
UYGHUR HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT SPECIAL REPORT

Resisting Chinese Linguistic Imperialism:

Abduweli Ayup and the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education

Rustem Shir, Research Associate



Logo of the Ana Til Balilar Baghchisi
(Mother Tongue Children's Garden)

May 2019



Contents

Acknowledgement	4
Introduction	5
1. CCP language policy on education in East Turkestan	6
Foundations of CCP ethnic minority policy	6
Eras of minority language tolerance	9
Primary and secondary school ‘bilingual’ education policy	12
The Xinjiang Class	20
Mandarin as the language of instruction at Xinjiang University	22
Preschool and kindergarten ‘bilingual’ education policy	23
Suppression of the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education	26
The Hotan Prefecture and Ghulja County Department of Education directives	28
Internment camps	29
Discussion	32
2. Abduweli Ayup and the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education	36
Upal: Why couldn’t we study Kashgari?	36
Toquzaq: <i>Oyghan!</i> (Wake Up!)	38
Beijing: Our campus felt like a minority region	41
Doletbagh: My sad history repeating in front of me	50
Urumchi: Education for assimilation	55
Lanzhou: Are you bin Laden?	60
Ankara: Ethno-nationalism and a counterbalance	67
Urumchi: For the love of community	72
Lawrence: Disconnected	77
Kashgar: Rise of the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education	81
Urumchi: Just keep silent	89
Kashgar: You’re going to be arrested	93
Doletbagh Detention Center: No choice, brother	98
Urumchi Tengritagh Detention Center: <i>Qorqma</i> (Don’t be afraid)	104
Urumchi Liudaowan Prison: Every color had disappeared	109
Urumchi Koktagh Prison: Do you want to defend yourself?	124

Urumchi/Kashgar: Release and return	127
Kashgar: Open-air prison	131
Ankara: Stateless and stranded	138
Paris: A new beginning	146
3. CCP geopolitical ambitions and East Turkestan	148
Educational concerns	152
Legal concerns	156
The Uyghur language and symbolic power	162
4. Resisting Chinese linguistic imperialism with family language policy	167
References	174

Acknowledgement

Thank you to the scholars who gave their time to review this report and provide feedback.

Introduction

When media outside the control of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) report on Uyghurs in East Turkestan (also known as Xinjiang), language is often mentioned as a source of contention. An article from the *New York Times* typified this practice when stating, “The U[y]ghurs, a predominantly Muslim and Turkic-speaking ethnic group native to the region, have faced economic isolation and restrictions on their language, culture and religious practices in Xinjiang” (Ramzy 2018). This report was written to illustrate what “restrictions on language” look like in design and delivery.

To preview the contents herein, Chapter One provides a history of CCP language policy on education in East Turkestan, tracing pivotal changes, from the inception of the CCP through nearly 70 years of rule. In this chronology, evidence is presented in support of an argument that the CCP envisions ‘bilingual’ education¹ as a stage in a strategy to achieve Mandarin language assimilation among ethnic minority communities² in East Turkestan. This review aims to be comprehensive, but it does have limitations. Information about CCP language policy on education in East Turkestan is incomplete because the public does not have access to conversations or debates among CCP officials on this topic – data that would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Chinese linguistic imperialism. Chapter Two is a narrative about Abduweli Ayup, of a grassroots effort to create and operate schools that offered mother tongue-based multilingual education, and the CCP’s repressive response to this initiative. Chapter Three describes CCP geopolitical ambitions in East Turkestan, as background for understanding why the CCP felt compelled to suppress Abduweli’s movement. This chapter also discusses educational and legal concerns attendant to linguistic erasure, and why the CCP is consumed with marginalizing the symbolic power of Uyghur in East Turkestan. Finally, Chapter Four considers how methods associated with family language policy may be used to resist Chinese linguistic imperialism and maintain the intergenerational transmission of minority languages.

¹ ‘Bilingual’ is used in quotes throughout this report to recognize that this mode of education, in the context of East Turkestan, denotes Mandarin language assimilation.

² ‘Ethnic minority communities’ refer to non-Han peoples.

1. CCP language policy on education in East Turkestan

This chapter describes and analyzes CCP language policy in the state-run system of public education in East Turkestan, first by surveying the ideological foundations and evolution of CCP ethnic minority policy (1921–1949) and the eras of minority language³ tolerance (1949–1966, 1976–1992), interrupted by the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). The focus then centers on CCP language policy on education in East Turkestan, a chronological review that includes the introduction and spread of primary and secondary school ‘bilingual’ education (1992), the establishment of the Xinjiang Class (2000), the adoption of Mandarin as the language of instruction at Xinjiang University (2002), the expansion of ‘bilingual’ education to preschools and kindergartens (2005), the suppression of the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education (2013), the Hotan Prefecture and Ghulja County Department of Education directives (2017), and the escalation of internment camp detention (2017). The following sections illustrate how CCP language policy on education in East Turkestan has shifted from tolerance to the prohibition of minority languages, while concurrently promoting Mandarin language assimilation.

Foundations of CCP ethnic minority policy

CCP language policy on education in East Turkestan is an outgrowth of CCP ideology, and thus rooted in a combination of Marxist, Leninist, and Stalinist thought, Confucianism, and a legacy of dynastic relations with frontier communities. After the CCP was founded in 1921, Mao Zedong looked to Marx, Lenin, and Stalin to establish a theory for ethnic minority policy, to guide the prospective governance of people labeled as ethnic minorities, within the CCP’s imagined borders of the Chinese nation-state. According to communist ideology, minority languages have a natural law of development: minority languages change slowly while remaining relatively stable, but eventually yield to replacement or assimilation by a common language (Blachford 1999). From this perspective, minority languages can be tolerated “as a necessary and temporary stage before their final integration” (Blachford 1999, 94), a dynamic known as “linguistic convergence” in the Stalinist philosophy of language (Schluessel 2007,

³ ‘Minority languages’ are defined as regional indigenous languages of East Turkestan, excluding Mandarin (the majority language of the People’s Republic of China).

252). For the CCP, this idea held appeal because of its compatibility with Confucian philosophy; both views “share the same paternalistic, communitarian logic...with the gradual fusion of the Han majority and the fifty-five minority groups into a single [*datong*] ‘Great Unity’ remaining the ultimate goal” (Leibold and Yangbin 2014, 6).

By conceiving of ethnic minority relations as a process culminating in a natural and gradual fusion, the nascent CCP distanced themselves rhetorically from earlier dynasties, whose interactions with ethnic minorities ranged from tolerance to forced assimilation (Blachford 1999). From 1921 until 1938, the CCP maintained a commitment to a different type of relationship with ethnic minority communities, emphasizing their self-determination. In 1922, the Second CCP Congress published a manifesto that, borrowing from the Soviet model of federation, proposed a federal republic of China, with autonomous territories having the right to unite or secede (Blachford 1999, Hao 2016). In 1931, the Jiangxi Chinese Soviet Republic upheld this right in their constitution, affirming that ethnic minorities could, if choosing to secede from the republic of China, form independent states (Tibet Justice Center 2009). This policy contrasted with the assimilationist policy of *Hanhua* (Sinicization) endorsed by the CCP’s civil war rival, the Nationalist Party of China, and persuaded many ethnic minority elites to join or sympathize with the CCP (Blachford 1999, Zhao 2004). In 1932, at the First National Meeting of the Worker and Peasant Soldiers, the CCP declared that minority languages should be used in education and other domains, “to firmly reject the tendency towards dominance of the great Han Chinese ethnicity” (Lam 2005, 125). And in 1935, the CCP elaborated its stance toward Turkish Muslims and other minorities of the northwest, by calling on these groups to “establish their independent and autonomous political power and handle all political, economic, religious, custom, ethical, educational, and other matters” (Mao 1936, 35-36).

The CCP’s ethnic minority policy changed in 1938, when Mao removed the right for ethnic minority self-determination, eliminating the legal provision to secede. The promotion of this right had been useful strategically, to demonstrate alignment with policies advocated by the Communist International, headed by the Soviet Union, and appeal to the sentiments of ethnic minorities. But when Mao no longer sought Communist International support, the CCP discarded the provision of self-determination. Instead, the CCP offered the right of regional ethnic

autonomy, promising ethnic minority communities the ability to administer their own affairs, as part of a unified Chinese nation-state (Blachford 1999).

In September 1949, after defeating the Nationalist Party of China, and days before establishing the People's Republic of China (PRC), the CCP adopted a Common Program that contained rights for ethnic minority communities. This interim constitution proclaimed, in Article 51, that "regional autonomy shall be exercised in areas where national minorities are concentrated," and in Article 53, that "all national minorities shall have freedom to develop their dialects and languages, to preserve or reform their traditions, customs and religious beliefs." The PRC Education Minister Ma Xulun reinforced these rights by requiring that all recognized ethnic minority groups use their own writing systems in education and that funds be allocated for developing national minority education (Bilik 2013, Han 1998).

However, the idea of self-determination had traction, and in October 1949, the CCP was compelled to explain their decision to abandon this right. The central party propaganda office sent a telegram to the northwestern branch office, with the following rationale:

Today the question of each minority's "self-determination" should not be stressed any further. In the past, during the period of civil war, for the sake of strengthening the minorities' opposition to the [Nationalist Party of China's] reactionary rule, we emphasized this slogan. This was correct at the time. But today the situation has fundamentally changed...For the sake of completing our state's great purpose of unification, for the sake of opposing the conspiracy of imperialists and other running dogs to divide China's nationality unity, we should not stress this slogan in the domestic nationality question and should not allow its usage by imperialists and reactionary elements among various domestic nationalities...The Han occupy the majority population of the country; moreover, the Han today are the major force in China's revolution. Under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, the victory of Chinese people's democratic revolution mainly relied on the industry of the Han people. (Gladney 2004, 12)

The rhetorical shift from self-determination to autonomy for ethnic minority communities indicates how the CCP modified policies from communist models, including the reduction of rights, to satisfy their ambition for control. This action demonstrated Mao's belief that Marxism-Leninism should be adapted to conditions in China (Zhang 1966), a position that licensed his

penchant for manipulation. Though Mao engaged in ideological revision to fit the Chinese context, he did not discard Marx's general framework of historical materialism. This method of historiography allowed Mao to conceive of history in stages, culminating with a China inhabited by a homogenous communist society, formed through ethnic minority integration into the Han majority.

Eras of minority language tolerance

The CCP invaded East Turkestan in 1949, displacing the coalition government of Chinese Nationalists and the Second East Turkestan Republic, and incorporated this territory in the PRC under the name of Xinjiang Province. Though formal education was not available for the majority of students in the province (Benson 2004b), Turkic and Persian languages were widely being used as languages of instruction (Bellér-Hann 2000, Schluessel 2007).⁴ Depending on their location, an observer at a primary school in the province would have heard classes being conducted in Uyghur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Tajik, Tatar, or Taranchi. Ethnic minority students studied Chinese for six to eight hours a week until junior high school (Schluessel 2007). Some non-Uyghur Turkic and Persian students learned Uyghur as a second language, which was a lingua franca for the province (Dwyer 2005). Han students were educated in schools where Chinese was the language of instruction, using materials imported from inner China (Benson 2004b).

Working with Soviet advisors, the CCP established an education system in East Turkestan in the mid-1950s, and this relationship continued until the Sino-Soviet split in the late 1950s (Benson 2004b, Clark 1999, Zhou 2003). The first Uyghur schools under CCP governance were based on a Soviet model of education and Uyghur served as a language of instruction to deliver a curriculum designed by Uyghur and Russian educators (Clark 1999). Uyghur schools offered four years of primary and three years of junior high school (Benson 2004b). Chinese schools were designed to conform with the education system from inner China, and offered six

⁴ For discussions on education in East Turkestan from earlier eras, such as the Qing dynasty and the Republic of China, see Bellér-Hann (2000), Benson (2004b), and Schluessel (2007, 2009). See Brophy (2016) for secular and Jadidist (Muslim modernist) movements in Russian Turkestan and East Turkestan in the mid-nineteenth to the early-twentieth centuries.

years of primary school instruction (Clark 1999). At the outset, ethnic minority students could study Chinese or Russian as an additional language, while Han students could study Uyghur or Russian (Wang et al. 2001).

The CCP adopted the first PRC Constitution in 1954, and incorporated articles from the 1949 Common Program that provided ethnic minority rights, including Article 3, that “all the nationalities have freedom to use and foster the growth of their spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own customs or ways.” The following year, in 1955, the CCP renamed Xinjiang Province as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), to convey the idea that all ethnic groups of East Turkestan needed to share power and representation for the administration of internal affairs (Clarke 2012).

The Chinese central government influenced language policy on education in East Turkestan by recognizing, in 1956, *Putonghua* (common language), a form of Modern Standard Mandarin, as the national, official language, to be promoted in all spheres of public life, including education.⁵ Also in 1956, schools in East Turkestan that used minority languages as languages of instruction were required to teach Mandarin for two to three hours a week (Benson 2004b). In 1957, Uyghur parents in Urumchi were permitted to send their children to Chinese schools, where Mandarin was the medium of instruction (Clark 1999).

Concerning orthography, language policy was chaotic. The CCP’s office of language planning in Urumchi formally switched between Arabic-based and Cyrillic-based Uyghur scripts several times in the 1950s. In the schools of East Turkestan, Cyrillic was widely used for Uyghur and other minority languages between 1955 and 1958, a convenience because textbooks and other educational materials could be imported from Soviet Central Asia (Dwyer 2005). However, this practice ended when Cyrillic was definitively abandoned after the Sino-Soviet spilt in the late 1950s (Benson 2004b, Dwyer 2005).

From 1959 through the early 1960s, CCP language policy on education in East Turkestan was influenced by the Chinese government’s desire to disrupt linguistic and cultural connections

⁵ The CCP defines *Putonghua* as “the standard form of Modern Chinese with the Beijing phonological system as its norm of pronunciation, and Northern dialects as its base dialect, and looking to exemplary modern works in *baihua* ‘vernacular literary language’ for its grammatical norms (Guowuyuan 1995 [1956], 765).

among Uyghur and Kazakh communities with other Muslim Turks residing in Soviet Central Asia (Zhou 2003). In 1959, the CCP introduced *yengi yeziq* (new script), derived from *pinyin* (a Latin-based transliteration system) for the major Turkic languages of East Turkestan (Dwyer 2005, Zhou 2003). Despite the government's ambition to popularize the Latin-based alphabet, progress was hindered by disinterest among ethnic minority communities, and insufficient educational materials (Benson 2004b). Correspondingly, a visitor to ethnic minority schools in East Turkestan in the early 1960s would have observed a small number of schools using the Latin-based script, with other schools using the Arabic-based script (Dwyer 2005).

The education system in East Turkestan was inoperative during much of the Cultural Revolution, beginning in 1966 (Benson 2004b). Red Guards denigrated ethnic minority cultural practices, and labeled minority languages, and regional dialects of Chinese, as useless and backward (Lam 2005). Through this period of social and political upheaval, minority languages were not taught at all, and hundreds of thousands of books and old manuscripts were seized and destroyed (Dwyer 2005). The general interruption of education in East Turkestan, and the suppression of minority languages, persisted through 1976 (Benson 2004b, Lam 2005).

The resumption of the regional education system was accompanied by a period of cultural and political liberalization, ushered in through Deng Xiaoping's Reform Era policies (Dwyer 2005). In 1982, the CCP abandoned the Latin-based script for Turkic languages and officially reinstated a modified Arabic-based script, which remains in place until the present (Bellér-Hann 1991). This change enabled a new generation of ethnic minority students access to literature and history composed before 1950. Yet, the "orthographic chaos" that persisted for nearly 30 years was a disruptive force (Dwyer 2005, 18). Theoretically, pedagogical materials had to conform with shifts in regional policy, but this was difficult, if not impossible, to implement. And the frequent changes damaged the legitimacy of the CCP, giving rise to conjecture that script revision was a deliberate effort to foster differing sets of literacy skills and divide the generations (Benson 2004b, Dwyer 2005). At the national level, in 1984, the CCP offered strong rhetorical support for minority languages, through the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law, which guaranteed, in Article 37, that "schools (classes) and other educational organizations recruiting mostly ethnic minority students should, whenever possible, use textbooks in their own languages and use these languages as the media of instruction."

Though the Chinese government expressed official support for ethnic minorities to exercise autonomy in various institutions, including schools, ethnic minority communities in East Turkestan were not given the opportunity to actualize these advertised freedoms. In practice, the CCP expanded the role of Mandarin at all education levels, and provided support for Mandarin language learning by revising Mandarin language curricular materials (Dwyer 2005, Schluessel 2007). In 1984, the CCP mandated that ethnic minority students start learning Mandarin in third grade, advanced from the first year of junior high school, coupled with two years of mandatory Mandarin study at senior high school and college (Dwyer 2005). Minority language instructional materials did not receive such attention. Uyghur and Kazakh textbooks were often limited to the humanities and social sciences, with other minority languages having an even smaller scope for publication (Dwyer 2005).

Primary and secondary school ‘bilingual’ education policy

In 1957, ethnic minority parents in Urumchi were given the opportunity to send their children to Chinese schools where Mandarin was the language of instruction (Clark 1999). This condition created a bifurcation in the East Turkestan education system, resulting in *minkaohan* (ethnic minority students educated in *Hanyu* (language of the Han people, i.e. Mandarin)) and *minkaomin* (ethnic minority students educated in minority languages) modes of education. Yet this opportunity for school choice was a myth (Dwyer 2005). Many non-Uyghur ethnic minority parents (e.g. Kazakh, Kyrgyz) sent their children to Chinese schools because ethnic minority schools predominantly offered Uyghur as the language of instruction. Many Uyghur parents sent their children to Chinese schools because these schools received more funding, and thus had better material resources than ethnic minority schools.⁶ For Chinese parents, unless living in rural areas that only had ethnic minority schools, Chinese schools were the invariable choice (Dwyer 2005). Some ethnic minority students continue to enroll in *minkaohan* primary and secondary classes (11.6 percent or 240,900 in 2009), but classes where minority languages are

⁶ From 1978–2017, ethnic minority students were awarded extra points for taking the *gaokao* (college entrance exam) in Mandarin (Simayi 2014). Zenz states that this practice was discontinued on advice from Chinese intellectuals and academics, who argued that “preferential policies based on ethnicity not only endanger social cohesion by strengthening distinct ethnic identities, but can also give unfair advantages to minority students from better educational backgrounds” (2017).

the medium of instruction have gradually been displaced by ‘bilingual’ education classes since 1992 (CCP 2011, Ma 2012, Simayi 2014).

Han migration helped create the conditions for the CCP to implement a ‘bilingual’ education policy, envisioned as part of an effort to “integrate all ethnic groups into a single and unified socialist state” (Benson 2004b, 190, He 2013). In the 1960s and 1970s, the CCP orchestrated large-scale Han migration into East Turkestan (Chaudhuri 2016), and while the Chinese government continues to incentivize migration (Elishat 2015, Long 2017), from the 1980s, many Han have migrated of their own accord, particularly to the urban areas of northern East Turkestan (Howell and Fan 2011, Toops 2004b).⁷ With attention to the three largest ethnic groups in East Turkestan, the population in 1953 was 74.7 percent Uyghur, 10.1 percent Kazakh, and 6.1 percent Han. By 1990, the population had shifted to 47.5 percent Uyghur, 37.6 percent Han, and 7.3 percent Kazakh (Toops 2004b).

The dramatic Han migration changed, and continues to change, the linguistic demography of East Turkestan. Many areas, where Mandarin was once a foreign language (i.e. a language that is not widely spoken in a particular place), are being transformed into second language contexts, with ethnic minority students learning Mandarin in environments where Mandarin is increasingly spoken. The distinction between foreign and second language education has implications for teaching and learning (Moeller and Catalano 2015). If Mandarin is spoken by a significant portion of an area’s population, ethnic minority students will have more contact with Mandarin, thus facilitating, through naturalistic exposure, second language acquisition.

In 1985, a regional CCP committee drafted plans legalizing Mandarin as the language of instruction (Blachford 1999). And in 1987, a working group discussed how to implement ‘bilingual’ education, agreeing to enact a transitional program, with limited instruction in minority languages while moving to Mandarin (Dwyer 2005). However, it was not until 1992 that the CCP regional government put these plans into practice, by establishing experimental primary and secondary ‘bilingual’ classes that, starting in the third grade, used Mandarin as a language of instruction for some subjects, such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, and English, with other subjects taught in minority languages (Simayi 2014).

⁷ See Cliff (2016) for an ethnographic study on the first generation of Han migrants in East Turkestan.

