *Dao* (Li 2003, 80).

Another debate in modern China involves how the framing of territories creates its own reality. In the context of the Century of Humiliation, the ideal of creating a “Grand Union” prevailed among early revolutionists such as Sun Yat-sen and Kang Youwei. The experience of imperialist invasions during the Century of Humiliation made intellectuals sensitive to the enemies’ intention to undermine China’s unity.

Scholars such as Gu Jiegang and Fu Sinian advocated abolishing the use of *minzu*, fearing that the name itself would help the enemies to divide China along ethnic lines. Their opponents such as Fei Xiaotong and Jian Bozan were concerned about the negative consequences of Gu Jiegang's assimilationist view. This debate explains the vigilance of the Chinese government regarding calling Xinjiang "East Turkistan". The priority of unity is reflected in China's integration model – diversity within unity. This integration model projects an inevitable assimilation of different ethnic and religious groups towards the "correct" ideology of the socialist path. The expression of ethnic or religious identities is only allowed on the condition that the "unity" of the nation is respected.

Second, a friend/enemy distinction underpins China's political discourse. The label of "hostile forces" is used to distinguish between "friends" and "enemies", and subsequently enables the government to decide how to treat them. Mao believed that an imminent war was inevitable. He believed that the enemies would use peaceful evolution to undermine the foundation of the legitimacy of China as a socialist country. Adopting a revolutionary view, Mao advocated that enemies should be treated with coercion and the deprivation of individual rights (1957, 1949). Therefore, a revolutionary struggle against the enemies in the Mao era was particularly violent. Deng was more concerned with the impact of economic backwardness on the foundation of the legitimacy of the CCP. He adopted a developmental approach to security, directed much attention to economic development, and laid the foundation for the government's focus on economic growth to deal with the political unrest in Xinjiang. The two generations of leader that followed Deng continued the momentum of economic development, and the relatively high pace of economic growth reduced the government's reliance on the friend/enemy distinction as a source of legitimacy. However, the assumption of a group of external enemies who share the same anti-China agenda remains important. These assumptions re-emerged in an era of economic slow-down, and resulted in Xi Jinping's re-emphasis of ideological enemies.

Third, the legitimacy of the CCP is partly built on the politicisation of the past. The term "hostile forces" used in the current counter-terrorism discourse resonates with the friend/enemy distinction that is central to the narratives of the Century of Humiliation. The official political discourse channels the sense of victimhood among the people to project all ethnic groups in their entirety as a unified nation, making any attempts of "separatism" illegitimate. In doing so, the CCP has established a regime of truth and decides what can and cannot be seen as "correct". Accordingly, the "correct" view of history must admit that Xinjiang has always been an integral part of China; the "correct" view of ethnicity must prioritise the unity of the Chinese nation

over the diversity of ethnic groups; and the “correct” view of the state must acknowledge that the sovereignty of the state must be safeguarded against the interference of enemies in the name of human rights.

Fourth, the concept of separatism is constructed based on the perception of unity and the friend/enemy distinction. Envisioning an ideal of a “Grand Union”, Chinese political elites and intellectuals assume a long list of territories that has always been an integral part of China until China was “carved up” in the Century of Humiliation. Separatists’ claims for these territories, are therefore considered illegitimate. Allowing a limited degree of diversity, the CCP has constructed a narrow understanding of what kind of lifestyle the Uyghurs should adopt, and sees the “sinicisation of religions” as inevitable and necessary” (Central Socialist School 2018). The expression of the Uyghur identity beyond the stereotype of the Uyghurs characterised by singing, dancing and beautiful women wearing colourful clothes might be considered “wrong” and subject to being “transformed”.

Fifth, the assumptions that underpin China’s counter-terrorism discourse reveal the state-centric nature of its counter-terrorism approach. Chinese political elites and intellectuals are primarily concerned with the state as the referent object, and portray a variety of groups and individuals with different agendas as a monolithic group of enemies who share the same anti-China agenda. This perception is reinforced by intellectuals through seeing the cases of the Western intervention in Kosovo and other cases of intervention as the precedent to justify future intervention in China. The anxiety about human rights activities has led the government to strengthen its control over non-government organisations and antagonise groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, making it difficult for third parties to function as mediators between the government and Uyghur dissidents.

