

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The conflict about the Uighur Muslim in Xinjiang has been an ongoing issue since 1980s in the region. However, the issue had resurfaced to the global news in these past two years due to Chinese government's certain policies in the region that was considered as "extreme" by the international community which the term international community here refers to the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the European Union. The Chinese government's policies in Xinjiang have angered the international community and many people are disagreeing with these policies. These policies are seen to have violated the basic human rights of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang.

Uighurs in general are Turkish Muslims, who socially and racially consider themselves to be close to Central Asian countries. Most live in Xinjiang, where about 11 million people live. The region's economy has long revolved around the development of agriculture and trade.¹ The Uighurs are considered to be one of China's 55 officially recognized ethnic minorities.² The actual size of the population of the Uighur specifically in China has been disputed by the Chinese government and the Uighur groups with some official figures stated that

¹ BBC, "Who are the Uighurs and why is China being Accused of Genocide?". March 26. [bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com) (accessed January 10, 2021).

² "A Meeting of Civilisations: The Mystery of China's Celtic Mummies," The Independent (Independent Digital News and Media, September 17, 2011), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/meeting-civilisations-mystery-china-s-celtic-mummies-5330366.html>.

the population of the Uighur within the Xinjiang region to be just over 12 million and generally centered in Xinjiang.³ However, some of the Uighur groups claimed that their population is actually more than 20 million and that the Chinese government vastly undercounted their population.⁴ This population dispute has continued even in the present time and then later the tension between the Chinese government and the international community happened. The report on China's policy to Uighur Muslim minority in Xinjiang later created a tension between the Chinese government and the international community.

United Nations (UN) human rights experts stated in their 2018 estimates that the Chinese government has used around one million Uighurs and other Turks in Xinjiang at places of detention for its "political" agenda, which resembles "mass detention camps" that was kept a secret by the government.⁵ The international community is pressuring China regarding their "War on Terrorism" policies in Xinjiang and urging the Chinese government to re-evaluate their policies. Ever since then, the media coverage by the international community have been urging the Chinese officials to acknowledge the presence of the internment camps that have been developed since 2017.⁶ The issue then acknowledged as an international issue where the concern of the international community has revolved

³ "3-8 主要年份分民族人口数," 新疆维吾尔自治区统计局, March 15, 2017, https://web.archive.org/web/20181121184615/http://www.xjtj.gov.cn/sjcx/tjnj_3415/2016xjtjnj/rkjy/201707/t20170714_539451.html/.

⁴ Dru Gladney, "CHINA'S MINORITIES: THE CASE OF XINJIANG AND THE UYGHUR PEOPLE," May 5, 2003, pp. 1-32.

⁵ Stephanie Nebehay. "U.N. says it has credible reports that China holds million Uighurs in secret camps", August 10 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-rights-un-idUSKBN1KV1SU> (accessed January 10, 2021).

⁶ Nectar Gan. "Xinjiang camps: Top official's first details of 'Training and boarding'", October 16, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/2168724/china-admits-xinjiang-training-and-boarding-centres-first> (accessed January 10, 2021).

around the policy in Xinjiang and its effect on the Uighur people living in the region.⁷

Pressured by the international community responses, the Chinese government denied and counteracted these allegations and accusations by the international community by mentioning that their policy toward Xinjiang is related to their War on Terrorism policy. The Chinese government has justified its policy by mentioning the establishment of a training center in Xinjiang as a response to the United Nations "Strategy to Prevent the Action of Violent Extremism", which aims to provide education and opportunities to people affected by separatism and terrorism. The Chinese government stresses that Xinjiang's problems are identified to extremism, separatism, and terrorism rather than human rights or ethnic cleansing in the region.⁸

It is undeniable that in recent years, few events in Xinjiang, China have attracted the international media attention about what happened in Xinjiang especially on Uighur Muslim minority that lives there. The international community has accused China of committing “genocide” and “ethnic cleansing” on Uighur Muslim by using media outlets as a tool to pressure China. Provided with evidence such as testimonies, interviews of the family of the Uighur living in

⁷ Philip Wen, Michael Martina, Ben Blanchard. “Exclusive: In rare coordinated move, Western envoys seek meeting on Xinjiang concerns.”. November 15, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/cnews-us-china-xinjiang-exclusive-idCAKCN1NK0H0-OCATP> (accessed January 10, 2021).

⁸ CGTN, “China on U.S. Xinjiang bill: 'attempt to contain china doomed to fail’”. December 4, 2019. Retrieved from <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2019-12-04/China-expresses-strong-indignation-on-U-S-passing-Xinjiang-bill-M8QoL2uXw4/index.html> (accessed January 12, 2021).

Xinjiang, and investigation, has resulted in the media outlets gaining support from the international community.