The initiation of ‘bilingual’ education policy in East Turkestan occurred the year after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and has accelerated while prominent Chinese scholars, such as Ma Rong, Hu Angang, and Hu Lianhe, argue that the CCP formulate a second generation of ethnic policies: one that would weaken conceptions of ethnic minority identity and strengthen a single, shared national identity (Leibold 2013, 2012, Elliott 2015). Ma, in particular, sees the CCP adoption of the Soviet model for ethnicity and the PRC’s system of regional ethnic autonomy as the roots of contemporary ethnic discord, and has said that the death of a minority language might be a good thing, as it contributes to social stability and ethnic equality (Tsung 2014a).

Informed by CCP aspirations to promote Mandarin and advance the government’s campaign to achieve national unity (and avoid disintegration), ‘bilingual’ education, as implemented in 1992, represents a departure from the tolerance of minority languages. However, because ethnic minority students transitioned to Mandarin at grade three, they still had an opportunity to develop some academic competency in their mother tongue. This opportunity was negated in 2004, when the Xinjiang CCP Committee issued the Decision to Vigorously Promote Bilingual Education, which initiated the study of Mandarin for ethnic minority students at grade one (Ma 2012, Schluessel 2007, Simayi 2014). With the corresponding announcement that “teaching should be conducted in Chinese as much as possible” (Dwyer 2005, 38, RFA 2004), minority languages were relegated to subjects of study (Simayi 2014). This change signaled a shift to Mandarin submersion, a form of subtractive bilingualism (Lambert 1974), where Mandarin is taught with the intention of replacing ethnic minority students’ first languages.

Following the Decision to Vigorously Promote Bilingual Education, regional and county-level CCP education departments published plans containing objectives for Mandarin language proficiency among ethnic minority students. At the regional level, the Xinjiang Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) stated a goal to institute ‘bilingual’ education in 75 percent of ethnic minority primary and secondary schools by 2015 and over 90 percent of such schools by 2020, with all ethnic minority high school graduates having a skilled grasp and use of spoken and written Mandarin by 2020 (CECC 2011). At the county level, education departments, such as in Hotan, articulated plans to expand ‘bilingual’ education, with different locations (e.g. urban, suburban, rural) having different annually increasing goals for percentages of classes

adopting this education mode, aiming to eventually reach 100 percent coverage (Schluessel 2007).

Given the variations in regional economy and demographics (Toops 2004a), and a constant shortage of teachers able to teach in Mandarin (CECC 2008, Xinhua 2015b), the implementation of primary and secondary school ‘bilingual’ education policy has been uneven. In 2011, the Xinjiang Department of Education presented a revised ideal of ‘bilingual’ education, stating that all instruction should be in Mandarin, with a minority language arts course, and a few other courses, such as physical education, music, and arts taught in minority languages if Mandarin instruction is unavailable (2012). However, many schools in the region do not have teachers who can comply with the requirement to teach in Mandarin. In the absence of personnel and resources, and without a curricular and methodological plan needed to shift to Mandarin as the language of instruction, many schools have struggled to teach in Mandarin “as much as possible,” producing variations in modes of language of instruction, and creating great diversity in the implementation of ‘bilingual’ education (Ma 2012, Simayi 2014, Wang 2016, Zhang and Yang 2018).

Though primary and secondary ‘bilingual’ education is far from uniform in practice, the CCP has demonstrated a commitment to this policy, by providing pre-service and in-service ethnic minority teachers academic language training in Mandarin and allocating funds to create programs and build schools. When the shift to ‘bilingual’ education was accelerated in the 2000s, many Uyghur teachers who were required to teach in Mandarin needed language training, and the CCP responded by providing distance education or one to two-year programs of full-time study. In addition to Mandarin language courses, the curriculum in ‘bilingual’ training programs includes educational theories, professional development, in-class practice, educational technology, and “aspects of ideological and political work” (Liu 2013, 26). By 2008, the CCP had invested 130 million RMB (19 million USD) in ‘bilingual’ training for primary and secondary school teachers, contributing to a workforce of 18,000 ‘bilingual’ teachers (Xinhua 2009).⁸ But by 2011, there was no substantial increase in teachers equipped to teach in this mode, with 18,342 ‘bilingual’ teachers from a total of 144,780 teachers (UHRP 2015). In 2013, the

⁸ Currency conversions reflect exchange rates at given years.

regional government began a five-year plan, investing 254 million RMB (41.48 million USD) in language training for ethnic minority teachers, and 237.1 million RMB (32 million USD) to construct training academies, including 19 boarding schools in 17 counties and cities in the region (Yin 2014). This program, in conjunction with earlier investments and programs, and other recruitment and hiring policies, contributed to a rapid growth of ‘bilingual’ teachers, reaching 70,000 in 2015 (Xinhua 2015b). The CCP also nationalized the effort to train ‘bilingual’ teachers. As part of a 2010 strategy dubbed “leapfrog development,” 19 inner provinces and cities were paired to assist areas in East Turkestan (Shan and Weng 2010, 61); by 2015, over 96,000 teachers were sponsored by provincial and municipal governments outside of East Turkestan for ‘bilingual’ training (Xinhua 2015a).

Although some Uyghur teachers have completed ‘bilingual’ training programs to enhance their ability to teach in Mandarin and keep their jobs, others have been excluded from this opportunity, and have been fired or forced into early retirement. In October 24, 2010, acting on superior CCP orders, officials in Toksun County, in Turpan Prefecture, announced that 518 teachers – about one-quarter of the county’s nearly 2,000 educators – would be fired. The chief of Toksun County Department of Education, Sharapet Tursun, asked the principals of Uyghur schools to administer Mandarin proficiency exams before November 8, 2010, to identify which 518 teachers to lay off (UHRP 2010). In 2011, Radio Free Asia reported that at least 1,000 Uyghur kindergarten and primary school teachers lost their jobs in 2010 and 2011 because they were not fluent in Mandarin. One Uyghur primary school teacher from Ghulja was forced to quit, along with 30 colleagues, after 20 years of teaching. She was told by her principal, “if you can speak Mandarin you are a good teacher, but if you can’t then you will lose your job” (Abdilim 2011). Another primary school teacher from Kashgar, with 28 years of service, was passed over for promotion, which she attributed to her lack of fluency in Mandarin. Her principal denied this allegation and said the teacher was not promoted because she was not “modern” enough and was constantly “fighting the government” (Abdilim 2011). Their ensuing argument led to a police investigation, which resulted in an eight-day jail term for the teacher. In 2018, *ChinaAid* reported that all ethnic minority teachers in one administrative division of Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture older than 45 were forced to retire and paid 60–70 percent of their salaries. The younger teachers were forced to quit and become security guards or street cleaners.

Some Uyghur teachers have been fired or forced into retirement because they were unable to participate in ‘bilingual’ training programs, due to demographic restrictions or personal or financial circumstances. The Implementation Plan for Training Primary and Secondary Bilingual Ethnic Minority Teachers, for ethnic minority science teachers in 2003, was available only to those under the age of 40 (Chen 2010). Some ‘bilingual’ training programs are even more restrictive, such as a 2010 program in Aksu, which could only be attended by teachers under 35 years of age (Zhang 2010). Even when Uyghur teachers meet demographic criteria to enter a ‘bilingual’ training program, some of these programs require distant relocation, and Uyghur teachers may be unable, or unwilling, to leave their families for a year or two. Though the CCP pays for the training, Uyghur teachers must pay for other expenses, such as transportation and a security deposit, refundable upon completion of the program (Ma 2012).

Preceded in scale by the *Xibu Dakaiifa* (Western Development Strategy), initiated in 2000, the CCP has increased efforts to encourage university students and young teachers from Chinese coastal regions to relocate to western China for filling newly vacant ‘bilingual’ teaching positions (CCP 2002, Lai 2002). A disproportionate number of positions have been reserved for Han, or specify that “many of the positions for non-Han groups require knowledge of Mandarin” (CECC 2009, 2010, UHRP 2017a). Some Han have migrated from inner China to teach in East Turkestan, enticed by CCP incentives, such as a relocation package, jobs for accompanying family members, and in some cases, an option for state employment after five years of teaching service (Elishat 2015, Long 2017). Teaching jobs are available to Han who possess a high school or technical school diploma, but have no teaching credentials (UHRP 2015). No evidence suggests that Han teachers employed at ‘bilingual’ schools must demonstrate any level of fluency in Uyghur, yet this factor has consequences in teacher retention, with some Han teachers leaving because, among other issues, they cannot explain things in Uyghur to students who lack proficiency in Mandarin (Ma 2012, Tsung 2014b). As Fay recognized, these policies are “part of a larger campaign of population transfer to relocate ethnic Han Chinese from inner China to East Turkestan” (2016).

Along with the drive to recruit teachers to implement the regional ‘bilingual’ education policy, the CCP has increased efforts to bring in volunteer teachers from inner China. In the first 50 years of CCP governance, the PRC State Council directed the Ministry of Education to

dispatch over 10,000 volunteer teachers, many from the east coast of China, for short-term teaching assignments in East Turkestan and Tibet (Xinhua 2003). As part of the “pairing assistance” model from the 2010 “leapfrog development” plan, dozens of volunteer teachers have been sent from provinces and cities in inner China “to boost comprehension of Mandarin among local ethnic minority Uyghurs” (Lin 2014). Also, part of the “pairing assistance” model, in 2017, authorities devised a large-scale program for volunteer teachers in East Turkestan and Tibet, with a target of 10,000 participants over the next few years. The first batch of 4,000 teachers was projected to start their one-and-a-half-year assignments in spring 2018 (China Global Television Network 2017).

Many Uyghur teachers in ‘bilingual’ schools are anxious that they will be accused of having poor command of Mandarin as a pretext to being dismissed from their jobs (UHRP 2015). This insecurity is a pernicious effect of the ‘bilingual’ education policy, and most strongly felt by mid and late career Uyghur educators, who are being purged from the school system, through exclusion from ‘bilingual’ training programs, and those with personal obligations or without the financial resources to participate in such programs. The CCP’s ‘bilingual’ education policy in East Turkestan has elevated Mandarin language proficiency to the highest qualification for teachers, a circumstance that advances the colonial imperatives of the state but ignores the linguistic and cultural needs of students.

In addition to altering the linguistic profile of the teaching force, the Xinjiang Department of Education has expedited the shift to primary and secondary ‘bilingual’ education by consolidating Han and ethnic minority schools. Although this movement began with a few schools in 1960, the number of merged Han and ethnic minority schools fluctuated in the 1970s and 1980s, before their sharp increase, starting in the late 1990s and continuing into the twenty-first century. By the numbers, Han and ethnic minority merged schools increased from 461 in 2001 to more than 1,100 in 2013 (Yi 2016), with all urban Han and ethnic minority schools merged by 2008 (Zhang and Yang 2018). School consolidation, a format where Han and ethnic minority students are either divided into different classes, or mixed into the same classes at a single school, has contributed to the marginalization of minority languages in the education system of East Turkestan, bolstering the perception of minority language linguicide, in this case, the premeditated extinction of minority languages (Dwyer 2005, 39). With merged schools,

ethnic minority students have greater proximity to Han teachers, creating a higher probability of exposure to Mandarin as a language of instruction, and Han students, creating a higher probability of exposure to Mandarin through interactions in different academic and social contexts (Cummins 2000). For ethnic minority students, this configuration often reduces or eliminates the opportunity for any type of mother tongue support. And for ethnic minority teachers, job anxiety is increased, as those in merged schools worry that they will be made redundant by Han teachers (Tsung 2014b).

These factors have combined to produce a growing number of ethnic minority students enrolled in primary and secondary ‘bilingual’ education. This movement, initiated in 1992 with classes in 10 schools, expanded by 2004, to 943 schools (20 percent of the total number of ethnic minority schools) serving 35,948 students (2.9 percent of enrolled ethnic minority students) (Ma 2012). In 2005, the year after publication of the Decision to Vigorously Promote Bilingual Education, enrollment increased to 4,505 ‘bilingual’ primary and secondary classes serving 145,138 ethnic minority students (Ma 2012). Over the next decade, enrollment accelerated rapidly. By the end of 2014, approximately 1,520,000 ethnic minority primary and secondary students (69 percent) were receiving ‘bilingual’ education in East Turkestan (Xinhua 2015a).

Prior to the introduction of primary and secondary school ‘bilingual’ education policy in East Turkestan, most ethnic minority students learned Mandarin for a few hours a week, with a small percentage of ethnic minority students enrolled in monolingual Mandarin-medium classes. In 1992, ‘bilingual’ education was initiated in a small number of ethnic minority classes, introducing Mandarin as a language of instruction for some courses starting in the third grade. Because ethnic minority students had a few years of schooling in their mother tongue, this educational program was transitional. But in 2004, with ‘bilingual’ education advanced into first grade, and with more courses taught in Mandarin, the transitional program was replaced with submersion, an extreme form of subtractive bilingualism, intended to replace students’ mother tongues and expedite Mandarin language assimilation. Although the Xinjiang Department of Education currently permits ethnic minority students to study their language as a subject, this status is marginal and peripheral to the general curriculum.

The CCP views education as a tool to achieve political goals related to ethnic stability and social harmony (Benson 2004b), with Chinese scholars adapting the concept of bilingual

education to local conditions in China (Schluessel 2007, Stites 1999) – what might be called ‘bilingualism with Chinese characteristics.’ According to CCP design, Han-stream Mandarin education for ethnic minority students will weaken the vitality of minority languages as markers of non-Han ethnic identity, thus facilitating integration into the Han majority. The practice of ‘bilingual’ education for ethnic minority students in East Turkestan has changed over time, and currently involves subtractive bilingualism through Mandarin submersion in Mandarin second and foreign language environments. Though heritage languages are taught in language arts courses, and other courses, if Mandarin-speaking instructors are not available, the societal and educational aim is Mandarin language assimilation. In Grecian terms, the Chinese version of bilingual education violates the maxim of manner (1989) because, given the multiple variations, it is ambiguous, and obscures the CCP’s intent to channel ethnic minority students into Han-stream society. While the CCP generally tolerated minority languages in the domain of education until 1992, the introduction and expansion of primary and secondary school ‘bilingual’ education implicitly prohibits ethnic minority languages, signaling an acceleration in the CCP’s plan to fuse ethnic minority groups and Han into a great unity.

The Xinjiang Class

The Xinjiang Class, founded in 2000, is a four-year boarding-school program that sends Uyghur and other ethnic minority students, along with a small percentage of Han students, from East Turkestan to study at eminent high schools in inner China.⁹ The government provides a financial incentive for this program, by setting Xinjiang Class fees lower than local schools (Grose 2010, Ma 2012). Participants are selected according to criteria that includes ethnicity, residence, and families’ financial background, with most spaces reserved for poor Uyghur youth from rural East Turkestan (Grose 2010). Applicants must also take an exam, and are awarded bonus points for other factors, including their performance in the Loving my Chinese Nation bilingual speech competition, family compliance to CCP birth-control policy, and status as an

⁹ For some students, the boarding school experience can begin earlier, with a junior high school education at a boarding school in a major regional city in East Turkestan (Chen 2015, Li 2017, McKenzie 2014). Participants are selected based on their performance on a primary school exit exam, with schools fined for not meeting a quota of successful candidates (Ma 2012).

only child (Grose 2010, TianShan Net 2007). Parents with strong CCP connections also have an unofficial advantage in enrolling their children in this program. At their senior high schools in inner China, Xinjiang Class students have a year of preparatory coursework in Mandarin and English, and remedial classes in math, physics, and chemistry. Upon matriculation, Mandarin is the language of instruction (Grose 2010). Starting with 1,000 participants in 12 cities, by 2017, more than 13,000 students from East Turkestan were enrolled in 93 high schools and vocational schools throughout inner China, totaling 90,000 participants since the program's inauguration (UHRP 2015, Xinhua 2017c).

Aside from the imperative to provide a high-caliber education to economically disadvantaged students, the Xinjiang Class boarding school program has an overt, and superordinate, political mission to promote ethnic unity and Chinese nationalism (Chen 2008, Grose 2010, UHRP 2015). The Administration Regulations for the Xinjiang Class state that purposes of this program are “to train qualified high school graduates who support the Chinese Communist Party's leaders, love China, love socialism, defend the unity of China, [and] maintain unity of the people” (2000). Xinjiang Class graduates are expected, though not required, by the CCP to return to East Turkestan and take entry level government jobs, such as teaching positions in rural primary and junior high schools (Grose 2016). Although Chinese state media reports positive personal testimonies from Xinjiang Class students and graduates (Jia 2013, Xinhua 2017b), scholars have documented the restricted, and sometimes negative, interactions that Xinjiang Class students experience with their inner Han peers, and generally negative experiences with Han non-teaching staff and Han local residents (Chen 2008, 2015, Grose 2010). Evidence suggests that many Xinjiang Class graduates display a Han oppositional sense of ethnic and religious identity, with some contesting the government's rhetoric on ethnic integration (Chen 2015, Grose 2010). The return rate of Xinjiang Class graduates casts doubt on the effectiveness of the program in stimulating socioeconomic development in East Turkestan, with only 21,000 out of 43,000 Xinjiang Class graduates (49 percent) returning to the region (Xinhua 2017c).

Regarding language, Xinjiang Class students of Uyghur ethnicity constitute speech communities marked by diglossia and bilingualism (Ferguson 1959, Fishman 1967). In the schools of inner China, Uyghur students use Mandarin in the domain of education. Uyghur is

excluded from the curriculum, and Uyghur students are penalized, by grade point deduction, for speaking Uyghur in class (Grose 2019). Although preparation for and participation in the Xinjiang Class may arrest Uyghur students' development of Uyghur as an academic language, research indicates that Xinjiang Class students exhibit resistance to Mandarin language assimilation by using Uyghur in domains outside of education (Chen 2008, Grose 2010). In an ethnographic study, Chen documented Uyghur students using Uyghur outside of class for a majority of the time (2008). And from interviews, Grose noted that Xinjiang Class graduates reported communicating primarily in Uyghur outside of class (2010). Such resistance deserves attention because, as Han migration continues to alter the demography of East Turkestan (SBX 2010, Benson 1990), future generations of Uyghur students may find themselves in contexts dominated by Mandarin speakers, resembling configurations that Xinjiang Class students encounter in inner China.

Mandarin as the language of instruction at Xinjiang University

Xinjiang University is regarded as the region's leading institution for higher education. In plans enacted by the Chinese central government's Ministry of Education, Xinjiang University was named as a national key university in 1978, a Project 211 university in 1995, and a Class B Double First Class University in 2015 (Welch and Yang 2011). These designations came with high levels of funding from the central government for research and training, and with the most recent plan, the expectation that Xinjiang University will become a world-class university and have world-class disciplines by 2050 (Peters and Besley 2018). Changes in language policy at Xinjiang University are significant because, in many fields, this institution attracts the highest achieving students in the region, compelling policy conformity from primary and secondary schools, other regional tertiary institutions, and vocational schools.

Xinjiang University was established in 1949 as a bilingual institution, offering courses in Uyghur and Chinese as languages of instruction (Dwyer 2005). However, in the 1990s, the Uyghur option was reduced, and in May 2002, the university mandated that all courses, except for Uyghur literature and Chagatay (Middle Turkic) poetry, be taught in Mandarin, starting in September of that year (Dwyer 2005, Große 2002, Millward 2007, Wingfield-Hayes 2002). Azad Sultan, the vice president of Xinjiang University, who has strong CCP ties, was the architect of

this plan.¹⁰ The dean of Xinjiang University justified the switch to Mandarin as a corrective to address the “language deficits” of Uyghur students and the paucity of Uyghur language instructional materials. He also voiced a conventional CCP language ideology, that Mandarin language competence would increase Uyghur job prospects (Große 2002). Yet, as Dwyer observes, these arguments are circular in nature: Mandarin has been legitimated as the language of instruction because the CCP has promoted Mandarin and restricted the publication of Uyghur language curricular materials (2005). By displacing Uyghur at Xinjiang University, the CCP has created a ripple effect, influencing other educational institutions and social conceptions about the roles of Mandarin and minority languages in the domain of education.

Preschool and kindergarten ‘bilingual’ education policy

The Xinjiang CCP Committee expanded ‘bilingual’ education into the preschools and kindergartens of East Turkestan in 2005, upon issuing the Opinions of Strengthening the Kindergarten Bilingual Education for Minorities (Ma 2012).¹¹ This announcement, accompanied with financial support, dictated that “learning *Putonghua* should begin at an early age,” with ‘bilingual’ education starting in preschool and continuing through the lower and upper levels of kindergarten (Ma 2012, 44). Through this decree, the CCP signaled their intent to accelerate Mandarin language assimilation, through the process of subtractive bilingualism, for ethnic minority children in East Turkestan, from the age of three, and for a duration of three years before primary school.