8.2 How does the CCP frame, define, and deal with “terrorism”?

The second sub-theme that was discussed in this thesis involves how the CCP frames, defines, and deals with real and perceived terrorist threats.

First, the official security principle put forward by political leaders indicates that the current leadership has inherited the assumptions about the causes of unrest and conflict in the world. Distancing itself from the hegemonic pursuit of power of the West, the CCP has put forward the Overall Security Outlook, which is characterised by a human-centric approach, a focus on development and five principles of peaceful coexistence. This security principle is, of course, largely normative, and is clearly not being followed strictly in the light of recent reports on “re-education camps”. But it highlights the three important aspects of China’s counter-terrorism approach – the

revival of the Mass Line approach, the developmental approach to dealing with socio-economic grievances, and hostility towards external intervention.

Second, the assumptions of external enemies are evident in the political discourse, in which the external enemies are seen as plotting to induce peaceful evolution and ultimately induce a regime change in China. Given the exemplary effect of the cases of separatist movements made possible by external intervention, Chinese political elites and scholars have always strongly opposed intervention in other countries, fearing that the separatist movements in China will employ the same tactic – appealing to Western supporters in the name of human rights and democracy. Attributing terrorism to “hostile forces” allows the government to utilise the ready-made assumptions about the enemies, and thus avoid clarifying the identity and motivation of the perpetrators. When citizens adopt the label of “hostile forces”, they unwittingly accept the assumptions that external enemies are responsible for the protraction of the fight against terrorism.

Third, the obsession with unity and the assumptions about external enemies led policy-makers to broaden the scope of the counter-terrorism legal framework. Embedded in China’s political context, which prioritises national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, the creation of the Anti-Terrorism Law was an attempt to consolidate the power of the government to designate its “enemies”. It reflects the struggle of an authoritarian regime between maintaining efficacy and sharing power with the judiciary. Concentrating power in the hands of the executive allows the government to put designated individuals on trial without, or before satisfying legal criteria. However, doing so also contravenes China’s own Constitution and Legal Procedural Law. The revised Anti-Terrorism Law did accord the judiciary more power in carrying out designations, but no restrictions have been put on the executive in regard to not intervening in the judicial process. Ultimately, the current “double track” system still provides excessive power to the executive which might be used to target political opponents, indicating that in China’s political context, “procedural justice” can be compromised when the state seeks to pursue “substantive justice”.

The Anti-Terrorism Law also reflects an obstinate conflation between terrorist “thoughts” and behaviour, and between separatism and terrorism. Since the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation coined the phrase “three evils”, it has been frequently used in the official counter-terrorism discourse. Equally vague as the “hostile forces”, the phrase is equally problematic because it lacks defining power and opens up the concept of terrorism to political interpretations.

Furthermore, despite the revision of the draft Anti-Terrorism Law, the definition of terrorism is still vague enough to be used to criminalise “thoughts”, as evidenced by

the imprisonment of advocates, such as Ilham Tohti. With regards to radicalisation, the criminalisation of “thoughts” means that the authorities pay attention equally to cognitive radicalisation, which can be seen clearly in the emphasis on “ideological work” and the efforts to “transform” those who are prone to radicalisation.

The dramatic increase in the number of terrorism-related cases after the publication of the Anti-Terrorism Law shows that the local authorities have been able to invoke the Anti-Terrorism Law more frequently than is necessary. The case of the Tianming Express company shows that when an offence can be punished either according to the Postal Law or the Anti-Terrorism Law, the local government chooses the latter (Xinhua 2016a). Invoking Anti-Terrorism Law whenever possible reflects a tendency to overstretch the scope of counter-terrorism strategy in legal practice. Anti-Terrorism Law is thus not only used against political enemies, but also to strengthen social control.

Fourth, the departments and institutions involved in counter-policy-making indicate a tendency towards a concentration of power under the current leadership. Within the government, the Party departments have further consolidated their power by bringing Armed Police, ethnic affairs, and religious affairs under the Party’s control. To reflect the Mass Line approach, the Anti-Terrorism Law also seeks to mobilise the public and turn individuals into sources of intelligence.

China’s cooperation with neighbouring countries reflects a growing assertiveness in promoting its own brand of security in the region and demonstrates the intention to highlight common interests, especially among SCO countries, based on dissatisfaction with the acquiescence or support of the West in regard to what are considered the “three forces”.