The narrative repeated almost universally across the international community, with headline news claiming that the Chinese government has committed human rights crimes. However, their source of information was considered as “unreliable” and “un-trustable” by the Chinese government because they were considered as fake and were set up to bring harm to the Chinese government. The reports gained the attention of the international community toward China which resulted in different opinions between states. There are some that condemned China, while some also support China by signing letters to the United Nations. For instance, ever since it became an international issue, more than 20 countries including the Western countries issued a joined statement condemning China’s policy in a letter to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.⁹ However, after the Western countries issued their letter, more than 54 countries¹⁰ mainly from Muslim-majority countries also wrote their own letter to the United Nations voicing their support for China for their counter-terrorism measures in Xinjiang, saying that these measures have brought security to the region effectively counter the three evils in the region.¹¹ The tension between the Chinese government and the international community has been

⁹ Ben Westcott, “22 Countries Sign Letter Calling on China to Close Xinjiang Uyghur Camps,” CNN (Cable News Network, July 11, 2019), <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/07/11/asia/xinjiang-uyghur-un-letter-intl-hnk/index.html>.

¹⁰ Algeria, Angola, Bahrain, Belarus, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Comoros, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Gabon, Kuwait, Laos, Myanmar, Nigeria, North Korea, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Congo, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Togo, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela, Zimbabwe.

¹¹ Liu Xin and Xie Wenting, “54 Countries Renew Support for China's Xinjiang Policy,” Global Times, October 31, 2019, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1168522.shtml>.

happening ever since then. China repeatedly stated that their policy in Xinjiang is more about deradicalization and separatism and had nothing to do with crimes against humanity or even ethnic cleansing. China claimed that what the western media reported against their policy in Xinjiang is the caused that this issue had become bigger and more problematic when in reality they are not as what the media were reported. Therefore, this study sees the tension between the Chinese government and the international community as an interesting study case because seeing how controversial the policies by the Chinese government in Xinjiang are to the point that it provoked a sharp reaction from the international community, the Chinese government are persistent in denying all the allegations and continuing to implement their policies on the grounds that these policies are their effort to eradicate terrorism and extremism in the region.

1.2 Research Question

Based on above mentioned arguments, this research suggests these following research questions:

1. Why does China's policy on Uighur terrorism provoke international community?
2. How does international community pressure China on Uighur?
3. How does China's government respond to international community's pressure?

1.3 Research Objective

In accordance to the research questions and the making of this thesis, the objective of this research are:

1. To explain what caused the international community to be provoked with China's policies in Xinjiang also analyzed what kind of pressure the international community gave to the Chinese government.
2. To provide a clearer understanding of China's policy in Xinjiang and the effect it brought to the Uighur Muslim minority that lives in the area. More specifically how China is responding to the international pressure by the international community response regarding the issue.
3. The final outcome of this research will explain all the variables mentioned. These will hopefully make this topic both an interesting read and a worthy research upon completion.

1.4 Significance of Research

This research is expected to provide benefits to the scientific development of International Relations studies. Moreover, this research is expected to have contribution on the problem solving as well as constructing the idea which may be used to create stability and sustainable system in the society. This research is expected to highlight the importance and understanding of the Chinese government policies in Xinjiang and how these policies had affected the Uighur Muslim minority as well as the international community responses.

In addition, the writer of this research could provide an idea and framework which may become the alternative solutions or reference to the political actors such as government officials and regional organizations in viewing China's response to international pressure through a comprehensive explanation from international relations perspectives.

This research can be useful for the writer to advance and deepen his understanding about this topic, to prepare to make a scientific paper, and to train critical thinking, analytical, and systematic. The result of this research could also be valuable for anyone who reads it. This research could also be used as a source of references from other research that is relevant with the topic of this research.

1.5 Structure of Writing

The first chapter introduces the topic of thesis and its relevancy, while also contains the technical makeup for the research as a whole. Also, in the first chapter there are key points and issues that are in line with the next chapter discussion.

The second chapter of this thesis is divided into two parts which are the Literature Review and Theory and Concepts. The Literature Review will be used as the basis on analyzing the research question about China's response regarding the international pressure on Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang. This chapter also explains about the theory and concepts in International Relations that will be used as a framework to analyse and explain the findings for this research.

The third chapter is Methodology which is the method to explain this thesis. It includes the research approach, the research method, data collection technique and data analysis technique to gather information for this research.

The fourth chapter is the main point or the highlight of this thesis. This chapter presents all the data that has been collected in the systematic manner and in accordance to the theories and concepts to answer and address the research question of this thesis.

The fifth chapter is the conclusion and recommendation where the research provides summary of the research and recommendations for the future research. This chapter also explains and highlights the result regarding China's policy in Xinjiang.