In 2005, when the expansion of ‘bilingual’ education to preschool and kindergarten was announced, a total of 30,269 (11.5 percent) of ethnic minority preschool and kindergarten students were enrolled in ‘bilingual’ education across 1,045 classes (XUAR Bureau of Statistics 2006). To encourage expansion, the regional government delivered financial support, with funds

¹⁰ Azad Sultan is now the former vice president of Xinjiang University. In January 2018, Azad was sent to an internment camp as punishment for being “‘two-faced’ – a term applied by the government to Uyghur cadres who pay lip service to Communist Party rule in the XUAR, but secretly chafe against state policies repressing members of their ethnic group” (Hoshur 2018c).

¹¹ In China, *you’eryuan* (kindergarten) often denotes any level of formal education before primary school, and can include *xiaoban* (preschool for students aged three or four), *zhongban* (lower kindergarten for students aged four or five), and *daban* (upper kindergarten for students aged five or six). The phrase ‘preschool and kindergarten’ is used here to make clear that this discussion refers to multiple grade levels.

to hire additional teachers, increase training programs at teachers colleges, and modify or construct school buildings (Abdilim 2011, Wang 2010, Xinhua 2017d, Zhao 2018). Between 2013 and 2016, the CCP invested 6 billion RMB (about 955 million USD) to build 3,075 rural ‘bilingual’ preschools and kindergartens (CCP 2017). The government provided meal and textbook subsidies for students. And teachers were promised medical insurance, along with wage and housing subsidies, though local government budgets did not always meet these expectations (Ma 2012). The Xinjiang Department of Education reaffirmed their commitment to the promotion of Mandarin through early childhood education in the Xinjiang Mid and Long-Term Program for the Reform and Development of Education (CECC 2011). This plan announced a goal to provide ‘bilingual’ education in at least 85 percent of ethnic minority upper and lower kindergartens by 2012. This coverage was expanded to preschools in 2016, intended to be complete by 2020 (Xinhua 2017d). As of 2018, a total of 1,314,515 preschool and kindergarten students (95.95 percent) were attending ‘bilingual’ schools and receiving three years of education in Mandarin (Mei). Funding from the regional government continues to be strong, with substantial amounts of money allocated for student subsidies and the construction of new schools (Mu 2018).

The ‘bilingual’ education curriculum for preschools and kindergartens consists of measurable Mandarin language learning outcomes. For example, as articulated in the Opinions of Promoting Rural Pre-school Bilingual Education of Shufu County, issued in May 2006, lower kindergarten students, upon exit, should “be able to recite 10–20 *Putonghua* nursery songs, introduce himself/herself to others simply, pronounce the main body parts in *Putonghua*, and recognize the Arabic for numbers 1–10.”¹² Exit criteria for upper kindergarten students include the ability “to understand simple *Putonghua* daily speech, speak *Putonghua* for simple daily communication, read pinyin and Chinese characters that have been learned, learn to add and subtract within 10, and precisely recognize Arabic numbers within 100 and pronounce them in *Putonghua*” (Ma 2012, 54). Although minority languages are used in some ‘bilingual’ preschool and kindergartens for a few classes (Anaytulla 2008), students have no requirements for demonstrating any form of proficiency in minority languages.

¹² The inclusion of Arabic numbers as a learning objective in the Chinese curriculum suggests that Uyghurs don’t use the Hindu-Arabic decimal number system, which is incorrect.

The low status of minority languages in ‘bilingual’ preschool and kindergartens is also reflected in teacher hiring practices. Chinese government documents indicate that teachers for ‘bilingual’ preschools and kindergartens in East Turkestan are selected primarily based on their proficiency in Mandarin (Ma 2012), implying that the ability to provide mother tongue support is not a high priority. In an ethnographic study of a preschool and kindergarten in Kashgar, Anaytulla observed that “the principle idea during lessons was to use Uyghur as seldom as possible” (2008, 42).

Because rural preschool and kindergartens have trouble recruiting and retaining teachers proficient in Mandarin, some local governments assign officials and staff, regardless of qualification, to teach in such schools, with the personnel rotated every few months (Ma 2012). Other schools employ Uyghur teachers who have not mastered the basic Mandarin tones, and use inaccurate pronunciation in Mandarin (Anaytulla 2008). And other schools resort to educational CDs when Mandarin-speaking teachers are not available (Ma 2012), despite numerous studies indicating that language learning in live social interactions is more robust than language learning facilitated by video or audio recordings (Lytle and Kuhl 2017). In 2018, the Xinjiang Department of Education began forcing Mandarin-speaking Uyghurs, regardless of qualification, to relocate to rural areas of East Turkestan to teach in ‘bilingual’ preschools and kindergartens for multiple year assignments.

Teaching materials in ‘bilingual’ preschools and kindergartens are deficient because textbooks are oriented to native speakers of Mandarin and Han cultural practices (Abdilim 2011, Anaytulla 2008). In 2007, the Xinjiang Department of Education recognized this problem and made suggestions for improvement (Ma 2012), however, as of 2016, no textbooks had been designed to address the linguistic or cultural needs of ethnic minority students (Yang, Li, and Wang). As a result of these teaching practices, Anaytulla observed that some preschoolers and kindergarteners “spoke Han [Mandarin] better than their mother tongue. However, most children in the younger, intermediate, and older classes learned by rote and did not know the meanings of the songs they memorized. Asked a few simple everyday-life questions in Han [i.e. Mandarin], many children could not reply. The pronunciations, tones, and comprehension of children from peasant households, in particular, were relatively poor” (Anaytulla 2008, 43). At home, ethnic

minority parents who lack proficiency in Mandarin are unable to help their children complete homework. And many ethnic minority parents cannot afford a tutor (Anaytulla 2008).

With all the subsidies provided for students, combined with government discourse on the importance of Mandarin proficiency for employment, it is not surprising that some ethnic minority parents in East Turkestan purportedly appreciate the government's program for three years of preschool and kindergarten education (Ma 2012). But while it is true that high-quality early childhood programs facilitate cognitive, emotional, physical, and social development, early childhood programs for ethnic minority students in East Turkestan function principally to accelerate Mandarin language assimilation and native cultural erasure. The CCP's extension of 'bilingual' education to the preschools and kindergartens of East Turkestan is an effort to reorient the identity of ethnic minority children and advance the interests of the state. As stated by Ilshat Hassan, president of the Uyghur American Association, "by enforcing this new policy at the preschool level, the Chinese government intends to kill the Uyghur language at the cradle" (Sulaiman 2017).

Suppression of the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education

The second chapter of this monograph is a narrative about the Uyghur scholar, Abduweli Ayup, and his initiative to establish schools in East Turkestan that provided mother tongue-based multilingual education. In summary, as a Ford Foundation International Fellow, Abduweli earned a master's degree in linguistics from the University of Kansas in the spring of 2011. He then returned to Kashgar with a plan to create a private school that aligned with the linguistic and cultural needs of Uyghur students. Along with Muhemmet Sidiq and Dilyar Obul, Abduweli formed the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education.

Their first school opened in central Kashgar in July 2011, and offered Uyghur young adults language classes in Uyghur, Mandarin, English, and Turkish, and vocational training in tourism and hospitality. In October, they launched a kindergarten – the first part of a prospective multi-level school – and welcomed an inaugural class of 15 students. As enrollment began to grow, spurred by Abduweli's public presentations on the educational merits of mother tongue-based multilingual education, some Uyghurs in Urumchi took notice, along with members of

other ethnic minority groups, and requested replication of the Kashgar model in the regional capital.

In their first year and a half of operation, Abduweli and his partners encountered minimal CCP intrusions – occasional visits from officials to ascertain that the school was a valid educational enterprise – but the government’s stance shifted after February 21, 2013, following an International Mother Language Day celebration in Kashgar. A few days after this event, Abduweli was interrogated and threatened with organizing an illegal gathering. Although Abduweli was released, he and his partners were detained and questioned again in March in Urumchi, after the police cancelled a conference on multilingual schools and language maintenance, to be attended by Uyghurs and members of other ethnic minority groups. On March 19, the government closed his school in Kashgar on the charge of incomplete documentation, disrupting the education of over 400 young adult students and 56 kindergarteners.

In April, the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education, now incorporated as the Mother Language International Trading Company Limited, was granted a license to open a new school on the outskirts of Kashgar. Through the spring and summer, Abduweli and his partners also worked to establish a school in Urumchi, although their efforts were stymied by realtors and government agencies. Abduweli continued his public advocacy for mother tongue-based multilingual education in public talks, as well as appearances on radio and television. On August 20, 2013, Abduweli was renovating a future school building in Kashgar when he and his associates were taken into police custody.

For the next 15 months, Abduweli was locked away in two detention centers and two prisons, enduring sexual abuse, along with physical and psychological torture at the hands of interrogators and inmates. For the first seven months, his indictment changed several times – a maneuver to extend his captivity – and it wasn’t until May 17, 2014 that the prosecutor’s office of Urumchi charged him with collecting illegal donations. In June, prosecutors pressured him to plead guilty, telling him, “If you don’t accept guilt for this crime, you will be charged with opposing the Chinese bilingual education policy.” Given the choice of pleading guilty to an economic crime, or being convicted of a political crime, and jailed for life, Abduweli accepted the first option only when told that his brother supported this decision.

A mock trial in June preceded a public trial in July, and on August 21, the leaders of Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education were found guilty of abusing public money. Abduweli was sentenced 18 months and fined 80,000 RMB (13,000 USD), while Dilyar received two years and a fine of 100,000 RMB (16,260 USD), and Muhemmet received two years and three months and a fine of 130,000 RMB (21,130 USD). In October, the three men had another trial and pleaded innocent, with Dilyar and Muhemmet appealing their sentences. On November 27, 2014, Abduweli was released from prison, while Dilyar and Muhemmet were freed in 2015. After his release, Abduweli resumed teaching in Kashgar, but Chinese security personnel continued to torment him with arbitrary beatings and confinement. Unable to endure this treatment, Abduweli fled to Turkey on August 25, 2015. His family followed, and they lived in Ankara as stateless refugees for nearly four years, before relocating to France in April 2019.

Abduweli and his partners were aware that their efforts to create a private school ran counter to the CCP's strategy to promote Mandarin language assimilation. Thus, the group made great efforts to maintain operational and fiscal transparency, by publicizing their activities on their website and other internet forums. They closely adhered to PRC national and regional laws and took every opportunity to demonstrate how autonomy in language and cultural practices could co-exist with abidance to the expectations of citizenship in the Chinese state. By imprisoning the leaders from the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education, the CCP intended to create a cautionary tale, and send a message to the ethnic minority communities of East Turkestan that minority language schools are forbidden.

The Hotan Prefecture and Ghulja County Department of Education directives

Many CCP language policies on education in East Turkestan covertly prohibit minority languages, but the Hotan Prefecture and Ghulja County Department of Education directives, both issued in 2017, revealed a new direction: the overt prohibition of Uyghur. The change in degree of overtness signaled a movement from implicit and unstated conventions to explicit and codified rules, formalizing a hierarchy where Mandarin is normalized as the dominant and legitimate language of education and minority languages are illegitimate deviations, subject to elimination (Bourdieu 1991, Schiffman 1996).

Located in southern East Turkestan, Hotan Prefecture is part of a predominantly Uyghur sub-region; the city of Hotan is over 96 percent Uyghur, according to the 2010 census (Xinjiang Provincial Bureau of Statistics 2012). A Uyghur official from the Hotan Prefecture Department of Education said, “while Hotan Prefecture had repeatedly tried to implement a bilingual education policy over the past 10 years, ‘the national language hasn’t become popularized’” (Sulaiman 2017). Thus, officials issued a directive in June 2017 that restricted the use of Uyghur in primary and secondary schools, to strengthen ‘bilingual’ education, by prohibiting Uyghur-only signage on school grounds, as well as the use of Uyghur in educational and public activities, as well as school administration (Sulaiman 2017). This directive also curbed attempts by Han teachers to learn Uyghur, by instructing schools to “resolutely correct the flawed method of providing Uyghur language training to Chinese language teachers” (Sulaiman 2017). The implementation of this decree may be moderated by this area’s linguistic demography; in 2015, only 30 percent of the 4,300 teachers in Hotan City were recognized as ‘bilingual’ (Shaohui 2015).

A few months later, in Ghulja County, within Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, an area that, according to the 2010 census, is approximately 26 percent Uyghur, and 21 percent Kazakh, among other ethnic groups (Xinjiang Provincial Bureau of Statistics 2012), the Department of Education declared that “the use of all Uyghur and Kazakh-medium textbooks and teaching materials must be terminated across the board” and that “any such items currently held in schools must be put away in sealed storage” (Long and Fan 2017, Toops 2004a). The Ghulja County directive, like that issued in Hotan Prefecture, threatened those who did not comply, stating that anyone found to be using minority language materials would be “reported to a higher level of government” (Long and Fan 2017). The pronouncements to restrict Uyghur in Hotan Prefecture schools and eliminate Uyghur and Kazakh in Ghulja County schools are pivotal because they represent an increasingly open attack on minority languages in the education system of East Turkestan. Such overt language policies that prohibit Uyghur may indicate growing impatience among CCP officials to promote Mandarin language assimilation.

Internment camps

The CCP Secretary of Xinjiang, Chen Quanguo, guided by PRC policymakers, such as Hu Lianhe, is currently administering a “coercive ethnic policy under Xi Jinping’s ‘New Era’ of

Chinese power, one that seeks to accelerate the political and cultural transformation of non-Han ethnic minorities” (Leibold 2018). At the time of publication, the CCP is detaining likely close to three million Turkic Muslim minorities, including Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and Kyrgyz, in internment camps throughout East Turkestan (Schrivers 2019).¹³

A CCP white paper issued in March 2019 states that the camps implement a “step-by-step approach...in the process of study and training, which begins with learning standard spoken and written Chinese language, then moves on to studying the law, and concludes with learning vocational skills” (19). This document also includes an articulation of CCP language ideology:

In view of the fact that some trainees have been influenced by religious extremism, have not received good education, are weak in the use of standard spoken and written Chinese language, slow in acquiring modern knowledge, and have poor communication skills, the centers fully ensure citizens’ constitutional right to learn and use standard Chinese language and provide conditions for them to learn. Through education and training, the trainees have improved their competence in the use of standard Chinese language and broadened their channels to acquire modern knowledge and information. They have realized that only by mastering standard Chinese language can they better adapt to contemporary society. (CCP 2019, 19)

This statement explicitly links Mandarin proficiency to modernity and endows the CCP with a moral justification to detain Turkic Muslims, by asserting that detainment is a realization of a constitutional right. Also ludicrous is the implication that other languages used in East Turkestan are deficient for communication, insufficient mediums for transmitting knowledge and information, yet functional as vehicles of religious extremism.

Testimonies from ex-internees, including people pressed into service as Mandarin teachers, and CCP propaganda confirm that Mandarin study is a primary component of

¹³ The CCP refers to these camps variously as “transformation through education,” “vocational education,” and “vocational skill education training centers,” that “carry out anti-extremist ideological education” (Buckley 2018a, Westcott and Xiong 2018). This guise of education conceals other activities that occur in the camps. Substantial evidence indicates that, for the Turkic Muslim detainees, these camps are sites for torture (AI 2018, Wang 2018).

internment camp activity (CCTV 2018, Sheng 2018, Vanderklippe 2018a).¹⁴ Minority languages are forbidden in these spaces, with compliance reinforced through microphones hanging on ceilings (Ayup 2018, Clarke 2019). A Uyghur ex-internee named Eldost, a former reporter from Xinjiang TV, was forced to teach Mandarin, along with Chinese history and culture, because of his high proficiency in Mandarin (UHRP 2018b, 19-20). As many of Eldost's internee-students were elderly or illiterate in both Uyghur and Chinese, he would invent mnemonic devices to help them recite Chinese phrases, from such texts as the *Three Character Classic*, a Confucian standard in Chinese primary schools. Eldost also "advised students to stop habitually saying 'praise God' in Arabic and Uyghur because other instructors punished them for it" (Shih and Kang 2018). A Kazakh ex-internee named Omir Bekali, when describing his daily routine, said he was required to continuously disavow his Islamic beliefs, criticize himself and his relatives, give thanks to the Communist Party, and study Mandarin and Chinese history (Shih 2018). Lack of Mandarin proficiency can also be cause for detainment (Rauhala 2018). A former teacher said that one category of internees "consisted of illiterate minority farmers who didn't commit any ostensible crimes other than not speaking Chinese" (Shih 2018). One ex-internee reported that "elderly detainees in his camp were told they had to learn more than 3,000 Chinese characters before they could leave" (Kuo 2018). Both circumstances send the message that if you don't learn Mandarin in school, you can expect to continue your studies in an internment camp. For some Uyghurs, this threat is unbearable. When a CCP officer threatened to send Tursun Ablet, from Kashgar prefecture, to an internment camp for up to five years for not being able to recite the national anthem of the PRC and the Oath of Allegiance to the CCP in Chinese, Tursun hanged himself. His wife said Tursun had, "complained about the difficulties he faced in learning how to read and write the Chinese language, saying 'Other people can read and write, but I cannot'" (Hoshur 2018b). Uyghur language advocacy can also result in detainment. The Uyghur pop star Ablajan Awut Ayup composed songs, such as "Söyümlük Muellim" (Dear Teacher) (2016), that celebrated the Uyghur language, a factor that may have contributed to the CCP's decision to imprison him on February 15, 2018 (Harris 2018).

¹⁴ Zenz documented that staff and teacher recruitment notices for these camps often require no specific degree, skill, or teaching background, though recruits are preferred who demonstrate strong ideological conformity, army, or police experience (2018a).

Discussion

Many scholars and organizations have recognized how the promotion of Mandarin and the marginalization of minority languages in the education system of East Turkestan contravenes CCP basic law, expressed as rational egalitarianism, and undermines professed CCP objectives to achieve ethnic stability, social harmony, and economic development in East Turkestan. These same parties have offered policy recommendations to counter ethnic minority resentment and stem ethnic conflict (Dwyer 2005, Ping 2016, Schluessel 2007, UHRP 2015, Zhu 2014). Dwyer suggested the CCP appoint specialists to develop the lexicons of regional languages in all domains; improve instructional materials and quality of instruction for major minority languages; implement additive forms of bilingualism with language sequencing; and consider forming a “three-language” policy, with Mandarin, English, and a regional language (2005, 59-63). Schluessel suggested the education system of East Turkestan return to a format where ethnic minority students are educated in their mother tongue, with Mandarin introduced as a significant part of the curriculum in the second or third year of primary school; the adoption of a system of personal linguistic autonomy, where ethnolinguistic communities have some control over their curricula, providing a few years of linguistically and culturally relevant education while under state oversight; the diversification of language-learning options in ethnic minority schools; and more funding for ethnic minority schools (2007, 269-272). And this organization, the Uyghur Human Rights Project, suggested, among a list of actions, that the education system of East Turkestan reinstate Uyghur language instruction from preschool through university, provide a strong foundation in Uyghur before introducing Mandarin as an additional language, and that the CCP grant permission for Abduweli Ayup to open a minority language school in Urumchi (2015, 31-32).

Though these recommendations are still pertinent, the trajectory of CCP governance in East Turkestan indicates that ethnic minority rights are more subject to erosion than expansion. From 1921 until 1938, to win the support of the Soviet Union and ethnic minority elites, the CCP strategically endorsed an ethnic minority policy predicated on self-determination, promising ethnic minority communities the right to unite or secede from the imagined federal republic of China. But in 1938, when the CCP no longer needed this support, the provision for self-determination was replaced with an allowance for regional ethnic autonomy. In 1949, after

securing control of inner China and establishing the PRC, the CCP promulgated basic laws assuring national minorities of expanded rights and representation under a system of regional ethnic autonomy (1949, 1954, 1984). However, scholars have recognized that the regional ethnic autonomy system is inconsistent in theory and practice (He 2005, Zhang 2012), supporting the belief that the CCP uses ‘autonomy’ as a tool to manipulate ethnic minority communities (Ghai 2000) – a perception that contributes to ethnic minority discontent (Bovingdon 2004, 2010).

Han chauvinism has also played a role in ethnic minority relations, by influencing CCP definitions of ethnic minorities as subordinate through metaphors of sex, where ethnic minorities are depicted as women; of history, where ethnic minorities are depicted as ancient; and of education, where ethnic minorities are depicted as children, exemplified by the familial concept of *xiongdi minzu* (big-brother/little-brother ethno-national group) where the big brother represents Han, as the socially and economically more advanced group, and the little brother represents other ethnic groups – potentially educatable, but eternally juvenile and inferior (Harrell 1995). The CCP employs these representations to justify their civilizing projects (Harrell 1995, Said 1978), and paternalistic policies and practices aimed at improving the *suzhi* (quality) of ethnic minority populations (CCP 1999, Dwyer 2005).