Fifth, Deng’s legacy of a developmental approach to security is still influential in today’s counter-terrorism policy. Chinese political elites and intellectuals believe that terrorism is rooted in a complicated international situation in which there is a widened development gap as well as inequalities. The solution to terrorism, therefore, lies in the economic development of Xinjiang. Indeed, the rapid growth of the GDP of Xinjiang reflects the government’s efforts in this respect. Large-scale programmes aimed at economic improvements in Xinjiang manifest the underlying assumption that economic development will naturally reduce the socio-economic grievances that have been used for separatist claims. However, the simplistic understanding of the problem of terrorism has proved insufficient in dealing with the heightened inequalities that have accompanied the economic growth and intensified the ethnic tensions among both the Uyghurs and Han due to preferential policies in favour of ethnic minorities.

Sixth, Chinese political elites and intellectuals perceive the increasing religiosity of Islam a threat to the regime's stability. Because they see the revival of Islam in the context of the relatively relaxed control after the Cultural Revolution, they have called for tightened control over religion and the sinicisation of Islam. Among others, the efforts to eliminate "illegal religious activities" have allowed the CCP to target a variety of religious practices such as the use of the *halal* logo on daily necessities such as water and paper. Official documents on distinguishing illegal religious activities and de-radicalisation have allowed the CCP to designate some religious practices as signs of radicalisation.

Seventh, the implementation of the Mass Line approach reveals that although China's counter-terrorism is centred on the masses normatively, the content and style of mass mobilisation is largely decided by government officials. The re-emphasis of the Mass Line approach under Xi reflects the CCP's attempts to adjust its security policy to deal with non-traditional security threats. In accordance with Xi's "Overall National Security Outlook", the counter-terrorism policy not only addresses individuals as the receivers of security but also the participants of counter-terrorism practice.

However, the implementation is problematic, as it is based on the war narratives and the assumption that the masses are passive receivers of information who must be educated and guided to construct the "correct" views. The language used in the counter-terrorism propaganda resonates with the historical political movement "Eliminating the Four Pests", which was also framed as a "people's war". War narratives reinforce and normalise the friend/enemy dichotomy. The case of the "Great Round-up" demonstrates that guided by the Mass Line approach, local citizens were mobilised to join the counter-terrorism practice and the case itself was later used as propaganda as well.

De-radicalisation propaganda comes in various forms, including cultural activities. The "Little Apples" dancing competition reveals the simplistic and black-and-white understanding that local officials have of the Uyghur culture. They consider the secular, sinicised Uyghur culture as modern, and some traditions that extremists have promoted as destructive and backward, and believe that who practice these traditions as people who must be "saved" by the government. Because extremists have promoted an interpretation of Islam that forbids singing and dancing and the *jilbab*, the CCP has focused on promoting the Uyghur culture, which is characterised by singing, dancing and beautiful women wearing colourful clothes, which is a simplistic and stereotypical understanding of the diversity of the Uyghurs. Promoting this kind of understanding to prevent radicalisation might result in further undermining the credibility of the official discourse due to a lack of cultural sensitivity.

Propaganda material is disseminated through the education sector, local communities, and religious communities. To engage community members to improve the credibility of the official discourse, the government has organised many training sessions for “patriotic believers” in order for them to manifest loyalty. Similarly, open letters by Uyghur cultural workers are promoted to add the Uyghur’s voice to the official discourse. However, the similarity of the open letters with the official discourse only demonstrates the narrow understanding of the “correct” views and lifestyle that the government allows.

Eighth, the anxiety of political elites and intellectuals about the infiltration of Western values is reflected in the narratives of an “ideological battlefield”. The government’s attempt to maintain tight social control clashes with people’s desire to follow the values of democracy, human rights and freedom. In order to justify this control, the CCP frames these “Western” values as a threat to the regime’s stability. In incorporating ideological control into the de-radicalisation propaganda, the CCP has further established the “correct” views on history, ethnicity, and the state. The intolerance towards alternative ideas and views serves to prevent not only the spread of real terrorist propaganda, but also any ideologies that are might undermine the legitimacy of the CCP.

Ninth, “education” in the context of China’s de-radicalisation functions to indoctrinate people with the “correct” ideas and views. To prevent the Uyghur youth from encountering the “wrong” ideology, the local government has designed various mechanisms to ensure that they attend public schools that promote the “correct” ideology. Importantly, the government has implemented the Settlement and Education policy to continue to “educate” those who have served their sentences but are still considered a risk to society. Extending detention without charge raises concerns about due process. The methods used to rehabilitate these detainees also demonstrate the obsession of local governments with indoctrinating people with the “correct” version of religion and Uyghur culture.

Tenth, the discourse of stability maintenance demonstrates the CCP’s quest for legitimacy, which is characterised by an obsession with unity and a reliance on all-encompassing control. To ensure stability, the government has established a regime of truth according to which only some assumptions are “correct”, and alternative interpretations of history, ethnic relations and the sovereign right of the state are considered a threat to the stability of Xinjiang. The political slogans indicate the various dimensions of control. The “four identifies” requires minorities to identify with the state, the Chinese nation, the Chinese culture, and the socialist path. The “three cannot do withouts” requires the public to recognise the mutual reliance of the

different ethnic groups. The “five keys” indicates that problems should be tackled through different channels.

8.3 How does the CCP respond to the Xinjiang political violence?

This thesis also examined more closely the case of “East Turkistan forces” – the major “enemy” that has been constructed in China’s counter-terrorism discourse. Anxious about Uyghur separatist movements and their ability to rally support from Western sympathisers, political elites and intellectuals use the label “East Turkistan forces” to justify the legitimacy of the crackdown on any separatist attempts, including non-violent expression. The CCP has adopted hard and soft approaches to differentiate “contradictions among the people” and “contradictions between ourselves and the enemy”. However, sometimes the CCP has to manipulate the concept of the enemy to avoid making too many enemies for itself, and justify further measures against the *real* enemies. The stories of *hijrat* highlighted that most people have fled China for personal reasons – to make more money and pursue education – as opposed to political reasons – to escape from suppressive government. They portray those who sought to join the *hijrat* as less-educated individuals who were not capable of making the right decision.

An examination of hard and soft de-radicalisation measures in Xinjiang reveals that even the so-called “soft” approach can be very harsh in an authoritarian state, based on the government’s narrow understanding of “correct” ideas and views. Recent reports on “re-education camps” demonstrate this point. Officials see coercive internment as “transformation through education”, believing that forcing innocent Uyghurs to “recognise how they were wrong”, “abandon the evil”, and learn the “good policies” of the government will forge loyalty (Chabuchaer County 2015). Without mechanisms to keep the power of the executive in check, an authoritarian state is intrinsically less capable of limiting what local officials can do to achieve the goal of unity and stability. The criticising reports, largely from “Western” media, have further reinforced the officials’ perception that the West sees China subjectively (*Hong Kong Free Press* 2018). The ready-made assumptions in the counter-terrorism discourse thus perpetuate a vicious circle that undermines the CCP’s ability to work with non-governmental organisations towards solving the problem of separatist movement through political negotiation.

8.4 Broader implications

The findings of this thesis have a number of broader implications for the debates about “terrorism” and China as a rising power more broadly.

For those who are interested in terrorism and Critical Terrorism Studies, this thesis contributes to the debate over the definition of terrorism, the state-centric approach to terrorism, the framing of “terrorism” and the close ties between the state and scholars.

The difference in the ways in which states perceive real and/or constructed “terrorist” threats hinders governments’ ability to reach a consensus on the nature of terrorism and undermines international cooperation. Conditioned by China’s quest for legitimacy and historical continuities, China’s counter-terrorism approach shows some characteristics that are distinctive from liberal democracies. Based on the ready-made assumptions in history, the current leadership constructs the concept of “unity” and “separatism” and the notion of the “enemy” in the context of the history of humiliation and the struggle against Western intervention. These assumptions contribute to the anxiety of Chinese political elites and scholars regarding the Western support for the separatist movements in the name of democracy and human rights. To achieve agreement on the definition of terrorism, China and the West need to address the key issue of the legitimacy of separatist movements. Western support for dissident groups that have a separatist agenda gives the CCP a reason to dismiss their efforts to exert pressure on human rights as an external intervention in China’s domestic affairs. Chinese political elites and scholars perceive Western support for separatist groups in the context of the “us and them” dichotomy inherited from the Mao era. They believe that such support is one of the main reasons for the prolonged conflict between the CCP and the separatists. China’s conflation of separatism and terrorism also exacerbates the problem, making it difficult to carry out peaceful political negotiation with “separatists” designated by the state.