Prompted by paranoia, after collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the CCP acted on advice from Chinese scholars to revise ethnic minority policies, curtailing minority cultural practices that could theoretically support ethnic separatism, and devising projects that encouraged the formation of a Chinese national identity (Buckley 2018b, Elliott 2015). With the 2016 appointment of Chen Quanguo as CCP Secretary of Xinjiang, the CCP has accelerated its campaign to dominate and control ethnic minorities (Zenz and Leibold 2017b). Chen is orchestrating an elaborate system of surveillance, detection, and detention, that has normalized the daily gross violation of internationally recognized human rights (AP 2018), giving rise to what Nury Turkel, chairman of the Uyghur Human Rights Project, has called, “probably the darkest period in Uyghur history” (Sinica 2018).

Mirroring the CCP’s campaign for the political and cultural transformation of ethnic minority people in East Turkestan, the trajectory of CCP language policy on education reveals that tolerance for minority languages has been supplanted with a drive to promote Mandarin language assimilation among ethnic minority communities. The CCP’s official stance on

language has been consistent, with the party maintaining that all languages are equal, all ethnic groups have the freedom to use and develop their languages, and all ethnic groups should be encouraged to learn each other's language according to their free will (Blachford 1999). These principles reflect the CCP's public commitment to rational egalitarianism (Dwyer 2005), and variations of these liberties and beliefs are included in all major policy statements that concern minority languages. However, among Han CCP elites, these language ideals have conflicted, and continue to conflict, with visceral anti-ethnic minority sentiment (Dwyer 2005).

The inauguration of experimental 'bilingual' education classes in 1992 was the most significant inflection point, to date, for language policy on education in East Turkestan because it signaled a shift, for ethnic minority students, from the study of Mandarin as an additional language, to subtractive bilingualism, where Mandarin is learned at the expense of minority languages. Before 1992, the CCP tolerated minority languages in the domain of education because the government considered this situation, in accordance with the communist philosophy of language, as temporary. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the CCP inaugurated a new stage of 'bilingual' education to erase linguistic and cultural identity markers that differentiated ethnic minority groups from the Han majority. The shift to subtractive bilingualism, and the increasingly overt prohibition of Uyghur in the domain of education, should cast doubt on CCP sincerity for any commitment to rational egalitarianism for minority languages. Chen Quanguo has intensified the assault on the cultural identity of Turkic Muslim minorities (Wang 2018). In this offensive, the Uyghur language is a prime target for erasure because it is a Turkic language with many words of Arabic origin, and loanwords from Persian, with an Arabic-based script. These aspects of the Uyghur language connect Uyghurs to Turkish and Islamic communities. The CCP seeks to sever these connections and continues to accelerate 'bilingual' education as a means to reorient Uyghur identity.

Given the CCP's investments in weakening the vitality of minority languages in East Turkestan, to undermine their potential as cultural capital in maintaining symbolic boundaries (Finley 2013), it is difficult to imagine the Chinese government heeding any suggestions, especially those originating from outside China, to reverse course and support minority languages in the regional education system. Nor does the CCP seem concerned that its drive to promote Mandarin language assimilation provokes comparisons to historical atrocities of forced

language shift, such as the US campaign against Native Americans (Crawford 1995), the Canadian campaign against First Nation communities (Leitch 2005), and the Australian campaign against Aboriginal communities (Lo Bianco 1990). In recognition of the absence of state support for education with Uyghur as a language of instruction, Abduweli Ayup initiated the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education. The following chapter is a description of his attempt to design and deliver a progressive, linguistically and culturally relevant education for Uyghurs in East Turkestan.

2. Abduweli Ayup and the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education

This narrative was constructed from interviews with Abduweli Ayup, along with email and instant message exchanges, between 2008 and 2019.

Upal: Why couldn't we study Kashgari?

My name is Abduweli Ayup and I was born on January 4, 1973 in a village called Upal, about 50 kilometers southwest of Kashgar, in East Turkestan. Upal is at the northern end of the Karakoram Highway, a paved thoroughfare of one of the routes in the network later named the Silk Road. This particular route connects East Turkestan with Pakistan via a mountain range that reaches nearly 5,000 meters. Because of its location on a well-traversed road, Upal sees a fair amount of traffic and trade, and its residents are accustomed to interacting with people from different places.

Upal is important to my identity not only because it imbued me with a capacity for intercultural communication, but because it is the final resting place of Mahmud Kashgari, the Uyghur scholar who compiled the first dictionary of Turkic languages in the eleventh century. Like many inhabitants of Upal, I was nurtured to take pride in a connection with Kashgari.

For me, this cultivation began in primary school when my father, a senior high school teacher and graduate of Kashgar Teachers College, arranged for my class to visit the tomb of Kashgari. This trip coincided with Noruz, the festival that marks the start of spring. Our teachers told us that Kashgari, every Noruz, would gather his students for a competition to display their knowledge. My father said that we would do the same, so, at the tomb, he tested our knowledge of various subjects, and the students who excelled were given a certificate. For a young student in Upal, it was an honor to get a certificate at the resting place of Kashgari. This was encouragement for us to behave and study hard.

Throughout my youth, I heard many stories about Kashgari's travels and accomplishments, and I began to imagine myself joining his lineage. I remember feeling frustrated because I wanted to learn more about Kashgari – to go beyond what my teachers and family could tell me – but I could not do this because the CCP had confiscated and burned books

related to Kashgari, among other subjects, during the Cultural Revolution. Like many families, we lost books during this period, several that were heirlooms. But the general stories about Kashgari were enough to spark my imagination, and though I had no specific plan, I dreamed of making contributions of knowledge, like Kashgari, that would bring respect to my people. This is one reason, along with my parents' expectation of achievement, that I became interested in the pursuit of knowledge.

At my elementary school, Uyghur was the language of instruction. It could have been no other way – none of my teachers spoke or were literate in Mandarin. In fact, in the 1980s, there were no Mandarin speakers, and no Chinese people in Upal. Our textbooks were in Uyghur, but they were translated from Mandarin. Even the cover of my math textbook showed Chinese kids doing a math problem. This was strange for me because I had never seen a Chinese person in real life. I was confused by all the problems that assumed familiarity with China or Chinese culture. I remember one question asking us to measure the distance between Shanghai and Beijing. None of us had heard of Beijing or Shanghai, so these foreign place names distracted us from answering the question. We would ask our teacher, “What is Beijing? What is Shanghai?” Another problem was that many textbooks had readings from classical Chinese scholars, such as Confucius, and when I had to interpret the texts, my teachers' and parents' unfamiliarity with these authors made the task difficult. I wondered, *Why couldn't we measure the distance between Kashgar and Urumchi? Why couldn't we study the writings of Mahmud Kashgari?*

Our confusion reached an apex in our Mandarin course. The teachers used Uyghur to interpret the Chinese text, so our language study was an exercise in guesswork and translation. Like the other school books, the Mandarin textbook had pictures that were unfamiliar. We had never seen those images: the people, the clothing, and the places. We didn't have much success with Mandarin because of the teacher and the textbook, and because we could not use this language in any area of our life. When using the Mandarin textbook, we were constantly distracted by the images, and uncertain of the accuracy of our guesswork, but we persisted.

The books for all courses were distributed on the first day of class, but Uyghur literature was the one that I looked forward to most. I would return home and read that book from cover to cover. But this appetite created an insatiable hunger because I had nothing new to read for the rest of the year. We didn't have a library at our school, and books written in Arabic-based

Uyghur were scarce. However, my community had a rich oral tradition. *Dastan* (epic oral narratives made of poetry and prose) was popular, and many people were familiar with Uyghur folk tales, so I could talk about this content with family and friends. I was lucky that my mother was also an educator, a primary school teacher, who encouraged my enthusiasm for reading and discussion. Uyghur literature was my favorite course because I could bring knowledge acquired outside of school into the classroom.

Toquzaq: *Oyghan!* (Wake Up!)

The CCP, needing to fill teaching vacancies, assigned my parents new jobs in Toquzaq, forcing us to relocate. So, when I was nine years old, my parents, three older brothers, one older sister, and one younger sister, moved from Upal to the town of Toquzaq, in Kashgar Konasheher County, to the west of Kashgar.

I started fourth grade in Toquzaq and was impressed with the higher quality of education offered in my new school, a county-level school. The language of instruction continued to be Uyghur, but the Mandarin course was taught by a Uyghur who was fluent in Mandarin and literate in Chinese, so there was none of the uncertain translation that I had engaged in before. It was interesting that a Uyghur was teaching Mandarin, because one of the teachers was ethnically Han, but she couldn't speak Mandarin. Having grown up in Kashgar, she only spoke Uyghur. But while the teachers were more qualified, I continued to feel a sense of alienation. I first thought the problem was with me, and that I needed to catch up with my classmates. But then I learned that my classmates had the same feeling of estrangement – we could not grasp the Chinese cultural content of the textbooks.

To counteract this feeling of frustration, some of my classmates and I decided to escape from school. By sixth grade, when my teachers were shifting to Mandarin as the primary language of instruction, and the textbooks were making deep cultural references to China, an unfamiliar nation, we thought that the best course of action was to go to a nearby lake and have fun. Our teacher was angry, and I remember him confronting me, saying, “You are one of the better students in class, and even you run off with your classmates to swim.” This didn't serve as much of a deterrence. All the boys began regularly skipping school, taking at least half of the day to swim and play. We were united. And I'm very glad about that – it was time well spent. We

participated in physical education at school and we liked singing together in our music class. But as for math, science, and, especially, communist ideology and Chinese ethics, where much of the content featured images of Chinese people in Chinese places doing Chinese things – I just couldn't relate.

Books continued to provide solace, and I supplemented my education outside of class. In contrast with Upal, which did not have a single place to buy or borrow books, Toquzaq had a small bookstore, which I regarded as a treasure. The bookstore was open eight hours a day, every day but Sunday, and had two sections. The Uyghur section had more books than the Chinese section, because in the Uyghur section there was somebody, and in the Chinese section there was nobody.

The absence of a Chinese readership in Toquzaq reflected the overall population of Chinese people in the county. Sometime in the mid-1980s, I heard that 367,000 Uyghurs lived in Kashgar Konasheher County. I paid attention to population numbers when I was young because Han migration was increasing, and Uyghurs often talked about how their settlement would impact and threaten us. We were often thinking about how many Uyghurs were living in East Turkestan, and we were sensitive about our numbers.

During senior high school, I discovered the poetry of Abduxaliq Uyghur. My friends and I loved his poems, especially *Oyghan!* (Wake up!), and we recited them passionately. When told that the author had learned Russian while living in the Soviet Union, we were inspired to learn Russian. At the bookstore, we found a Russian textbook, but the clerk would not sell us the book because we needed permission from the Foreign Affairs Office. Seeing the improbability of being granted permission, we gave up. That was the first time I wanted to learn another language, and I could not learn it because I needed to have permission from the Chinese government. Although I couldn't articulate it at the time, that was my first lesson in how information is regulated by the CCP, and how the CCP controls the acquisition of certain types of knowledge.

Notwithstanding my poor school attendance, I did the minimum and passed my classes. My parents wanted me and my other siblings to have a good education, and attend a good college, and I could not disappoint them. Their high expectations were influenced by the academic success of my extended family. At that time, it was rare for Uyghurs from Kashgar Prefecture to study in Urumchi, the regional capital, but one of my uncles was doing this. When on break, he

sometimes visited us in Toquzaq, and he always told us to be diligent in our studies. A cousin was also able to earn the highest grade, among all senior high school students, in Kashgar Prefecture. He too encouraged me to study hard and do something meaningful with my life.

My siblings and I wanted to go to college, for our parents and for ourselves, but this proved difficult to achieve. My first and second brothers didn't go to college because of a quota system that restricted the number of students accepted from any given place. My third brother was not qualified to apply to college because he had dropped out of senior high school to help my grandparents on their farm. My older sister (and, later, younger sister) were also denied acceptance because of the quota system. All my siblings enrolled in technical schools, which provided training and avenues to employment, but college remained an elusive goal for my brothers and sisters.

It the spring of 1992, when I was considering where and what to study, Beijing was on my mind. In 1989, I had watched on television the student protests in the streets of Beijing and Tiananmen Square, and was amazed to see expressions of freedom. When Orkesh Dolet (also known as Wu'erkaixi), a Beijing-born Uyghur and one of the student leaders of the Chinese democracy movement, criticized Premier Li Peng on national television, I was excited to see this exchange, and encouraged by Orkesh's bravery to pursue political reform.¹⁵ This was the first time in recent memory when a Uyghur guy spoke with a high-ranking Chinese government official. We were proud of Orkesh, and he became my role model. I wanted to see more communication occur between common people and those at the heights of power.

A strong connection formed in my mind, equating Beijing with freedom, opposite to the control exercised by the CCP in Kashgar. Even after the democracy movement was crushed, this association persisted. Beijing was free for a moment, and I wanted to know the truth of the Tiananmen Square protests. I also wanted to go to Beijing to compete academically with Chinese students. Beijing Normal University was my first choice because this is where Orkesh had studied. But my options were restricted by the Chinese government. Minority students could not enroll at Beijing Normal University directly. We had to attend the Central University for

¹⁵ After the Tiananmen Square Massacre, Orkesh escaped arrest, and fled to France via Hong Kong. He spent a few years in the US, and later settled in Taiwan. Orkesh maintains political involvement as a commentator and activist.

Nationalities (now called Minzu University of China, and known colloquially as Minda)¹⁶ for two years before transferring to Beijing Normal University. Even Orkesh, despite having attended primary and secondary Chinese schools in Beijing, was forced to do this, because of his Uyghur ethnicity. I decided to follow this path and was accepted to study at Minda in Beijing.

Beijing: Our campus felt like a minority region

I arrived in Beijing in the fall of 1992 for *yuke ban*, a year-long preparatory course for ethnic minority students prior to starting college. After completing this requirement, I matriculated, but was disappointed with the rigid structure and rote nature of the curriculum. Although I was majoring in Turkic languages and culture, more than half of our classes felt like an extension of our preparatory coursework, because they focused on developing our proficiency in Mandarin and our ability to translate Uyghur to Mandarin and vice versa. We did study other topics, such as ancient Uyghur literature, but the primary objective was for us to learn Mandarin, with the expectation that we would become Uyghur- Mandarin translators.

I didn't want to become a translator. Studying Mandarin was fine, but if I was going to learn Mandarin, I wanted to use that language as a tool to obtain other types of knowledge. Another language-related frustration was that the Chinese students at Minda had a separate curriculum that included English language study. In East Turkestan, I hadn't considered learning English, but now in Beijing, I asked myself, *Why are I am learning Mandarin while the Chinese students are learning English? How will I be able to catch up with them?* Eventually, the Uyghur students were offered English courses, but only sporadically. I took other required courses on CCP ideology and Socialism with Chinese characteristics, but didn't pay attention, and read my own books in quiet protest. Consequently, I failed those classes.

To quell my frustration, in my free time, I would sometimes stroll through the campus of Peking University and look at their Democracy Wall, where people with grievances attached posters addressing political and social issues in China. Around that campus, I found student-run

¹⁶ Most major universities in China have an abbreviated name, formed from the first syllables of words from the full school name. Zhongyang Minzu Daxue (the Central University for Nationalities/Minzu University of China) is thus referred to as 'Minda,' from the first syllables of the final words 'minzu' and 'daxue.'

magazines and newspapers – expressions of freedom that students on my campus did not enjoy. I also saw advertisements for a variety of interesting lectures.

We also had lectures at Minda, but they were compulsory, and it seemed like the speakers were sent to spy on us. Many times I thought, *I am still in East Turkestan*, because surveillance was in the atmosphere – our campus felt like a minority region.

To cope with this feeling of oppression, and my mind-numbing coursework, I returned to the habit I had developed in Toquzaq and sought out books. The Beijing National Library was nearby and I went there to read every day. It's hard to believe today, but at that time, you could find books by Liu Xiaobo, the human rights advocate.¹⁷ There were limits though. Books on freedom and democracy were forbidden. But for those subjects, the streets filled my needs; vendors had books on diverse topics, and would spread them on the sidewalk, even ones that were critical of the CCP and CCP ideology. This is where I discovered George Orwell's *1984* and *Animal Farm*. To practice English, I visited the campuses of Beijing Normal University, Beijing Foreign Studies University, and the People's University of China, and would strike up conversations with Western foreigners. I was learning a lot – not on my campus or in my classes – but outside.

In my third year at Minda, I was part of a student group that started a Uyghur Studies Forum. This was my first experience in social organization. We invited Beijing-based members of the Uyghur intelligentsia, including professors, writers, and specialists, to give lectures at Minda. Ilham Tohti, an economist at Minda, was a frequent lecturer.¹⁸ We didn't have to worry about finding somebody to speak, because whenever I invited Ilham, he was ready and willing. Ilham was eager to talk about the promotion of Han and Uyghur ethnic harmony through dialogue. In our private conversations, Ilham encouraged me to learn English. He advised me to

¹⁷ Liu Xiaobo was a literary critic, poet, political activist, and 2010 Nobel Peace Prize laureate. A co-author of *Charter 08*, a manifesto calling for political reform, greater human rights, and an end to one-party rule in China, Liu was arrested in 2009 and charged with inciting subversion of state power. He was sentenced in 2010 to 11 years in prison. Liu died on July 13, 2017.

¹⁸ Ilham Tohti later co-founded the website Uyghur Online in 2006, a platform for the peaceful criticism of Chinese government policies. Through his writing and lectures, Ilham addressed CCP policies that marginalized the Uyghur language, interfered with religious practices, impeded job opportunities, and encouraged Han migration into the region. Ilham is currently serving a life-term for promoting separatism and violence.

go to the Russian and Kazakh Embassies because English-speaking foreigners could be found at those locations.

Our Uyghur Studies Forum had a formal schedule; every two weeks, we gathered for a lecture. Topics included the economy, history, and literature of East Turkestan. In addition to this academic component, our forum was used to plan the celebration of Uyghur holidays, like Noruz, Roza Heyt (Eid al-Fitr, the end of Ramadan) and Qurban Heyt (Eid al-Adha, the Sacrifice Feast). We also memorialized days associated with Uyghur poets and writers, such as Ali-Shir Nava'i's birthday on February 9, Abduxaliq Uyghur's execution by the Chinese warlord Sheng Shicai on March 13, and Lutpulla Mutellip's birthday on November 22. We held these gatherings to inform Uyghur students about their identity and their obligation to make beneficial contributions, emulating Uyghurs from the past. We wanted to encourage our classmates to reject complacency, and form a positive ethnic consciousness.

The forum was not always easy to manage, and I had to negotiate conflicts occasionally. On a celebration of International Women's Day, there was a dispute over the meaning of a Uyghur idiom, *Ayal yerim dunya*. I supported a literal interpretation of this idiom, that "women are half of the world," and reasoned that men and women comprised equal halves, and that if our world is to be complete, these two parts of the world need to co-operate. But a group of male students challenged this interpretation and said it meant, more figuratively, that "women are half of a human being." The female students were offended and this led to an argument among the Uyghur students, culminating with the women gathering in front of the men's dormitory to protest. I mediated this argument by letting the women know that the discriminatory interpretation was not widely held among the men. This caused some of my male classmates to dislike me, but I felt it more important to defend our sisters.

In large organizations, conflict is inevitable, but the forum was an important space to debate issues and reach consensus. One prominent topic was how to engage with Chinese students who called our language *Xinjianghua* (Xinjiang dialect). The problem with this term is that the character *hua* (dialect) implies that the Uyghur language is a variety of Chinese, like *Beijingshua* (Beijing dialect). But this is misleading. Uyghur is a Turkic language, not related to Chinese. The name *Xinjianghua* also had political implications because it suggested that the

Uyghur language belonged to a CCP-ruled colony called Xinjiang. Thus, we talked about how to persuade Chinese people to refer to our language as *Weiwu'er yu* (Uyghur language).

The name that Chinese people used for our language was a persistent source of irritation. I clearly remember a Chinese teacher giving a lecture and using the term *Xinjianghua*. One of my classmates stood up in front of more than 500 students, and asked, “Why are you using the term *Xinjianghua*? Who is talking *Xinjianghua*? There’s no *Xinjianghua* in the world. There is *Weiwu'er yu*. Don’t use that word again. It’s hurting us.” That teacher was embarrassed, but I am sure he learned how seriously we took this issue.

We also hated the term *Xinjiangren* (person from Xinjiang).¹⁹ In response to hearing this word, we would say, “We are not *Xinjiangren*. We are Uyghur.” If you call us *Xinjiangren*, it implies that we are members of a Chinese nation, like *Sichuanren* (person from Sichuan). It means that you do not recognize our existence as a nation. If you call us *Xinjiangren*, you are deliberately ignoring our Uyghur-ness.