“Terrorism” is used as a label to ascribe right and wrong. China’s counter-terrorism discourse inherited the master frames in which the friend/enemy distinction has been accepted without question. Therefore, within this discourse, the CCP does not need to explicitly state who the “hostile forces” and “three forces” are. The phrase “hostile forces” is a package of ready-made assumptions that draws on the narratives of the Century of Humiliation. It allows the speaker and the audience to communicate their indignation regarding terrorism without pointing out the identity of the terrorist. The “terrorism” label is only meaningful in the context of the existing “us and them” divisions.

Like other countries, the Chinese government is expected to justify its counter-terrorism policy to its citizens. However, given that the official counter-terrorism discourse is seldom criticised due to the CCP’s tight control over ideology, it is easier, compared to democracies, to persuade citizens to accept the curtailment of civil

liberties. Therefore, China's counter-terrorism propaganda is largely characterised by out-dated methods and an intolerance of cultural diversity. In comparison, the Prevent Strategy is highly controversial in the UK, which in its own right demonstrates the fact that a different voice is allowed in British society.

The case of China has some implications for Critical Terrorism Studies more broadly. China's counter-terrorism approach reflects its state-centric approach to terrorism. Chinese political elites and scholars base their understanding of the security threat on the historical continuities and the friend/enemy distinction inherited from the Mao era. They see the Western support for dissident groups in the context of a broader agenda to contain the rise of China. As they believe human rights are used to disguise the intervention, they are not likely to make a concession to allow Western human rights organisations to investigate in China. This attitude is further manifested in the Law on the Management of the Activities of Overseas Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) within Mainland China, which was passed in 2016. The CCP has sent a clear signal that NGOs will be closely monitored so that their work does not pose a challenge to the regime's stability.

This thesis sympathises with the commitment of the CTS to examine "terrorism" as a social fact and highlight the state's approach to terrorism in the context of its quest for legitimacy and historical continuities. Embedding counter-terrorism policy in a series of assumptions regarding what constitute security threats and how individuals should behave, the CCP allows and promotes the "correct" ideas and views about history, ethnicity, and the state, and restricts alternative narratives so that non-violent expressions of dissent based on genuine grievances cannot be voiced. Fearing that the "ignorant" masses will be influenced by the *real* enemies who are aiming to containing China, the CCP has made significant efforts in promoting counter-terrorism propaganda – the "correct" views on the issue of separatism – and adopted various coercive tactics, such as "re-education camps" and requiring cadres to stay at Uyghurs' homes.

This thesis also sympathises with the CTS perspective that views "terrorism" label as a rhetorical device through which to unveil the underlying friend/enemy distinction. The dominance of the official discourse – as opposed to alternative discourses provided by Uyghur dissidents, human rights groups and Western media – the vague and broad criteria, and the excessive power of the executive in designating terrorist organisations and individuals allows the Chinese government to be fully capable of determining "who are our enemies". Resolute crackdowns on the enemies have helped the CCP to construct itself as a legitimate force that safeguards the interests of the Chinese people.

This thesis also verified the observation made by the CTS regarding the impact of close ties between the state and scholars. In regard to the issue of terrorism, many Chinese scholars uncritically accept the official discourse of terrorism, leaving issues such as human rights violations unaddressed. Although there have been some attempts to challenge the existing paradigm within Chinese academia, such as the criticism of the principle of “combining leniency with severe punishment” (Wang and Zhao 2016, 138), “pocket crime” (Xun Zhang 2013), the “ignorant masses” (Huo Huang 2008), the hard approach (F. Chen 2015a), and the Settlement and Education policy (Z. Chen 2016), they have not been influential enough to change the mindset of the majority of government officials. As a result, counter-terrorism practice at the local level has gone further in curtailing the Uyghurs’ individual rights. As they are not confronted or challenged, it is likely that local officials believed that it is reasonable to suppress “wrong” ideas and views using coercive methods.

This thesis also appeals to experts in Chinese politics who are interested in how the state functions to legitimise its approach to terrorism. The authoritarian characteristics of China’s counter-terrorism approach limit the CCP’s ability to strike a proper balance between effective counter-terrorism and providing the rights and liberties that citizens are entitled to according to the Chinese Constitution. Like liberal/democratic countries, China faces the challenge of justifying its counter-terrorism approach to the public. However, faced with the more urgent need for unity and stability – a need constructed by political elites and intellectuals through the narratives of the Century of Humiliation – the CCP is not constrained in implementing heavy-handed counter-terrorism measures at the expense of civil liberties. In this context, the CCP seeks to consolidate its legitimacy through ideology, repression, and co-optation – to promote the “correct” socialist values and frame separatist views as “wrong” and even “illegal”; to repress “wrong” and “illegal” views through development and religious policies, and the “re-education camps”; and to engage with community members by increasing the presence of their voice. In this context, propaganda does not necessarily serve to convince the public, but rather, it becomes a demonstration of the power of the state to create its own truth. This is evident in the language of open letters by Uyghur “cultural workers”, the relatives of Rebiya Kadeer and Uyghur students and intellectuals. The boilerplate propaganda phrasing in these letters is better understood as a demonstration of the state’s power, which adds to the already-dominating official discourse. It reveals that the government, which might have played a role in producing these letter, was more concerned with dominating the discourse with the official version of stories. Political elites and intellectuals are more concerned with facilitating frame alignment so that these influential Uyghurs frame the issue in the same way that the government does.

Prioritising national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, the CCP reinforces the assumptions that collective interests come before individual interests – only by expanding the power of the state can individuals enjoy the stability that they are currently enjoying. In exchange for the further curtailment of civil liberties, the government promises stability and economic growth. However, as the power of the executive is not constrained, very little can be done to prevent local authorities from employing coercive tactics just to “hit the target”. The proud description of the number of individuals who have been “successfully transformed” is an example that the locals are more concerned with the achievements that are preferably quantifiable and reportable (*Tianshanwang* 2014).

In the discourse of counter-terrorism in the Chinese political context, governance can be reduced to simply following the “correct” ideology and economic growth. Government officials have created an environment in which it is simply more practical and less dangerous to follow the “correct” ideology promoted by the state, even if that means to compromising ethnic and religious identity. Because the government tends to dismiss any harsh criticism as aligned with external enemies, it would take a long time for the government to reform its counter-terrorism policy from within. The façade of plurality stems from the implementation of the Mass Line strategy and the engagement with community members demonstrates the dominance of the official framing and discourse of counter-terrorism, rather than the genuine inclusion of the voice of the Uyghurs. The centralisation of power in the counter-terrorism discourse, policy and practice make fragmented authoritarianism – as Andrew Mertha (2009) describes it – an illusion.

The decline in Chinese political rights and civil liberties, particularly among ethnic minorities in the context of counter-terrorism is part of the democratic backsliding across the world in the last 12 years (Abramowitz 2018). The most recent reports by Freedom House (Abramowitz 2018) highlights the consecutive decline of freedom in 71 countries , including leading democratic countries such as the US. Between the 9/11 attacks and 2012, more than 140 countries passed Anti-Terrorism Laws. Many countries are faced with the issue of the legitimacy of their anti-terrorism measures (Bianchi 2006). The fear of the “other”, be it “real” or socially constructed, poses major challenges for even the world’s most powerful democracies and their counter-terrorism strategies.

As China integrates into the world order, it is under the normative pressures to comply with the International Human Rights Law. The documents on the human rights of Xinjiang (2017), the three National Human Rights Action Plans and their reviews (The State Council Information Office 2011, 2016a, 2016b) and the report on the

implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (National People's Congress 1988) indicate some efforts to reduce human rights violations and ensure due process. However, considering the restrictions on civil liberties discussed in this thesis, these documents remain more or less rhetoric. The latest National Human Rights Action Plan (2016b) envisions restrictions of the executive power and improved mechanisms against torture and illegal internment by 2020. However, cases of human rights violations, especially the "re-education camps", mean that the implementation of this Action Plan remains to be examined.