My classmates and I often debated why Chinese people, students, and teachers, used these troublesome words and were generally ignorant of Uyghurs. The Chinese education system was certainly complicit. All the textbooks, from primary school through university, were uniform throughout the country, and they contained images of and information on Chinese areas and cities, but none mentioned Uyghur places. The textbooks were also biased toward Chinese writers. In courses on Chinese literature, the authors were all Han, such as Lu Xun. But in our courses on Uyghur literature, half of the content was translated material, such as poems and short stories from Chinese writers. Because Chinese students read nothing from Uyghur writers, Chinese students lacked knowledge of Uyghur literature. They were also unfamiliar with the Uyghur script. Even some Chinese students enrolled at Minda, which had a Department of Uyghur Language and Literature, were ignorant of basic aspects of Uyghur language and culture. I could understand if Chinese students at other universities had these gaps in their knowledge, but the Chinese students at Minda had ample opportunities to meet Uyghurs. In our forum, we discussed how to educate others about us.

¹⁹ See Dwyer (2005, 30, 34) and Smith Finley (2013, 23, 181) for discussions of the “artificial group term” *Xinjiangren*, including efforts by the CCP to popularize this form of identity.

Many of the faculty and administrators at Minda did not support, or were suspicious of, our forum, but we needed permission to operate as a student organization. Initially, we registered with the student union, but an administrator from the Department of Turkic languages and culture, who also happened to be a member of the CCP, began to interfere with our activities. The only way we could get more autonomy was by registering our forum through the president of the university.

Fortunately, the president was a good guy. I had a casual acquaintance with him because we had a similar habit of jogging around campus every morning. When my classmates and I decided to start the Uyghur Studies Forum, I met with the president and submitted a petition to him directly. He gave his approval, praising my behavior and morning exercise routine. With permission from the top, no one could object to our organization. But after one year, we met resistance. The Xinjiang Security Bureau took notice of our forum and pressured the faculty and administration to stop our organization. We attempted to negotiate, and asked to operate independently of the university, but were denied. We knew that the CCP would not relent until our forum had been dissolved.

The leaders of the Uyghur Studies Forum discussed at length how to move forward – how to create a student organization that would meet our objectives and not attract the scorn of the CCP. To this end, I sought to devise an organization name that seemed complimentary to CCP interests. We considered how, in the mid-1990s, the CCP was spreading propaganda to inspire a positive reception to policies for the reinvigoration of Silk Road economic activity. A Uyghur scholar, Abdushukur Memtimin, had written a book in support of these initiatives, suggesting that poverty in East Turkestan was a result of the decline of trade along the Silk Road. He proposed that Uyghurs would be prosperous once again if international commerce following the routes of the ancient Silk Road was reinvigorated. I thought his idea was great, so, in tribute, I named our organization the Silk Road Cultural Association.

Under this name, our group had more freedom. We imported the lectures and cultural celebrations from the Uyghur Studies Forum, and added fund-raising activities to benefit Uyghurs in East Turkestan, such as collecting donations for Uyghur orphans. And in 1997, after a strong series of earthquakes in Peyziwat County, near Kashgar, we arranged for Uyghur musicians to perform and Uyghur artists to paint in Tiananmen Square and sidewalks around

central Beijing. We sent proceeds from the performances and paintings to victims of the earthquake. Not only did we raise funds, but because these performances and paintings were in public places, we stimulated the interest of Chinese people in Uyghurs and East Turkestan.

Most of the Chinese people were unfamiliar with Uyghurs in general, and if the word *Weiwu'er* (Uyghur) meant anything to them at all, it was associated with Orkesh, the Uyghur student leader from the Chinese democracy movement. They would ask how Orkesh was doing, and where he was. From this entry point, we would give some basic information about Uyghur culture, including literature, art, and music. None of the Chinese people knew of the Peyziwat earthquake, but many would donate when informed.

We performed another activity with the sole purpose of improving the public image of Uyghurs. Many Chinese people in Beijing didn't like Uyghurs because they thought that all Uyghurs were thieves. To counter this stereotype, our group sent Uyghur students to the railway station, and helped Chinese passengers carry their bags. This was during Spring Festival, when trains are crowded and people often travel with heavy bags. The *Beijing Youth Daily* noticed us helping and even published a photo of me performing this deed. We knew such actions had limited impact, but the idea was to change minds gradually through personal encounters.

The Silk Road Cultural Association continued to host lectures on the economy, history, and literature in East Turkestan, sometimes addressing CCP policy. We invited a guy from Taiwan to talk about education, religion, and the relationship between economic development and democracy. We also organized speech contests and debates, entirely in Uyghur. By using our language at school, we felt we were asserting the status of Uyghur as an academic language. This was also a way for us to display pride in our ethnic identity. One time, a Uyghur professor used Mandarin during a lecture when he couldn't express himself in Uyghur. Some students took offense at this, but the professor was apologetic, and explained that his parents had sent him to a Mandarin-medium school. Embarrassed, he said, "I understand your feelings, but please forgive this shortcoming."

To attract Uyghur student-athletes, along with intellectuals, our group organized soccer matches between teams of students from different nationalities at Minda. Once, I arranged for a match against teams of Uyghur and Korean students. We had to raise money to rent a stadium, so a group of us worked for two days in restaurants around Minda, and gave our wages to pay the

rental fee. Some of those students were from wealthy families and had never worked before, but I didn't want to take donations from them, and expect the less wealthy students to work and give from their own pockets. When the wealthy students agreed with my proposal for everyone to work and donate their pay, I was proud. Together, we washed dishes in the restaurants. We played a good game against the Korean team and won; the victory felt shared among all the Uyghur students because everyone had contributed.

That event was a success, but on other occasions, things went wrong. Whenever I tried to set up a match, some of the faculty and administration questioned me incessantly. They made me feel like I was committing a crime, and this created a sense of anxiety. Sometimes, they would cancel our soccer matches for an invented reason, like having no electricity, or a non-functioning public address system. Other times, they would tell me I didn't have the proper forms of permission. Or they would cancel the match with no explanation. I thought, *If the school cancels a big game with no notice, how will I answer to more than a thousand spectators waiting in the stands? Maybe the school's purpose is to frustrate us, so that we will give up, and not pursue anything?* Fortunately, only small matches were cancelled, and no one ever blamed me for circumstances beyond my control. My classmates consistently reaffirmed their support for my organization.

During summer break, for the five years I was in Beijing, I would return to East Turkestan. I always felt nervous because Beijing and East Turkestan were like different countries, and I had to adjust my habits of thought and behavior when moving between them. In Beijing, we had a degree of freedom of speech and expression. Even though there were limits, I could say much that was on my mind. East Turkestan was totally different. If you criticized the CCP or any political figures in East Turkestan, people would be shocked, and ask, "How can you say this?" Topics that were openly discussed in Beijing were taboo in East Turkestan.

Like most of the Uyghur students, I would stay at Minda through the winter break. Our campus had a different feel in the winter because most of the Chinese students would return home to celebrate the Chinese New Year. Usually, things were quiet, but during the winter break of my final semester in college, an incident occurred in East Turkestan that would change our lives at Minda and end the Silk Road Cultural Association.

To give some background, in the 1980s and 1990s, the Chinese colonization of Ghulja (Yining), and its prefecture, Ili, in northwest East Turkestan, caused many Uyghur men to lose their jobs. Unemployed and dejected, some Uyghur men turned to alcohol, drugs, and other vices. *Meshrep*, a traditional gathering where men recite poetry, play music, dance, and talk, started growing in popularity to counterbalance Uyghur despair.²⁰ And many *meshrep* began to invoke Islam to prohibit destructive behaviors. The CCP had tolerated these gatherings for many years, but fearing political rivalry and influence, banned *meshrep* in 1995. Many *meshrep* continued in secret, but the groups occasionally appeared in public, sometimes playing soccer against each other. On one of these occasions, the CCP cancelled a game. And in response, several hundred Uyghurs marched through the city and protested in the main plaza. The CCP changed their position on *meshrep* after that, making a distinction between types of *meshrep*, allowing for secular ones, and prohibiting those that were associated with Islam. Many *meshrep* leaders were arbitrarily arrested, such as Abdul Helil, who was jailed in 1996, and later killed in prison.

On February 5, 1997, hundreds of Uyghurs in Ghulja gathered at city intersections to protest the arrest of their relatives and friends. The CCP brutally suppressed this demonstration with clubs, water cannons, and tear gas; many Uyghurs were killed and hundreds were arrested.²¹ Uyghur students from Ghulja were detained and interrogated. All Uyghur student groups at Minda were subsequently dissolved.

The Chinese police tried to turn one of my classmates into an informer because he worked at a restaurant that was owned by a Uyghur from Ghulja. But the student refused, saying, “I cannot do that. If you ask me about me, I can tell you about me, but about my colleagues, my boss, and the Uyghurs in Beijing from Ghulja, I cannot provide their personal information for you.” That classmate was arrested and jailed for several days. Upon release, he was scorned by anyone affiliated with the CCP.

After the winter break, Ismail Ehmet, the highest-ranking Uyghur in the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, came to Minda to lecture the Uyghur students on the situation in Ghulja.

²⁰ See Harris (2008) and Pawan, Dawut, and Kurban (2017) for discussions on the role and function of *meshrep* in Uyghur society.

²¹ For more information on the Ghulja Massacre, see Amnesty International’s report, *People’s Republic of China: Gross Violations of Human Rights in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region* (1999).

He started speaking in Mandarin, but a Chinese administrator, knowing our language preference, suggested that Ismail switch to Uyghur. Ismail protested, saying, “If I speak Uyghur, you won’t understand,” but the Chinese administrator said that a bilingual teacher would translate Uyghur into Mandarin for him.

I was aggravated with Ismail’s choice to use Mandarin, and his ignorance about our ability to translate – at Minda, we had bilingual professors who had superior bilingual Uyghur-Mandarin language skills. When Ismail did not speak Uyghur, and capitulated only at the request of a Chinese administrator, this caused us shame. Before this meeting, most of us were intimidated because of his status in the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, but when Ismail demonstrated his subservience to his Chinese counterpart, it was clear that Ismail was a nobody.

After switching to Uyghur, Ismail went on to deliver his remarks. He began by listing places in East Turkestan that he had visited, such as Kashgar and Hotan, where he observed that Uyghurs were lazy, uninterested in work, and reliant on the CCP. Ismail claimed that because we are lazy, because we are backward, and because we are religious, Uyghurs could not catch up with Chinese people. He then segued to the situation in Ghulja, also describing the protestors as lazy and backward. To this, he added that the protestors were separatists and enemies of the peace. Ismail told us that the Western media was twisting facts about what happened and that there were no civilian casualties. According to him, the People’s Liberation Army had defended the citizens of Ghulja in accordance with CCP law.

Ismail said that Uyghurs had no reason to criticize the CCP because, due to historical and geographical reasons, we were the cause of our problems. Uyghurs needed to be somebody else. Ismail offered himself, the highest-ranking Uyghur in the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, as proof of what could be achieved if we took the opportunities provided for us by the CCP.

To create a point of comparison, Ismail spoke of his travels in Australia, and concluded that Australians didn’t have favorable policies for ethnic minorities. He said that Australia didn’t provide preferential treatment for ethnic minorities who wanted to enter government. And he boasted of criticizing a member of the Australian Parliament, saying, “I’m a minister in China, but does your country have an ethnic minority minister?” Ismail wanted to impress upon the Uyghur students that the CCP policy for ethnic minorities was the best in the world.

Ismail also tried to show that East Turkestan had been exploited by foreigners in the past. He said that in the late nineteenth century, a caravan of Indians, sent by the British government, came to Kashgar and Hotan. They made commercial agreements with Uyghur community leaders, set up bazaars, and because of low duties, became rich through trade with our people. Our local businessmen could not profit like the foreigners.

Most of what Ismail had said was senseless, so after the meeting, we discussed only his last point. Ismail was right that East Turkestan had been exploited by foreigners in the past. But he failed to complete the story and discuss how the Chinese had simply realized the ambitions of other foreign governments, by thoroughly colonizing East Turkestan. Yes, Ismail was right. Foreigners did become rich and local Uyghur businesspeople could not compete. But the current crop of foreigners were Chinese!

* * * * *

When I arrived at college, I wanted to be a writer, and through my writings, influence Uyghurs. I spent one year writing, but the university did not encourage this. I also felt that writing might not be the most efficient way to solve problems that affected Uyghurs. I then thought I could make an impact as a university professor, through teaching, but was concerned that I would only reach a small number of students. My real wish was to continue the work I had begun with Uyghur student groups, and explore ways to improve the social well-being of Uyghurs. By the end of my senior year at college, I still hadn't committed to a future path.

In 1997, after graduating from Minda, I put my social organization and development interests on hold, and took the entrance exam for graduate school, but didn't pass. I then went to Kashgar and Urumchi to look for a job, but found nothing. I had to wait another year before taking the exam again. During that time, the CCP arranged for me to be a translator in Doletbagh, a town about five kilometers southeast of Kashgar.

Doletbagh: My sad history repeating in front of me

My assignment in Doletbagh was to translate for a Chinese guy whose job was to spread CCP propaganda. I spent six months with him in 1998, from January to June, but didn't learn much about him other than that he had served in the army for a few years, and liked to curse.

That Chinese guy was sent to Doletbagh because rural Uyghurs, most of them elderly farmers, were oblivious to CCP propaganda. The CCP thought that the rural Uyghurs were not able to understand the propaganda in the newspapers, but I found that the Uyghur in the newspaper was different from the Uyghur used by the people. This newspaper Uyghur was literally translated from Chinese, and included neologisms, idioms, and slogans that were unusual or foreign to Uyghur culture.²² Take, for example, the slogan, *shao sheng haizi, duo yang zhu* (have fewer children, raise more pigs). A direct translation of this slogan would greatly offend Muslims, because Islam forbids the consumption of pork, so I had to use circumlocution. This was the case for many topics, whether I was talking about things the CCP wanted to promote, such as the Uyghur acceptance of Han migrants, or things the CCP was trying to discourage, such as Uyghur aspirations for independence. It was difficult to present CCP propaganda in an intelligible way, and this pressure was compounded by the imploring eyes of Uyghur farmers, who had to pass an exam on CCP ideology and policy to be released from these indoctrination sessions. I did all I could to help them escape these meetings as soon as possible.

When I wasn't translating nonsense, I voluntarily taught Uyghur primary school kids how to read and write in Uyghur. I felt compelled to do this because many of these children had been cheated out of an education – their schools were open only three or four months out of the year. In this charade of a school system, the students hadn't developed Uyghur literacy skills, so I sought to fill this need.

The kids were happy to learn Uyghur with me, but they made comments that caused great concern. First, they questioned the usefulness of learning how to read and write in Uyghur when Mandarin was the main language of school. And second, though they identified as Uyghur, they were unfamiliar with Uyghur culture and history. For example, the kids didn't know that Uyghurs had used an alphabet-based movable type for printing as far back as the fourteenth century. Mother tongue literacy and cultural knowledge is a source of pride, but many of the school children did not know things about their heritage, and thus were precluded from being able to value them.

²² Dwyer referred to this language as “a kind of Uyghur ‘governmentese’ that can be far removed from modern standard Uyghur” (2005, 48).

I tried to teach the kids material from their textbooks, but saw that the books were filled with mistranslations. Therefore, I had to correct their books or find acceptably written materials. This experience helped me realize why I had little enthusiasm for math, science, history, and politics in my youth. I wasn't just distracted by the textbook pictures of Chinese people and places, and the references to China and Chinese culture. Just as significant, my learning had been hindered by poor Mandarin-Uyghur translation. When I was in Beijing, I forgot about my past, but when I came to Doletbagh, a place that reminded me of my childhood, I found my sad history repeating in front of me. In some cases, the textbooks had been translated from English to Chinese, and then from Chinese to Uyghur. The garbled language was causing a problem in communication, and undermining the students' ability to learn.

My education differed from the education available to the Uyghur students of Doletbagh in only one meaningful way: The schools were transitioning to Mandarin much earlier, and by senior high school, Mandarin was the language of instruction for all courses, except Uyghur language arts. I saw myself in those kids – their disconnection with the course materials and the resulting boredom. I also found that most Uyghur students were enthusiastic about their Uyghur literature course. When asked why, they responded as I would have in my youth – Uyghur literature was the only course that dealt with topics connected to their home and community culture.

During my six months in Doletbagh, I went to many villages and spoke with many families about their children's experience at school. And through these conversations, a theme emerged: The objectives of the education system were misaligned with the needs of the people. Though school was in session for only a part of the year, it was compulsory when open, and operated as a site for political and cultural indoctrination. The CCP was using the education system as a tool to spread propaganda and Sinicize Uyghur children – to marginalize their Uyghur identity and traditions and reorient them to Chinese culture. The parents were not happy with this because they could not participate in their children's education. And they had no way to address this grievance. The students felt alienated because they were not represented in educational materials. The poorly translated textbooks only compounded these issues. Neither the CCP nor the Uyghur parents and students were benefiting from this muddled situation.

I felt that school knowledge should build upon knowledge and experiences from the home and neighborhood. This reinforcement would allow students to learn deeply, participate in, and contribute to society. But the CCP was ignoring the cultural knowledge of Uyghur communities. When Uyghur students tried to discuss things that they learned in school, such as Chinese historical figures, with their parents or others in their neighborhood, no one knew what they were talking about. Another problem was that Uyghur students couldn't recognize themselves in characters from Chinese works of fiction or non-fiction. Role models from Chinese culture are remote from Uyghur culture, including their values and historical memory, so they didn't resonate.

This disjunction causes trouble because Uyghur students don't learn how to live in society. I felt Uyghur students should study Uyghur historical figures and folk heroes at school because this type of knowledge exists at home and in the neighborhood. Uyghur students need to examine the lives of noble Uyghur role models and characters they can relate to. In effect, the marginalization of Uyghur culture at school sends a message that Uyghur culture has no place and no value in the education system. And this marginalization seemed at odds with stated CCP policy goals to improve schools and invigorate the economy in East Turkestan. The school system is disrupting the intergenerational transmission of language and culture, so Uyghur students are being disadvantaged of opportunities for achievement.

I was inspired to solve this education problem and began imagining the creation of a school. I wanted to make a curriculum that wasn't steeped in propaganda. And I wanted to build upon the cultural knowledge that Uyghur kids brought from home. I reasoned that when children begin their formal education, they already have a reservoir of linguistic and cultural knowledge. The purpose of my school would be to expand upon this knowledge. If kids spoke social Uyghur with their relatives and friends, my school would help them learn academic Uyghur. My vision also had a reciprocal component – I wanted students to bring home what they learned in school and discuss ideas with their relatives and contribute to their families. If students lived in a rural, agrarian area, they would learn something in school about farming, and then share this information with their families.

This idea of mutual reinforcement would extend to all subjects. History would include the study of Uyghur historical figures. And literature would include the study of Uyghur poetry and

prose. I envisioned Uyghur students bringing knowledge from home to school, where we engaged in critical inquiry, and then continuing these discussions from school at home, where parents would have something meaningful to say about the lives of Uyghur political leaders like Ehmetjan Qasimi, the works of Uyghur writers like Yusuf Khas Hajib, and the deeds of Uyghur folk heroes like Sadir Palwan and Nuzugum. These conversations would validate knowledge and strengthen bonds across generations. I felt that, only then, could we say that education had succeeded.

The school of my imagination was to be multilingual, with instruction in Uyghur, Mandarin, and English. For Uyghur textbooks, I envisioned translating source material that was linguistically close to Uyghur, such as Turkish. Or producing better translations of Chinese texts. Or writing and publishing our own Uyghur textbooks. The key factor was that the content needed to be progressive. I hadn't worked out all the details, but my objective was clear: to resist Chinese linguistic and cultural imperialism and provide an alternative for Uyghurs to the colonial CCP education system.

* * * * *

While in Doletbagh, I was notified that I had passed the graduate entrance exam and was accepted to Xinjiang University (known colloquially as Xinda) in Urumchi. But a conflict with a CCP leader nearly derailed my plan. The problem was that, sometimes I went to rural villages to translate for local CCP guys, and required a car, food, and lodging. I needed a car because many of the villages were remote. I needed food because, even though Uyghurs invited us to eat at their homes, I couldn't accept. It would have been awkward to bring along and eat next to CCP guys, who were always with me. And I needed lodging because I had no office, and being an annoyance to the farmers, no one offered me a place to sleep. The farmers had good reason to hate us; on several occasions, we entered and illegally searched their homes for books, VCDs, and DVDs related to history, religion, and separatism. And then, we lectured them on nonsense and prevented them from doing their work.

I requested money for these things from a CCP leader but was refused. Instead, the CCP leader called me into his office. And in front of other CCP guys, he criticized me, saying that the Communist Party had paid my college tuition and provided for me. I corrected him, saying, "You didn't send me to school. My parents sent me to school and paid my tuition. This has nothing to

do with the Communist Party.” The CCP leader was incensed. He said, “If that’s what you think, then just leave. We won’t give you your salary.” So I said, “Okay. I don’t want your salary. I just want to go. I don’t want to be your Uyghur cadre. I don’t want to stay here anymore.” And with that, I walked out his door.