Adopting the Mass Line approach as an alternative to liberal democracy (Chen Xi 2012, 89), the CCP has implemented various measures for participation and persuasion, as exemplified by the engagement of community members – patriotic believers, opinion leaders, cultural workers, and grassroots propagandists – and the reliance on community – residents' committees, neighbourhood committees, workplaces and schools. However, as the discussion in this thesis demonstrated, the implementation of the Mass Line principles epitomises the further curtailment of civil liberties and highlights the limited level of "diversity" that the Uyghurs enjoys. Instead of reflecting the will of the masses, the implementation of the Mass Line approach demonstrates that the essence of the Mass Line ideology is associated with the highly-centralised, paternal role of the Party and the manipulation of the masses (W. Tang 2016, 7). The feedback of ordinary people is valued, but is strictly controlled and even manipulated in order to justify the legitimacy of China's counter-terrorism approach. This observation furthers Graham Young's (1980, 225) argument that Party leadership remains central, not only to Mao's conception of the Mass Line, but also to Xi's governance in the current era.

In conclusion, this thesis sought to address the question of why and how the CCP legitimises its approach to terrorism by investigating the ways in which the counter-terrorism discourse, policy and practice are shaped by China's quest for legitimacy. It revealed important aspects of how the country functions by emphasising the linkages between its approach to terrorism and its quest for legitimacy through frames, assumptions, narratives and labels. In an era of economic slowdown, the CCP has put more emphasis on creating political conformity by promoting the "correct" ideas and punishing the "wrong" ones.

Appendix I

Translation of the 15 manifestations of radicalisation in the Ordinances on de-radicalisation in XUAR (People's Congress 2017).¹²³

1. Advocating and disseminate extremist ideology.
2. Interfering in others' freedom of religion, forcing others to participate in religious activities, forcing others to provide property or labour for religious venues and clergies.
3. Interfering in others' marriage, divorce, funeral, and inheritance succession.
4. Interfering others' association, integration, cohabitation with people from different ethnic groups or other religious belief, and expelling people of other ethnic groups or other religious belief to leave the place of residence.
5. Interfering in cultural and entertainment activities, rejecting public products and services such as radio and television.
6. Extending the concept of *halal* to other fields other than food, and excluding or interfering with others' secular life in the name of *halal*.
7. Wearing or forcing others to wear *jilbab* and extremist symbol.
8. Growing a beard and giving [Arabian] names to children without a good reason in order to spread religious fanaticism.
9. Disregarding legal procedure and getting married or divorced according to religious ritual only.
10. Stopping children from receiving national education and hampering the implementation of the national education system.
11. Threatening or inducing others to reject national policies, and deliberately damage legal certificates such as identity card and residence booklet, and Renminbi [the Chinese currency].
12. Deliberately destroying or damaging public property.
13. Publishing, printing, distributing, selling, producing, downloading, storing, reproducing, consulting, excerpting, and possessing articles, publications, and audio-visual products that contains extremist content.
14. Deliberately interfering or hampering family planning policies.
15. Any other extremist speech or act.

¹²³ The Ordinances on de-radicalisation in XUAR: 新疆维吾尔自治区去极端化条例, *xinjiang weiwuer zizhiqu qu jiduanhua tiaoli*

Appendix II

Translation of the 26 forms of “illegal religious activities” (The Party Committee General Office of the XUAR and The People’s Government of the XUAR 2014).¹²⁴

1. Activities that in the disguise of religion disrupt social order, impair the health of the citizens, sabotage national education system, interfere with administration and judicial processes, family planning policy and inheritance distribution, and other activities that undermine national interests, social and public interests and legitimate rights and interests of the citizens.
2. [Activities that] interfere with the freedom and religious belief of other people, force or in disguised form coerce others to convert, fast and worship; or interfere others’ normal production activities, business, and social life in the name of Ramadan, and compel women to pray in the mosques and wearing *jilbab*.
3. Employing an unqualified person who is not recruited by patriotic religious groups to organise or preside over religious activities or ceremonies.
4. Conducting activities outside their own religious venues without permission. Religious clergies and believers preach and gather for religious activities outside their own religious venues.
5. Unauthorised recruitment of external clergies. Unauthorised recruitment of clergies from inland China to conduct religious activities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.
6. Converting others arbitrarily by those who proclaim to be preachers. Unauthorised consecration of clergies. Unauthorised consecration by foreign (including Taiwan, Macau, and Hong Kong) religious organisations.
7. Illegally setting up religious classes, praying classes and theology classes, and unauthorised admission of religious students.
8. Setting up religious courses or conducting other religious activities in schools of different levels and other non-academic institutions without permission.
9. Coercing, instigating, conniving at, or indulging juveniles to worship, study and fast at school.
10. Interfering in marriage by performing the *Nikah* for people to enter into marriage instead of registering the marriage [at the local

¹²⁴ 26 forms of “illegal religious activities”: 非法宗教活动 26 条界定, *feifa zongjiao huodong ershiliu tiao jieding*

government], and performing Triple *Talaq* instead of official divorce proceedings.

11. Restoring or in disguised form restoring the abolished system of religious feudalism and oppressive exploration, advocating the succession of the religious leader, giving religious permission, dispatching Imams, and levying the religious tax.
12. Setting up tweeters in religious venues to carry out religious activities.
13. Utilising the opportunities of attending weddings, funerals, family gathering and *meshrep*¹²⁵ to conduct the *Tabligh* preach.
14. Advocating, disseminating religious extremism in the name of *halal* and *haram*.
15. Illegal religious organisations in the inland China roping in believers in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, developing an underground network and founding illegal religious organisations through dispatching religious personnel, providing cadre training and funding.
16. Unauthorised reincarnation of the Living Buddha without approval, and searching for and identification of the reincarnated soul boy across regions.
17. Deliberately provoking disputes and causing chaos between different religions, denomination, or within the same denomination.
18. Editing, translating, publicising, printing, reproducing, producing, distributing, selling, and disseminating illegal religious publications and audio-visual products without permission.
19. Utilising digital platforms and medium such as the internet, mobile phone, and mobile storage device to advocate and disseminate religion without permission.
20. Illegally listening, watching, and disseminating overseas religious radio and television programmes using satellite ground receiving facilities.
21. Organising private pilgrimage or participating in an international pilgrimage that is not organised by national Islamic religious groups.
22. Receiving religious donations by foreign (including Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan) organisations and individuals without permission.
23. Attending training and conferences organised by foreign (including Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan) religious organisations, and

¹²⁵ A *meshrep* is a type of Uyghur gathering including poetry, music, dance and conversation.

contacting and associating with such organisations without permission. Attending training and conferences organised by domestic illegal religious organisations.

24. Overseas organisations conduct preaching activities by donating to disaster-stricken areas, funding schools, providing poverty aids, and providing medical prevention and cure in the name of doing business, travel, teaching, studying, and cultural exchange.
25. Unregistered and unauthorised religious venues. Building, transforming, or extending religious venues, or constructing other buildings in a disguised form to be used for religious activities. Manipulating temples in disguise of providing funding.
26. Creating large outdoor religious statues outside of religious venues without permission.

Appendix III**Interviews**

Cui Liu, Police officer, Xi'an, 25/07/2016

Fan Shiming, Professor of the Peking University, Beijing, 21/07/2016

Government official A, Beijing, 20/07/2016

Government official A, Xi'an, 25/07/2016

Government official B, Xi'an, 25/07/2016

Government official C, Xi'an, 27/07/2016

Government official D, Beijing, 26/08/2016

Government official E, Beijing, 23/08/2016

Government official, Xinjiang, 09/07/2017

Minority student A, Beijing, 03/08/2016

Minority student B, Beijing, 03/08/2016

Police officer A, Guangzhou, 17/07/2016

Police officer B, Xi'an, 24/07/2016

Police officer C, Xi'an, 24/07/2016

Police officer D, Xinjiang, 06/07/2017

Police officer E, Xinjiang, 08/07/2017

Police officer F, Xinjiang, 08/07/2017

Scholar A, Xi'an, 30/07/2016

Scholar B, Beijing, 2/08/2016

Scholar C, the Peking University, Beijing, 3/08/2016

Scholar D, the Peking University, Beijing, 14/07/2016

Scholar E, the Minzu University, Beijing, 05/08/2016

Scholar F, the Minzu University, Beijing, 06/08/2016

Scholar F, Xinjiang academy of social sciences, Xinjiang, 04/07/2017

Scholar G, China Institute of International Studies, Beijing, 06/08/2016

Scholar G, Xinjiang academy of social sciences, Xinjiang, 05/07/2017

Scholar H, Shanghai, 02/07/2017

Scholar H, Xinjiang academy of social sciences, Xinjiang, 07/07/2017

Scholar I, China Think Tank, Beijing, 04/08/2016

Zhang Jinping, Director of the Counter-terrorism Research Centre at the Northwest University of Politics and Law, 24/07/2016

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