This confrontation came back to haunt me in two ways. First, because files are kept on everyone, my fight with the CCP leader was documented, and according to this official, unresolved. Such circumstances are nettlesome because an insult to a CCP leader is construed as an insult to the CCP itself. Second, I needed permission from the CCP leader to be released from my assignment as a translator and begin my studies. There was no getting around this. Before starting my graduate program, I had to send my file to Xinda, but when I returned to the CCP leader and asked for his approval, I was denied.

Seeking advice, I told my eldest brother about my situation, and he offered to intervene. On our first visit to the CCP leader, my brother, who didn’t speak Mandarin fluently at the time, recited some phrases that he must have practiced many times at home. He said, “Sorry for this problem,” and, “My brother made mistakes,” and, “As a brother, I didn’t guide him well.” The CCP leader refused his apology and we had to make several return trips. On each occasion, I felt bad because my brother was lowering himself in supplication, like a second-class citizen. Even now, every time I think of my brother bowing in front of that arrogant Chinese guy, I feel sad for putting him in that position. Eventually, the CCP leader relented, and amended the confrontation in my file as resolved. He also granted me permission to quit my job and resume my studies. With this conflict amended, I sent my documents to Xinda and was officially accepted to graduate school.

Urumchi: Education for assimilation

In Doletbagh, I had developed a sensitivity to ideology and propaganda in educational materials, so when I received the materials for my graduate courses, I looked at them through this frame of reference. The books were translated from Russian and filled with propaganda in support of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In adherence to the party line, the Russian sources claimed that Uyghur authors of antiquity hated religion and god. The same Uyghur authors were described as proponents of materialism and opponents of idealism, according to

Marxist definitions of these terms. That is, the Uyghur authors were celebrated for analyzing reality in terms of their actual conditions, and not ideal conditions.

Russian scholars used the Uyghur texts to push their agenda, promoting strong class identity, disdain for the rich, and solidarity with the poor, but they often revealed an ignorance of Uyghur culture and economic conditions, resulting in fraught anachronisms and clunky pronouncements. For example, one book tried to apply the Marxist theory of class to an eighteenth century Uyghur narrative. The Russian claimed that one character, a farmer, had been praised because of his status as a poor peasant. The Russian did not know that, in agrarian Uyghur societies of eighteenth century East Turkestan, many farmers owned their farms, and thus controlled their means of production. Many farmers were not exploited like typical proletariat in industrial societies, so they could not be categorially praised as an opposing force to the bourgeoisie. The Russians lacked any sort of nuance in their analysis.

Most of the professors followed the books faithfully, and would say things like, “This is our famous Uyghur writer from long ago, and they wrote about things just like Marx and just like Mao Zedong.” They took every opportunity to emphasize connections with communism. I would sit in class and think, *Why am I studying these things? What’s the relationship between Mao Zedong and this Uyghur writer from the thirteenth century? What’s going on here?*

There were some genuine academics in my department, a small number of young scholars who did not feel obliged to force communist ideology into every discussion. I studied under Eset Sulaiman, who is now a translator and reporter for Radio Free Asia’s Uyghur Service. Eset had earned his doctorate at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, so his approach to education was more liberal. Another teacher, Hormetjan Abdurahman taught Sufism, using primary Sufi texts. Hormetjan was proficient in Russian and used academic materials from Russia, but not books biased toward communism. Those guys were good, but they were new and few, so lacked power and influence.

* * * * *

I started at Xinda right before the school replaced Uyghur with Mandarin as the language of instruction. That policy was instituted in 2002, but the language shift was underway before then. Azad Sultan, the vice president of Xinda, was at the helm of this movement. The CCP

considered him to be a model Uyghur, and had rewarded him with powerful positions, first as the president of Xinjiang Normal University, and then as president of the Xinjiang Federation of Literary and Art Circles.

Azad was both an administrator and professor at Xinda, and I took one of his classes. He knew that we were questioning the change from Uyghur to Mandarin as the language of instruction, and Azad defended this policy with some nonsense. He said, “If you don’t love the Chinese language, you don’t love your Uyghur nation.” To this I thought, *What’s wrong with you?*

One of my professors from Minda in Beijing, Abdurup Polat, heard about this issue and wrote a letter to Azad, imploring him to reconsider his position. Abdurup challenged the legality of this new policy by citing articles from the PRC Constitution, Education Law, and Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law. Article 4 of the Constitution guarantees that “the people of all nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own ways and customs.” Article 12 of the Education Law states that “the Chinese language, both oral and written, shall be the basic oral and written language for education in schools and other educational institutions.” But it also allows that “schools or other educational institutions which mainly consist of students from minority nationalities may use in education the language of the respective nationality or the native language commonly adopted in that region.” Article 37 of the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law explicitly decrees that “schools (classes) and other educational organizations recruiting mostly ethnic minority students should, whenever possible, use textbooks in their own languages and use these languages as the media of instruction.” Abdurup argued that these legal documents constrained Azad from changing the language of instruction at Xinda.

Abdurup also addressed the implications of Azad’s decision. Policies initiated at Xinda, the most prestigious university in East Turkestan, have a ripple effect. By formalizing Mandarin as the language of instruction at Xinda, the entire education system of East Turkestan would eventually follow. Other Chinese government-controlled institutions would also receive greater license for not accommodating Uyghurs who lacked fluency in Mandarin or literacy in Chinese. In addition to causing social problems for Uyghurs in many areas of life, Abdurup pleaded for Azad to think about the linguistic and cultural consequences of his resolution on the Uyghur children who would become victims of his wrong decision.

Abdurup was not the only academic who voiced disapproval of Mandarin replacing Uyghur as the language of instruction at Xinda. A retired Kazakh professor of physics wrote an article, encouraging Azad to change his mind. But Azad would not be swayed. He seemed completely at ease with Uyghurs shifting to Mandarin, saying, “Now, Uyghurs think there is Uyghur, and there is Mandarin. There is a difference. After 30 years, Uyghurs won’t think about this. They will forget the language issue.”

Azad’s decision to elevate the status of Mandarin was consistent with the CCP’s agenda to Sinicize Uyghurs. When the CCP seized East Turkestan in 1949, the Chinese government was closely aligned with the Soviet Union, and they adopted the Soviet policy of national delimitation for ethnic minorities. This policy supported minority languages in a variety of ways. The CCP dispatched teams of linguists to create orthographies or revise existing scripts for minority languages, which aided literacy development. Uyghur had an established script, so this type of activity wasn’t needed, but the CCP initially did benefit Uyghur by tolerating our language, and allowing it to be used as a language of instruction in schools. The CCP also recognized the instrumental use of Uyghur because this language was their only means for winning the acceptance, or the passive acquiescence, of the Uyghur population. But by the end of the twentieth century, when the CCP had consolidated the borders of East Turkestan and dominated Uyghur society, the Uyghur language no longer served a purpose for the state. This is all consistent with Socialism with Chinese characteristics, the form of Marxism-Leninism adapted to Chinese conditions. In this ideology, minority languages are to be tolerated at one stage of development, but ultimately abandoned as ethnic minority groups are Sinicized and shift to Mandarin.

Azad’s promotion of Mandarin also advanced other CCP prerogatives. It affirmed that East Turkestan is not truly autonomous, and that the state wanted Uyghurs to adopt Han linguistic and cultural practices. The language policy change abrogated a claim from the preamble of the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law, stating, “the state’s full respect for and guarantee of ethnic minorities’ right to administer their internal affairs.”

The shift in language policy coincided with the CCP’s revision of discourse in *minzu* (ethno-national group) policy. From the 1950s until the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, the CCP had endorsed a class struggle ideology, where class identity was used to create

animosity among members of different socio-economic groups. The phrase *jieji xiongdì* (class brothers), was popularized to unify Uyghurs and Chinese people, based on proletarian class consciousness and participation in a revolutionary struggle. After the Cultural Revolution, the CCP re-examined the class struggle ideology and, finding it divisive, replaced it with an assimilationist approach, with the aspiration that Uyghurs identify, not according to class, but as members of the Chinese nation. The CCP thus targeted minority languages in their push to Sinicize ethnic minorities, in conformity with a “one language, one nation” ideology.

In pursuit of this, over the past few decades, the CCP Ministry of Education has placed thousands of Chinese teachers in East Turkestan to promote Mandarin language assimilation. But student volunteers have also come to East Turkestan on their own for short-term teaching assignments. In one such program, a group of student volunteers from Dalian University went to a rural village, Korangutal, outside of Hotan. In the village school, I observed those student volunteers instructing Uyghur kids to repeat, “*Wo shì zhongguó rén*” (I am Chinese). I thought, *Why couldn't they teach those kids to say, “This is an apple” or “I am your sister.” Why don't you use language to express relationships? Why don't you emphasize your shared humanity? Why do you teach a fantasy like, “Wo shì zhongguó rén?”* Those student volunteers were not sent by the CCP, so their actions cannot be attributed to Chinese government directives, but their choices do indicate Han chauvinism. Whatever the nature of their intentions, those student volunteers from Dalian University were facilitating assimilation through language education.

* * * * *

During my three-year program, I learned many things, but my most profoundly, I realized how the CCP uses the education system to indoctrinate students with values that are endorsed by the state. I learned that my professors from Xinda had written or translated all the Uyghur educational materials used in East Turkestan and China. And those professors were rewriting Uyghur literature to convey Socialism with Chinese characteristics. I reflected on my own education, and had to admit that much of what I learned in school was filtered through an ideological lens that focused attention on a certain set of values. Some of those values were surely good, but what perspectives had I absorbed that solely promoted the interests of the CCP? My identity, to a great extent, was based on relationships with Uyghur historical figures and folk heroes, knowledge obtained largely through books, but now aware of the authors' intents, I had

to question the veracity of everything I knew. This revelation cast my identity in doubt, and I felt a profound sense of injustice.

I wrote an article for a student journal criticizing the ideological approach to the study of Uyghur literature, and asked why we had to filter our interpretations through this lens. I questioned why we had to praise writers who allegedly agreed with Marx or Hegel, and condemn writers who allegedly disagreed. Why did we have to honor Uyghur philosophers who described reality in materialist terms and disparage Uyghur philosophers who described reality in idealist terms? Uyghur writers were labeled revolutionary and revered or branded anti-revolutionary and despised. Even fictional characters received this same ideological treatment.

I also identified errors in categorization. Having read original texts in Old Uyghur and Chagatai, I found evidence of religious belief and faith among some of the Uyghur authors who were exalted for being atheist. I wanted to know the justification for this biased view. I offered an alternative approach, suggesting that we view those Uyghur authors as human beings who were concerned with exploring and describing the human condition. I recognize that all texts have an ideological dimension but felt we should learn to recognize and examine ideologies, not just use them to confirm biases.

Upon reading my article, my professor was angered and called me a troublemaker. In retaliation, he refused to accept my master's thesis, which periled my graduation. As my eldest brother had done for me in Doletbagh, my father came to my defense in Urumchi. And like before, my father adhered to an apologetic script, telling my professor, "Sorry. My son made mistakes. He wrote something that did not support your ideas. I am sorry about that." My father also brought some gifts, which pleased my professor. After this, my master's thesis, which was formerly unacceptable, was now adequate. I hadn't changed a single word.

Lanzhou: Are you bin Laden?

I graduated from Xinda in 2001, and wanted to continue my studies, but not at any university in East Turkestan, where Uyghur literature was analyzed through the prism of Socialism with Chinese characteristics. This approach had skewed my education and, more generally, corrupted the Uyghur legacy. I aspired to research Uyghur literature and publish in a university atmosphere that wasn't clouded with the detritus of CCP ideology. To achieve this

aim, I knew I needed to go abroad. But this was not simple – the CCP heavily restricts the granting of passports to Uyghurs, especially those who reside in East Turkestan.

My strategy to get a passport hinged on a hope that my application would be treated more favorably if I resided in inner China. And because residency depended on employment, I sought a teaching position at Northwest Nationalities College (now called Northwest University for Nationalities, and known colloquially as Xibei Minda) in Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu Province. I was qualified to teach in two of the degree programs at Xibei Minda: Uyghur for Chinese students, and Mandarin for Uyghur students. After passing an interview and an exam, I was offered a job. Things were looking up – I was happy to be teaching and making progress toward my goal to study abroad. But then 9/11 happened.

The CCP has always seized opportunities to oppress Uyghurs, and I knew the Chinese government would embrace the US-led Global War on Terror to advance and justify discriminatory policies for Muslims in East Turkestan. I also presumed that this attitude would be adopted and replicated by many Chinese people.

Though I wouldn't describe the Chinese population of Lanzhou as cosmopolitan, I felt they treated Uyghurs with relative fairness. But after 9/11, there was a change in how Chinese people regarded me. I will never forget the time a Chinese girl, who must have been eight-years-old, asked me, "Are you bin Laden?" I looked at her with kindness and said, "I'm not bin Laden. Bin Laden is evil. He killed more than 3,000 people in the US, and his army killed many others in Afghanistan. He's a symbol of evil forces. I'm Muslim, but I'm different." I told her that, in the streets of Lanzhou, there are Chinese thieves, and there are Chinese bad guys, but they are not representative of Chinese people. So, I am not a representative of terrorists. I explained this to her very carefully, very sincerely. But I thought, *If an eight-year-old, an innocent girl, has this idea about Muslims, what must adults think?*

Before 9/11, I had suffered discrimination for being Uyghur, and I was accustomed to this – the CCP has long characterized Uyghurs as separatists. But my encounter with that child was the first time I felt vilified because of my Muslim identity. After 9/11, the CCP stoked Islamophobia through campaigns to destroy the "three evil forces" of separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism (Dupont 2007). At the same time, the CCP began to emphasize the Muslim identity of Uyghurs. Prior to 9/11, Uyghurs were identified as an ethnic minority group,

but we were now identified as a Muslim ethnic minority group. This shift in language precipitated a shift in the Chinese national psyche.

Because Muslims were now an international enemy, all Uyghurs became suspected terrorists. For Chinese, who regard our names, language, and appearance as foreign, Uyghurs are obvious targets. I remember visiting an ultranationalist Han website and asking for the opportunity to clarify misconceptions about Uyghurs. Someone responded by sending me a picture of a Uyghur guy eating a pig's head. There were no words, just this picture as an answer to my sincere request.

It was depressing to be cast as one type of enemy, a separatist, and then be recast as a bigger enemy, an international enemy – a Muslim. In post-9/11 Lanzhou, I was treated as suspect, but this scrutiny became more intense when terrorism was in the news. And to the misfortune of Uyghurs, terrorist activities were happening frequently, all around the globe. Whenever an attack was labelled as Islamic terrorism, the connection between Islam and violence was reinscribed, resulting in a perception of Islam as an extreme religion and its practitioners as religious extremists. Uyghurs were treated as guilty by religious association. And the conflation of the “three evil forces” (i.e. separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism) meant that Muslims were also separatists and terrorists. The CCP was creating an enemy out of us as a pretext to destroy us, and the vilification of our Islamic identity was part of this plan. The CCP wanted to make us abandon Islam by making it uncomfortable to practice our religion. When I went anywhere public, to a market or a restaurant, Chinese people would often look at me with fear, as if I were dangerous, as if I were on the verge of doing a terrible thing.

Uyghur students at Xibei Minda also suffered from discrimination. They tried to build a positive reputation, by forming a soccer association and starting a newspaper, with the intention of showing the university community that Uyghur and Chinese students had similar interests. Through these activities, the Uyghur students wanted to create spaces to demonstrate that they were human beings, not terrorists, and not bin Ladens. Drawing from my experiences at Minda in Beijing, I guided them when interacting with the administration, but ultimately, the Uyghur students at Xibei Minda were not granted permission to organize. In the absence of dialogue, we were regarded with fear and suspicion.

* * * * *

In 2004, a Hui colleague encouraged me to apply for a doctoral program at the Center for Studies of Ethnic Minorities in Northwest China at Lanzhou University. Though not independent from the CCP, this institute was appealing because the members researched ethnic minority policies. I applied to study there because I was eager to conduct research, and hadn't secured a scholarship at a university outside of China. Plus, they needed a Uyghur scholar to join their team. I took an entrance exam to demonstrate I was proficient in English, familiar with social science research methods, and knowledgeable about the history of ethnic minorities in China.

After passing the exam, I advanced to the final interview, where the admissions committee asked me to describe my dissertation topic. I said, "I want to study how Uyghurs experienced the Cultural Revolution." When one of the committee members asked me to elaborate, I responded, "First, the Cultural Revolution happened throughout China, but Uyghurs in Xinjiang experienced it differently from Chinese people in inner China. Communist ideology originated from abroad, but it was appropriated and propagated by Chinese people. When Chinese revolutionary guards demolished Chinese temples, they were destroying their own cultural heritage. In Xinjiang, it was different. From the Uyghur perspective, the Chinese government and people were demolishing Uyghur culture and replacing it with something foreign to us. There's a difference when cultural destruction is instigated by insiders or outsiders. I want to tell the story of how Uyghurs endured the Cultural Revolution."

"Second," I continued, "I want to describe how the CCP changed Uyghur culture during the Cultural Revolution. Concerning language, I want to investigate the reasons for Uyghur script revision, and the state-sponsored proliferation of Mandarin loanwords. Concerning religion and literary heritage, I want to discover the motives for burning Qur'ans and Uyghur literature. And concerning clothing, I want to know why the CCP imprisoned people like my uncle for nearly 20 years, just because he refused to make his family members dress like red guards. I want to study these issues systematically."

When I finished, the committee members traded quizzical looks with each other. Then, one said, "You are very brave, and very confident," and motioned to end the interview. As I exited, I thought, *What does this mean? Are they using code words?*

A few months later, with no contact from the committee, I contacted my Hui colleague for information on the decision, but he was evasive, and advised me to be patient. Eventually, the

admissions deadline passed and, from the institute's website, I saw that my name was not on the acceptance list. The committee didn't provide a reason, but a few months later, I was attending a conference on ethnic minority issues in northwest China, where I came across a guy who had also applied for the institute. He told me he had been accepted, and confided, "I don't want to keep a secret. You were not accepted by the institute because your dissertation topic was too sensitive for the committee to support." With this information, I understood the meanings of "brave" and "confident" when used by the committee. These terms were euphemisms for transgressive. But I was not alone in rejection – no Uyghur candidates were accepted to join the institute. So, the Center for Studies of Ethnic Minorities in Northwest China had no Uyghur scholars to research one of the largest ethnic minority groups in northwest China.

At the conference, I met another professor from that institute, who said he had observed Uyghurs in Hotan, and had concluded that they were lazy, ignorant, and backward. I approached him, saying, "I have a question for you. If you have this kind of mentality, how do you study ethnic minority groups? You characterize Uyghurs as backward and lazy and ignorant. What's your definition of backward? What's your definition of lazy? And what's your definition of ignorant? Where do these terms come from? How do you operationalize these terms and use them for ethnic minority research?" A guy from Xinda intervened and told me that my questions were irrelevant to the theme of the conference, so I received no answer.

* * * * *

Many of the scholars who were researching ethnic minority issues held views that were deeply biased. Ma Rong, from Peking University, exemplified such tendencies. For several years, he had been publishing articles that urged scholars to re-conceptualize the discourse around ethnic minorities. He said that, in the history of China, dynasties did not recognize ethnic minority groups as independent nations. Earlier rulers derived their policies from a Confucian dichotomy that distinguished the civilized Han from barbarian ethnic minority groups. Insiders and outsiders were distinguished according to the presence or absence of Han values and norms of behavior. Ma argued that the CCP had diverted from Confucianism by recognizing ethnic minority groups as having a separate genetic inheritance, place of origin, economic independence, religion, language, and other cultural practices.

Ma attributed the rise of ethnic minority problems to increased ethnic consciousness, originating from the CCP's recognition of ethnic minority groups' distinct characteristics. He said that this was the origin of our problems, and that we needed to correct this mistake, so that we didn't see non-Han groups as distinct nationalities. For Ma, the solution to the ethnic minority problem was to dilute ethnic consciousness through linguistic determinism. He proposed that ethnic assimilation could be achieved by avoiding language that emphasized ethnic differences, such as by replacing the political concept of *minzu* (ethno-national group) with *zuqun* (ethnic group), because the former term implied that ethnic groups deserve their own nations, impeding ethnic minorities from identifying as members of the *Zhonghua minzu* (Chinese nation). According to Ma, decreased attention to ethnic identity would encourage ethnic minorities to think of themselves, first and foremost, as members of the Chinese nation.

Ma couched his criticism of the CCP in reference to Confucianism – a safe orientation for an academic because this ideology is an accepted part of Chinese cultural heritage, providing a solid foundation to dispute Western ideas and elevate Chinese ideas. I was disheartened to see scholars supporting Han chauvinism, and using Han values and norms to judge other ethnic groups. These perspectives were in stark contrast to my belief in ethnic pluralism, and disdain for cultural hierarchies.

* * * * *

Few scholars in China have challenged Han supremacy, and this is partly due to a paucity of ethnic minority faculty, and a dearth of academic departments and programs for ethnic minority studies. To remedy this situation at Xibei Minda, I worked with some colleagues to establish a Department of Uyghur Language and Culture. Such a department existed at Minda in Beijing, so we felt that our school, located in a province that bordered East Turkestan, should have the same. A dean rejected our request, saying that Gansu had no Uyghurs, so our department was unnecessary. In response, I argued, “If this logic is true, then how can Indiana University and Washington University offer Uyghur language courses? And how can Ankara University in Turkey have a Uyghur Language and Literature Department?” But as I expected, no answer was given.

I also suggested that Xibei Minda reform their curriculum for Uyghur college students by offering courses that provided career options outside of Mandarin-Uyghur translation. In the past,

this narrow education could be justified because the CCP arranged employment in East Turkestan for Uyghur graduates who were competent in Mandarin-Uyghur translation. Uyghur graduates on this career track usually joined the CPP, and some became officials in East Turkestan. But by 1998, these arrangements had ended. In recognition of this, I argued that Mandarin language proficiency was no longer sufficient to obtain a job. Uyghur college students needed a foundation in linguistics, and then courses in Mandarin and English. I felt that students should use these languages as tools to read texts from humanistic fields, such as literature and philosophy. But the administration did not acknowledge the change in employment conditions, and said, “This is not our problem.”

Once, when an administrator was boasting about the number of Uyghur cadres, I asked how many Uyghur graduates had become professors or specialists. I also asked how a narrow education in communist ideology and the history of the CCP could prepare Uyghur college graduates to be productive members of their communities. These were not new questions; a Uyghur scholar named Zordun Sabir had published a book in the 1980s that took issue with education programs that served the singular purpose of cultivating ethnic minority cadres. Zordun had asked why ethnic minority students were not given opportunities for academic and intellectual development. Like Zordun fifty years earlier, my concerns were ignored.

Even in the classroom, I sometimes clashed with university officials. Once, a CCP liaison barged into my class, telling us that an election was taking place. Wanting clarity, I asked, “What are we voting for? And who are the candidates?” He said, “A name is written on this ballot. Just put it into this box.” I responded, “No. First, you are interrupting my class. I am teaching Mandarin grammar, and your election has nothing to do with this subject. Second, you can’t even tell us the meaning of the election or the positions of the candidates. You just put a name on ballots and want us to put them in a box.” I then asked my students, “Do you want to put these things in that box?” They all said, “No, we don’t want to. We just want to continue class.” The CCP liaison was flustered; he blushed and made a quick exit. I’m not sure why he didn’t just stuff the ballot boxes himself, but I certainly was not going to allow my class time to be wasted.

* * * * *

Although I had been rejected by the Center for Studies of Ethnic Minorities in Northwest China, I was successful in obtaining a scholarship from the National Overseas Studies

Foundation, funded by the Ministry of Education. Ankara University in Turkey accepted me as a visiting scholar, and my CCP-sponsored scholarship was instrumental for getting a passport. After joining the faculty at Xibei Minda, I transferred my resident ID from Upal in East Turkestan to Lanzhou. My new resident ID was an upgrade in identity because, unlike such cards issued in East Turkestan, it featured only Chinese, and no Uyghur script. This difference in script is consequential because Uyghur attracts negative attention. Both my old and new resident IDs had the same numeric code, indicating birthplace, so fair treatment was not certain. But to the CCP officials reviewing my passport application, I was not immediately regarded with suspicion – not marked immediately as a Uyghur terrorist.

By the end of 2005, I had secured the necessary documents, and was preparing to leave for Ankara, but a few days before my departure, some guys from the National Security Bureau visited my home. They asked me to collect information on Uyghurs in Turkey who were involved in politics and human rights activities. Having no reason to comply, I refused their request, which was then rephrased as a demand to cooperate. But I did not budge. I told them that I was only responsible to the Ministry of Education. Eventually they relented and went away.

Ankara: Ethno-nationalism and a counterbalance

I was inspired to study in Turkey after reading Edward Said's *Orientalism* and Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations*. Both books had been translated into Uyghur and were widely debated among Uyghur intellectuals. Edward Said prompted my interest in how Western scholarship promoted a colonial ideology about the Eastern world. I could see how Uyghur culture could be depicted as traditional and backward to justify replacement with purportedly modern and progressive Western ideas. Said helped me understand how imperial powers create cultural hierarchies as a pretext to dominate people. Turkey, at the crossroads of Asia and Europe, was fascinating because it contained elements of both East and West. Huntington was important because he described how cultural and religious identities could be a potential source of conflict. East Turkestan was a site of such conflict, and I wanted to experience life at the opposite end of Asian Islamic civilization. I must admit that my curiosity in Turkey was also stirred by my fascination with popular conspiracy theories that accused families and secret societies, such as

the Rothschilds and the Freemasons, of scheming to control the world. In these conspiracy theories, Turkey was often a site of intrigue.

After arriving in Ankara, I found that many Turkish people were familiar with Edward Said, but his ideas on imperialism were often used to fuel conspiracy theories. Some of these plots addressed past or current events. For example, whenever the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) engaged in violence, many Turkish people would accuse the CIA of clandestine support. But some of these conspiracy theories anticipated future events. I'll never forget a guy who predicted that when China became a superpower, the Confucian and Islamic worlds would join forces to defeat America, and the Western, Christian worlds. That guy was happy to meet me because he thought I was evidence of a strengthening bond between China and Turkey. He said that I was proof of this prophesy! I quickly recognized a pattern, where trouble in Turkey, extending back to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, was attributed to the machinations of the Western world. People I met from other nations, such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, also blamed Western imperialism for contemporary problems. I realized that many of the ideas I heard in East Turkestan originated, not from a careful reading of Said or Huntington, but from resentment transmitted from Turkey and other nations in the Islamic world.

I don't deny that Western powers have devastated and destabilized the Islamic world, but it seemed that Islamic governments were encouraging citizens to blame outsiders, to avoid taking responsibility for any problems. I saw that Turkey was in chaos because of internal misrule and corruption, but the people could not recognize this because the Turkish government hid the truth. Even if the truth were revealed, I suspect that many Turks would not accept it because they are consumed with nationalism. The public education system indoctrinates students to believe that Turkey is a holy nation – infallible and invincible. The fixation on supreme greatness blinds Turkish people to faults in their government.

Before coming to Turkey, I also subscribed to their national myth of greatness, and more broadly, I accepted without question the greatness of other nations in the Islamic world, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. In each case, after meeting refugees from these nations, and hearing about injustices committed by their governments, I was disappointed. Regarding Iran, I was enamored with Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the 1979 Iranian Revolution. I felt that his victory was a victory for Islam and that he had established a true Islamic state. My interest in Iran was so

strong, that in Lanzhou, I temporarily redirected my language study from English to Persian, and even translated a book written by Ali Hosseini Khamenei, another key figure in the Iranian Revolution. For six years, I applied to study at a university in Iran, but without success. This was a fortunate failure because, in Turkey, I met some refugees that had fled Iran. I learned from them how the Iranian government oppresses its citizens and violates human rights. Regarding Saudi Arabia, I was captivated by Wahhabism, the state-sponsored form of Sunni Islam, because it promoted a return to a pure and orthodox practice of Islam. But in Turkey, I also met refugees from Saudi Arabia, people who suffered discrimination because they did not follow Wahhabism. I had respected Turkish nationalism, Iranian political Islam, and Arabian Wahhabism, but through observations and conversations with dissidents, I became disillusioned with these governments.

In retrospect, I understand why I was searching for alternative political structures. The CCP domination of East Turkestan has devastated the Uyghur people, and I needed a model for aspiration. Of the Islamic governments I researched, Saudi Arabia held no appeal because power was too concentrated in an absolute monarchy. Egypt was also unattractive because the government functioned like a dictatorship. I felt that Iran and Turkey were better models because the governments of these nations claimed to combine Islam with democracy. And most of all, they claimed to hold free and fair elections. These places were captivating because I had long imagined what the fusion of religion and government might look like in East Turkestan. But when I learned that the Iranian government has an appointed supreme leader, above an elected president, at the top of the power structure, my admiration for that system dissipated. I also discovered that the Islamic Republic of Iran resembled the CCP in their restrictions on freedom of expression. But sometimes this resulted in opposite regulatory extremes. To take the hijab as an example, women in Iran must wear a hijab by law, while women in East Turkestan are not permitted by fiat to wear a hijab in many public places.

My admiration for Turkey diminished after experiencing the bureaucratic, insular, and antiquated nature of Ankara University. I first encountered Turkish bureaucracy when trying to get an apartment on campus. No one seemed capable or interested in helping me, and every office sent me to another office, where I was rejected because of opaque procedure, until after a few days, I gave up and had to find a place off campus. This was one of many instances where

administrators used byzantine regulations as an excuse to avoid work. I felt Ankara University was insular because their website had no English version. To me, this represented a general disinterest in the world outside of Turkey. And the school seemed antiquated because there was no time limit for degree programs. Occasionally, I wondered if I was in a madrasa or a secular university. Taking Ankara University, a public university, and the first higher education institution established in the Turkish Republic, as a microcosm of wider administrative control, I concluded that Turkey too was not a model worthy of emulation.

* * * * *

Turkish people accepted me as a fellow Turk, so I enjoyed respite from discrimination, but I continued to experience injustice through empathy with Kurds. In Ankara, some Turkish people distinguished urban Kurds from rural Kurds, and favored urban Kurds because they had lost markers of Kurdish ethnicity, such as their language. After meeting some Kurdish people, I learned how they suffered from anti-Kurdish sentiment, and why the PKK was fighting for equal rights and Kurdish autonomy in Turkey.

I know that discrimination can be viral, so when my expatriate Uyghur friends began to disparage Kurds, I always challenged them. Once, while visiting the tomb of Mehmet Imin Bughra, an East Turkestan independence leader, one Uyghur friend lost his camera, and he immediately blamed Kurds. When I asked how he knew the ethnicity of the thief, he said resolutely, “Kurds are thieves.” I pointed out that Chinese people have the same attitude towards Uyghurs. I said, “If you take the dominant Turkish attitude towards Kurds, then you cannot criticize Chinese people for discriminating against us. Both Kurds and Uyghurs are oppressed peoples, and we have a shared experience. Just because we are Turks, we cannot adopt the Turkish perspective that Kurds are thieves and separatists. If you adopt this perspective, then you need to accept that the Chinese have marked you as a separatist. That is only fair.”

* * * * *

I had become cynical with Turkish nationalism soon after arriving in Turkey, but it wasn't until the end of my stay that I realized that my apprehension was linked to China. In both countries, the leadership encourages blind nationalism to divert attention from government incompetency and corruption. And both countries reward majority ethnocentric tendencies, and

oppose ideas, cultures, and peoples that threaten to upset the social and political order. I saw this ideology as a source of problems for Uyghurs in East Turkestan and China, and Kurds in Turkey.

Despite my disappointment with Turkey as a political model, I was heartened to discover an educational model that was being used to combat the ethno-nationalism promoted in the public education system. Many Turkish students took courses at private Gulen schools in the afternoon and on the weekend. Inspired by the teachings of Fethullah Gulen, members of the Gulen movement established these schools to provide a progressive education, including charitable work and interfaith dialog, founded in Islamic values like empathy, compassion, and altruism. These schools also promoted democracy, human rights, globalization, and the integration of Islamic tradition and modernity through publications and student organizations. I saw the Gulen schools as a model for import to East Turkestan – a model to base my imagined school upon. I reasoned that, even if the CCP used their education system to Sinicize Uyghurs, my supplementary school could serve as a counterbalance – a site for engagement with important, but neglected subjects and ideals.

* * * * *

At the end of 2005, after six months at Ankara University, I returned to Xibei Minda in Lanzhou and resumed teaching. The Chinese Ministry of Education had asked me to write an extensive report, about 30,000 words, describing my experience as a visiting scholar in Turkey, but when I returned to China, no one was interested in reading it. I met with the president of Xibei Minda, and gave him a summary of my report, telling him about my Turkic language study. But when I finished, he said, “Your Mandarin is better than before.” At first, I didn’t know why he was focusing on my Mandarin skills instead of the content of my speech. And I wondered why the ministry funded an international scholarship for six months, just to judge my proficiency in Mandarin. Then, I realized that they were not concerned with advancing my education, or producing knowledge. Their only concern was to ensure that I was highly proficient in Mandarin. This was the same reason they rejected my suggestion to offer content-based courses for Uyghur students. The administration was not going to provide Uyghurs with an education equitable to Chinese students. They only wanted to produce Uyghurs who were compliant and proficient in Mandarin. I was not going to change their mission. So, in 2007, I quit my job at Xibei Minda and returned to East Turkestan.

Urumchi: For the love of community

While living in Ankara and Lanzhou, I had been separated from my wife, Mihrigul, whom I had married in 2005, and our daughter, Masuda, so I was happy to be living with my family in Urumchi beyond summer and winter vacations. But this positive change in my personal life came along with negative turns in my professional life. Although I found a business partner who wanted to invest in my school, we didn't have support from the Uyghur community – no one took my idea seriously. So instead of pursuing my dream, I secured adjunct teaching positions to cobble together an income. For two years, I taught Mandarin and courses on cultural studies to Uyghur students at Xinjiang University of Finance and Economics (known colloquially as Caida).²³ And for one year, I taught Uyghur to international students at Xinjiang Agricultural University.

At Caida, as a member of the Journalism Department, I noticed a deficiency in the students' education – they were completing their bachelor's degrees without learning how to write newspaper articles or produce reports for broadcast media. To address this need, I encouraged my students to seek opportunities at news organizations, such as *Xinjiang Daily* and Xinjiang Television, but the chair of my department told me to stop, that these activities were inappropriate and against school policy. I asked to see the regulation that forbade students from interning at news organizations, but he just repeated his invented rule. I tried to reason with him, telling him that the students needed to obtain practical knowledge of journalism. But he disagreed, saying that the Journalism Department was under the Chinese Department, and that the students needed to focus on developing their proficiency in Mandarin and knowledge of Chinese literature.

With this impasse, I did not venture to broach another issue – my problem with compulsory meetings for Uyghur students every Wednesday. At these gatherings, Uyghur students endured lectures about avoiding some behaviors, such as donning headwear, like doppas for men or head scarves for women, and embracing others, like befriending Chinese students. I

²³ Cultural studies in the context of Chinese higher education has nothing in common with the Western field sharing the same name. The Western field of cultural studies is concerned with cultural analysis, and focusing on the political dynamics of contemporary culture. In China, courses on cultural studies provide basic descriptions of cultural practices, with no attention to how these practices relate to wider systems of power.

wanted to challenge the purpose of these meetings, and tell the department chair that these topics had nothing to do with journalism, but given our sour relationship, I held back.

After my initiative to introduce extra-curricular student learning experiences was blocked, a group of journalism students sought an explanation from the chair of the department, but he wouldn't discuss this matter with them. Dissatisfied, the students petitioned the university CCP leadership to resume their internships in journalism but had no success. In retaliation, the administration did not permit me to accept an invitation to participate in an international conference in Turkey. They also prevented me from pursuing a doctorate in Beijing, with the circular reasoning that I was an assistant professor, and doctoral students needed to be associate professors, and associate professors should have doctorates.

I thought the Caida administration intended for me to remain and teach Mandarin, but an encounter with the head CCP university liaison forced me to rethink this. On one occasion, he asked me to come to his office to fix a problem with his computer. While I was working, he loudly farted right next to me. He also spat on the floor at my feet. The CCP liaison had been an army officer in Kashgar for more than 20 years, and called me *laoxiang*, a term of endearment used by people from the same hometown, so I knew he was consciously offending me. I also realized I was no longer welcome when the chair of the Journalism Department began reducing my course load.

* * * * *

I first heard of the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program in 2003, when I was in Lanzhou.²⁴ After getting my passport to study in Turkey, a world of possibilities opened for subsequent international education. I scoured the internet for organizations that provided scholarships for students holding Chinese passports. Because Ford Foundation scholarship applicants needed four years of employment, I was not eligible at that time. But by the time my work situation began unravelling in Urumchi, I had met this criterion, and could consider applying. This decision was difficult – I was conflicted due to my happiness at home and

²⁴ The Ford Foundation's International Fellowships Program operated between 2001 and 2013. This program funded graduate-level education for more than 4,300 students from 22 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Russia, and the Middle East.

unending misery at work – but ultimately decided to apply because I needed to further my knowledge of linguistics to address the educational needs of my community.

I wanted to study linguistics because many publications, including propaganda and educational materials, in East Turkestan were mistranslated from Mandarin to Uyghur, and I recognized this as a form of injustice. As a student, I knew that my academic achievement had been hampered by the poor translation of textbooks. As a translator, I knew how the villagers of Doletbagh suffered when chastised by CCP personnel, for not understanding mistranslated propaganda. And as a teacher, I had tried to teach the gibberish that I had encountered as a child. I knew the negative consequences of mistranslation, but I wanted to be able to explain, in technical terms, why Mandarin words could not be substituted with Uyghur words with no attention to semantic nuances, and how differences in Mandarin and Uyghur syntax and pragmatics affect meaning. The mistranslated texts were obstacles, hindering communication and disrupting Uyghur lives in the classroom and other domains. I wanted to learn how to document and analyze this phenomenon.

Other questions I intended to investigate belonged to the fields of education and linguistic anthropology. I wanted to research and describe the effects of educational initiatives and policy changes, such as the establishment, in 2000, of boarding schools in inner China for Uyghur high school students, and in 2002, the shift from Uyghur to Mandarin by universities in East Turkestan. For Uyghur children educated in Mandarin, I wanted to document the disruptive consequences for the intergenerational transmission of Uyghur language and culture. And concerning my imagined school, I wanted to learn how to devise a curriculum for mother tongue-based multilingual education.

In August 2008, I was awarded a Ford Foundation scholarship, but this news came with one caveat: My options for graduate school would be determined by my English language proficiency. If my TOEFL score were high enough, I could study in the US. But if I did not meet the standard, my school choices would be limited to other countries, such as Thailand or the Philippines. After much practice, I achieved the target TOEFL score, and was admitted to a master's program in linguistics at the University of Kansas.

* * * * *

When I informed the administration at Caida about my scholarship, they disapproved, and said that if I were to accept it, I shouldn't expect to resume my teaching position upon return. So I quit my job. In February 2009, I went to Beijing for a leadership training organized by the Ford Foundation. There, over a three-month period, we discussed strategies for academic success, including resource management, how to conduct a research project, and how to publish in scholarly journals. We also talked about personal development, and how to set goals to realize our potential.

After the training, I returned to East Turkestan. I knew I was unwanted at Caida, but I had to go there to complete some paperwork. I also wanted to confront the chair of the Journalism Department. In my absence, he had spread rumors among the faculty, saying that the Ford Foundation was a Christian-based organization, with aims to proselytize Christianity in East Turkestan. I knew where this was coming from – some Uyghurs in Urumchi think that people convert to Christianity for money. I asked the Journalism chair to explain why he spread these rumors and why he wanted my Uyghur colleagues to think that I betrayed my religion for money. He denied everything. It was then that I realized that my detractors would use any means to demonize my reputation. This exchange further strengthened my resolve to leave and study abroad.

At the end of this meeting, still feeling an obligation to my students, I took a gamble, and asked for permission to present them material from the leadership training. My request was denied, but my students persisted, and arranged for me to speak in a park next to Caida.

I accepted their request and delivered my lecture in the park, but at the conclusion, I was approached by one of my colleagues, who told me that a guy from the regional Religious Affairs Bureau was looking for me. I felt nervous because I did not know anyone from that bureau. When I walked out of the park, I saw a man get out of a police car, shouting that he was with the Public Security Bureau of Xinjiang.²⁵ Then, another two guys exited the police car, saying they

²⁵ The Public Security Bureau is a local or provincial CCP office administered by the Ministry of Public Security. Public Security Bureau officers are essentially police officers, but their scope of activity aligns with social and political conditions unique to the PRC, such as the supervision of entry and exit of residents and visitors.

were from the Public Security Bureau of Beijing. They said they needed to talk with me and asked me to go with them to a hotel near Caida. I was apprehensive but agreed.

In the hotel room, the police officers barraged me with questions. They wanted to know about the content of the Ford Foundation training program in Beijing. They wanted to know how many Uyghurs attended the training. They asked why I wanted to study in the US and why I had chosen linguistics. They asked me about people I had never met. And they asked who I had met in Turkey. Their final questions were about my personal finances. Three miserable hours later, the officers let me go.

Like the National Security Bureau officers had done, before I left for Turkey in 2005, these officers asked me to spy on other Uyghurs while abroad. But their primary goal was to intimidate me, by warning me to be careful, and to watch my words. Around this time, I was writing essays online that were critical of CCP policy in East Turkestan, and the officers asked me to stop. I said that I refused to spy on anyone, but feigned obedience to their request that I be cautious in my writing and political commentary.

Before leaving Urumchi, the CCP intruded on me once more, by confronting me at home and questioning the validity of my *hukou* (household registration). The police officers claimed that I had no permission to live in Urumchi because I didn't have an Urumchi resident ID. Then they barged inside my home and began looking around. I was angry but contained my emotions. After some time, they told me to get a temporary resident ID and went away.

* * * * *

I was the first one in my family, and the first one from Upal to study abroad. And though my scholarship to Turkey was important for my community, the opportunity to study in the US was even more significant. To mark this honor, my family and friends held a celebration before my departure. The mood was at turns joyous and solemn. Some of my colleagues, graduates from elite universities in China and East Turkestan, asked me to be their voice in the US. My friends wanted me to alert the world community of the Uyghur struggle for human rights in East Turkestan. Related to this, they asked me to convey their greetings to the political activist,

Rebiya Kadeer.²⁶ Regarding the CCP attack on Uyghur culture, they wanted me to draw attention to how Mandarin was displacing Uyghur in the school system. My brothers and sisters, actual and figurative relatives, wished me personal success, but also told me to do something meaningful for our nation.

A few days later, I left Urumchi for Beijing, where I had to transfer from the domestic to the international airport. This was an anxious moment – I was constantly looking over my shoulder, worried that I was being followed. While checking in, I was nervous that the agent would stop me and not allow me to proceed. But no one followed me, and the agent asked me no unusual questions. Without incident, I boarded my flight to the US.

Lawrence: Disconnected

I arrived in Lawrence, Kansas on June 1, 2009. My first month was challenging – I was alone and had to adjust to a new environment and prepare for the upcoming semester at the University of Kansas. Thanks to my Ford Foundation training in Beijing, I could anticipate and overcome mundane concerns, like how to navigate the bus system, but nothing could have prepared me for the dark days to come.

Though far from East Turkestan, I maintained a connection with home by visiting online forums that hosted discussions on issues relevant to the Uyghur community.²⁷ And it was through such websites that I learned of the tragedy in Shaoguan, Guangdong province.²⁸ On the night of June 25, at a toy factory compound, where migrants worked and lived, several Uyghurs were murdered during a brawl with Chinese, sparked by allegations of Uyghur men having sexually assaulted a Chinese woman. News agencies later revealed that these allegations were lies, spread by a disgruntled Chinese worker, but many Uyghurs were unsatisfied with the slow response by the Chinese government to the violence and deaths.

²⁶ For information on the US-based Uyghur political activist Rebiya Kadeer, see her biography, *Dragon Fighter: One Woman's Epic Struggle for Peace with China* or the film, *The 10 Conditions of Love*.

²⁷ Online forums, sometimes called BBS (bulletin board system) forums, are message boards organized by topic, where members post messages and have discussions.

²⁸ For information on the Shaoguan Incident, and subsequent events, see Millward (2009).

After the tragedy in Shaoguan, Uyghur internet forums were filled with comments expressing grief and shock. Some Uyghur websites used a black background to memorialize the victims. And all the prominent Uyghur online writers changed their online names to *hazidar* (one who lost relatives) to commemorate the Uyghurs who were killed. A song with lyrics about the death of a relative was featured on many Uyghur websites, along with a Uyghur anthem about the search for a leader who would deliver people from despair, called “Where is the Blue Wolf?” But, as textual descriptions of the violence became supplemented with gruesome pictures and videos, Uyghur netizens began to feel and express a sense of outrage.

We held the CCP accountable for the tragedy in Shaoguan because the Chinese government had organized the labor transfer program that brought Uyghurs to inner China and we wanted to be assured that our brothers and sisters were safe. Some citizens, both Chinese and Uyghurs, wrote letters to government officials in leadership positions at that time, including Xinjiang chairman Nur Bekri and the Xinjiang CCP Secretary Wang Lequan, and even President Hu Jintao. But the leadership failed to respond to our requests for justice. Day by day, Uyghurs grew more incensed at the Chinese government’s apathy.

On July 5, I was glued to the internet, watching a stream of videos from Urumchi. Because of the time difference, morning in Lawrence was evening in Urumchi, and I began the day by witnessing an unbelievable sight: Uyghurs marching through the streets of Urumchi, chanting, “Uyghur, Uyghur,” their steps in rhythm with the cadence of this word – a display that filled me with pride. This was a public assertion of our ethnic group’s right to exist, and our human right to live. This was our awakening. But as afternoon turned to night in Urumchi, peaceful demonstrations gave way to horrifying chaos in the streets. After a while, I realized that no new videos were being uploaded – East Turkestan had gone offline.

I called Mihrigul, at 4:00 p.m. (3:00 a.m. in East Turkestan), but I didn’t say anything to reveal my knowledge of the day’s events. The probability was too high that the CCP was listening to our conversation. I just asked if they were okay, and she assured me that they were.²⁹ I called again two hours later, and she again said they were okay. But after that, I could not reach

²⁹ I later learned that, in the melee, a car was set on fire outside my family’s apartment, near the main entrance of Xinda. Mihrigul and Masuda were unharmed.

them, or any other relatives, to confirm their safety. The CCP had blocked international telephone communication – East Turkestan was now disconnected from the rest of the world.

* * * * *

After July 5, my ability to keep informed of happenings in East Turkestan was curtailed. I could not communicate with relatives or friends. And many Uyghur internet forums, based in East Turkestan, were scrubbed from the internet.³⁰ Many webmasters, including close friends, were blamed for the violence and imprisoned on various charges, such as inciting violence and endangering state security (WUC 2016).³¹ Desperate for information, I posted messages on Chinese internet forums, asking about the situation in East Turkestan, but my questions were deleted or ridiculed. Fortunately, a few Uyghur internet forums, such as Ilham Tohti's Uighurbiz, remained operational (2013).³² These websites survived because they were based in inner China. My online writings were also preserved on forums based in inner China, due to a tendency among Uyghur netizens to reproduce notable posts on multiple forums. I felt isolated in Lawrence, and these forums were my only window on East Turkestan, and my only channel for communication with the Uyghur community.

The discussions on Chinese and Uyghur internet forums reflected differences in freedom of expression as experienced by Chinese and Uyghur netizens. On Chinese internet forums, members criticized the CCP in general terms. For example, Chinese netizens used the term *dangguo* (party country) in a pejorative manner, to condemn the one-party state ideology. But in Uyghur internet forums, members could be arrested for such blunt commentary. As a result, Uyghur netizens were more specific in their criticisms of the Chinese government, naming lower-level organizations and jurisdictions, to avoid accusations of separatism. Criticisms were always balanced with praise of the CCP and CCP policy in East Turkestan. Uyghur netizens

³⁰ Even before July 5, the internet forum policy in East Turkestan was restrictive, intended to provoke self-censorship and stymie free speech. To establish such forums, Uyghur webmasters had to register at the local police station. Internet forums based in inner China were not moderated (i.e. members' comments were displayed immediately), but those based in East Turkestan were moderated (i.e. members' comments had to be approved by a webmaster before display). Comments originating outside of East Turkestan or China were scrutinized more intensely. For more information on CCP restrictions for Uyghur internet users, see *Trapped in a Virtual Cage: Chinese State Repression of Uyghurs Online* (UHRP 2014).

³¹ Some of these political prisoners have been released, while others remain imprisoned.

³² The CCP periodically shut down Uighurbiz until 2014, when it was permanently closed.

protected themselves by saying that the Chinese government had good policies, but that the local government deviated from national CCP intentions. Many netizens on Uyghur internet forums invoked CCP rhetoric, like *minzu tuanjie* (ethnic unity) and *minzu hezuo* (ethnic cooperation), to avoid reprisal. And on days of national significance, such as the founding of the CCP on July 1, Uyghur internet forums would prominently display the flag of China. Webmasters and netizens of Chinese internet forums were not compelled to perform any of these empty expressions of allegiance.

* * * * *

Because my thoughts were consumed with the turmoil in East Turkestan, I did not sleep well and had difficulty concentrating on school work. One day, my mind was so occupied that, on the way to school, I walked in the wrong direction. When I finally came out of my daze, I was completely lost. Luckily, a kind stranger offered to help and gave me a ride to campus.

I also had trouble in school because my courses did not always align with my interests. I wanted to work with a professor from the Department of Anthropology, but I was enrolled in the Department of Linguistics, and had to take many core courses. I knew it was important to learn Noam Chomsky's idea of Universal Grammar and how to draw tree diagrams, but I was more interested in educational anthropology. I struggled to complete coursework while exploring topics of my primary concern.

Though I had trouble in school, I engaged socially by joining the Intercultural and Interfaith Dialog Student Association. This organization advocated the belief that communication could facilitate harmony and cooperation among diverse groups. And to achieve this aim, they brought people together from different cultural and religious backgrounds for activities, like picnics, seminars, performances, and readings.

During that year, I made every effort to bring Mihrigul and Masuda to Lawrence, and in July 2010, we reunited. Their presence made a huge difference on my psyche. I could verify, with my own eyes, that they were safe. And this peace of mind allowed me to focus on my studies. But I was not fully at ease, knowing that other relatives and friends in East Turkestan were suffering.

In October, my advisor presented me with an opportunity to stay at the University of Kansas and pursue my doctorate, promising three years of financial support. I was not expecting this offer and had been preparing to return to East Turkestan after finishing my master's degree. Mihrigul and I discussed this new option, and we came to a decision at the end of November. In my letter to my advisor, I said I could not remain in the US because I had to do three things: First, I needed to provide educational opportunities for Uyghur young adults, with a focus on language education and career development. Second, I needed to provide literacy skill and parent education programs for Uyghur women. And third, I needed to provide mother tongue-based education for Uyghur kindergarteners, so that these students would have a linguistic and academic foundation in their first language and culture. Because these needs were immediate, I could not continue my studies at the University of Kansas. My advisor was perplexed, and tersely responded, "Are you sure?" To this, I confirmed, "Yes. I'm totally sure."

Kashgar: Rise of the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education

After completing my master's degree in the spring of 2011, my family and I returned to Kashgar, where I worked tirelessly to set up my school. Contrary to the tepid response I had received in Urumchi in 2007, my initiative now had strong support from the Uyghur community. I attribute this change to a growing awareness among Uyghurs of CCP intentions to marginalize Uyghur cultural practices, including our language. At this point, most Uyghurs recognized that the CPP policy of 'bilingual' education, accelerated in 2004, was a scheme to promote Mandarin language assimilation, and relegate Uyghur to the periphery of the curriculum. The CCP was investing heavily in 'bilingual' school infrastructure and providing relatively high salaries for teachers and subsidies for students at 'bilingual' schools – factors that compelled Uyghur parents to send their children to such schools. Uyghurs also saw how the Chinese government was encouraging the establishment of Mandarin preschools and kindergartens throughout East Turkestan, by making such ventures attractive to Chinese businesspeople, through free land and subsidies for teachers and students.

Another supporting factor was the reputation I had built while in the US, through my online writing, under the pen name Gulen.³³ In May 2010, the CCP partially restored the internet in East Turkestan. During the ten-month blockade, I had written extensively on Uyghur internet forums based in inner China. Now, Uyghurs in East Turkestan could access and read my essays.

When word circulated that I had returned to Kashgar and was realizing my plan to start a school, many Uyghur intellectuals and educators voiced their desire to help. Among this group, Muhemmet Sidiq and Dilyar Obul joined me in leadership positions. We named our initiative the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education. Muhemmet oversaw finances, drawing on experience as a tax agent for the regional government and the owner of two accounting firms. Dilyar, a lawyer and author, handled legal matters and represented the school when interacting with government officials.

Dilyar, along with some volunteers, also created and administered a website for our movement, *Qutadghu Bilik* (The Wisdom which Brings Happiness). We used this site to document school events, display student work (e.g. speeches, essays) and discuss ideas and plans, but it also served as a form of protection against the CCP. To maintain transparency and demonstrate our abidance to the law, we published notes on meetings and interactions with government agencies.

My concern was not imaginary. I had been interrogated by a police officer upon my return to Kashgar; he wanted to know about my activities in the US and what I planned to do in Kashgar. I did not reveal my intention to start a school because I wanted to protect myself and others from CCP harassment. For the same reason, I did not register the school under my name with the Kashgar Department of Education or elsewhere. Instead, an associate was listed as the proprietor.

At the time, the most successful Uyghur-owned private school was Atlan, based in Urumchi. But Atlan, which specialized in English language training, differed fundamentally from my school. Kasim Abdurehim, the founder and CEO of Atlan was unprincipled, and only interested in making money. My organization needed to be solvent, but we wanted to use a

³³ This pseudonym, adopted to protect my family and friends from CCP retribution for my writings, was in tribute to Fethullah Gulen, the Turkish cleric who inspired the Gulen movement, and its network of schools.

linguistically and culturally relevant pedagogy to address the needs of our community. Kasim had no such motivations; Atlan was a purely capitalist endeavor, so it was free from suspicion. Kasim also had good relationships with Uyghur and Chinese officials, such as Zhang Chunxian, the CCP Secretary of Xinjiang, who came to his school in 2010 in a show of support.

CCP officials also eventually visited my school, but to investigate and provoke fear, not display comradery. Recollections of those dreadful encounters stand in stark contrast to memories of elation when my school, the Mother Tongue School, opened its doors in Kashgar on July 10, 2011. Our location was seemingly prime; we were in the Technology and Culture Square, in the largest park in the city center. The square was a public facility, but the city used it for profit, and we rented three classrooms and an office, a total area of over 150 square meters.

With our space secured, I began to develop programs and recruit students, contacting different groups according to accessibility. I started with a *yashlar* (youth program) because I knew that many Uyghur young adults were familiar with my online writings and had expressed an interest to enroll in my school. Many of these Uyghur young adults had completed nine years of compulsory education but did not finish senior high school or attend college. Others were currently enrolled in public senior high schools. All of them wanted to expand their employment options, and I sought to meet this demand by offering language education at various levels in Uyghur, Mandarin, English, and Turkish, along with vocational training in tourism and hospitality.

To attract additional students, I borrowed an approach from the youth branches of Turkish political parties and used events as enticement for education. I organized activities in the performing and visual arts, such as singing, dancing, and drawing. But sports, especially volleyball, basketball, and soccer, were most popular. At these gatherings, I would praise the participants' abilities, but also encourage them to register for courses at my school. I discounted tuition for these potential students, providing further incentive for enrollment.

In the classroom, teachers used music and drama in support of learning objectives. For example, when teaching English, I taught my students a rap from a movie, *The Ron Clark Story* because the rhymes addressed events in US history. I arranged for a local Uyghur band to play and teach some English songs to my students. I also showed English language movies, and had

students learn dialogue to recreate scenes. My objective was to maintain motivation by designing a relevant and engaging curriculum.

With the youth program established and increasing enrollment, I turned my attention to setting up a women's program. But, for a few reasons, this program failed. I tried organizing public meetings to explain our offerings (Uyghur Maarip Uyushmisi 2012). And I tried using our website to publicize courses for literacy development, but the demographics that we were trying to reach, women in rural locations and those who lacked literacy skills, did not have the ability to access this information; they could neither use the internet nor read proficiently. A second demographic was urban women, to teach parenting skills, personal hygiene, and child language development, but they were consumed with responsibilities at home and work. In recognition of parental obligations, I created an English course for mothers and their primary school-aged children, and I thought this formula might work when three or four families came. But, to my dismay, they never returned. I later learned that our location, in the city center was problematic for some women. I hadn't noticed it before, but Chinese brothels and karaoke joints were in the vicinity, and the Uyghur women were afraid to be seen around those places.

I made a great effort to establish the youth and women's programs but invested the most energy in the kindergarten. This program was important because it was to be the first link in the chain of a multilingual kindergarten through senior high school institution. I planned to operate the kindergarten for a few years, and then gradually offer higher grade levels. Regarding language of instruction, I intended to use Uyghur for kindergarten through primary school, with Mandarin and English taught as additional languages. And at junior high school, I planned for the balance to shift, with equal focus on Uyghur and Mandarin or Uyghur and English, depending on the student's intention to attend college in East Turkestan, inner China, or abroad.

Our preparations began in the summer, as we anticipated opening the Ana Til Balilar Baghchici (ATBB Kindergarten; Mother Tongue Children's Garden) in the fall. We registered the kindergarten with the Kashgar Department of Basic Education. The regulations were not onerous – the main requirement was a headmaster with more than five years of teaching experience and a teacher's license. Mihrigul, who had been serving as the office manager of the school, met this criterion, and took on the responsibility of kindergarten headmaster.

As with the youth program, I had a group of students from the beginning – the children of parents familiar with my online writings. My kindergarten opened on October 1, 2011, with ten students and two teachers, in accordance with my desire to maintain a low student to teacher ratio. During the semester, I found another teacher, and invited five more students to join the class, but stopped when enrollment reached 15. I wanted to start small and grow slowly to provide supervision and ensure a high level of quality. I trusted my teachers – they all held degrees in education – but they were inexperienced and needed guidance. The next year, in February 2012, I hired three more kindergarten teachers and a supervisor, expanding enrollment to 30 students. When the teachers became comfortable with the curriculum, I relaxed the student to teacher ratio, and by the spring of 2013, the kindergarten was serving 56 students.

My pedagogical approach and kindergarten curriculum was based on my study of child language acquisition at the University of Kansas. One course required me to observe a kindergarten in Lawrence, and I made copious notes of teaching methods, intending to import them to my school in East Turkestan. I wanted my kindergarteners to exhibit growth in four areas: language, communication, observation, and concentration. To develop language and communication skills, students learned vocabulary and sentence patterns. Teachers used Uyghur, Mandarin, and English as languages of instruction and the students used these languages to play games, sing songs, recite poetry, and tell, create, and perform stories. For listening comprehension, I dubbed episodes of *Dora the Explorer*, substituting Spanish with Uyghur. To develop observation skills, students learned to recognize how recurring class activities related to times of the day. And to develop concentration skills, students were encouraged to work independently, on tasks such as drawing and counting.

* * * * *

On our website's internet forum, many members in Urumchi posted messages stating their desire for a school that followed the model we had established in Kashgar. This interest was not only voiced by Uyghurs, but members of other ethnic minority groups, including Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, and Mongols. Intellectuals from these ethnic minority groups recognized the need to create spaces for the maintenance of their language and culture. Parents from these ethnic minority groups asked for kindergartens that used their first languages, along with Mandarin and English, as mediums of instruction. In response to this demand, in the fall of 2012, the leaders of

our movement began working to establish an ATBB Kindergarten in Tengritagh (Tianshan) District, Urumchi. We planned to start with a kindergarten for the sizable Uyghur community and then grow to include other programs and ethnic minority communities.

From the beginning, we encountered resistance. Local lawyers refused to provide counsel. Some officials from the Tengritagh Department of Education avoided us, and made excuses for neglecting our application. And some tried to discourage us, such as Tursun Nazir, an official from the Xinjiang Department of Education. Tursun rejected our kindergarten proposal, saying, “The future of our education system is looking brighter than ever. Of course, there are some sacrifices we have to make for the overall improvement of our education system. There is no harm in instructing Uyghur children in Mandarin” (qtd. in WUC 2014, 22). The Secretary of the Urumchi Department of Education, Sidiq Kasim, also tried to dissuade us, remarking, “it would be much easier for you to open a kindergarten that’s ‘bilingual’ where children are instructed in Mandarin” (qtd. in WUC 2014, 23). Sidiq was suggesting we replicate the CCP deceit of advertising ‘bilingual’ language instruction in Uyghur and Mandarin, while only using Mandarin in practice.

Other officials simply lied, telling us that minority language instruction in schools violated national or regional PRC laws, or that some type of CCP approval was needed, without revealing how to obtain such approval. A senior official from the Xinjiang Department of Education had the gall to tell us that minority language instruction was prohibited in East Turkestan, even though he couldn’t cite the domestic law that codified this prohibition (WUC 2014, 23). The total obstruction lasted until December 7, when Sidiq relented, admitting that we had the right to establish our school. Although we prevailed against the municipal authorities, the Tengritagh Department of Education was intransigent. Our appeal to the neighboring Seybagh District Department of Education was also unsuccessful.

Meanwhile, public interest continued to grow in our Urumchi venture. We had been chronicling and discussing our experience on the online forum of *Baghdax*, a website that was heavily trafficked by the Uyghur community. Titled “The journey of building a mother language kindergarten,” we described and discussed our endeavor until January 9, 2013, when the thread was deleted. By that point, the conversation had around 30,000 followers and over 500,000

views. The next day, our webmaster, Dilyar, created a new thread on *Baghdax* called, “For the children, we march,” where we resumed updates and discussion about the kindergarten.

Until then, I had invested nearly 100,000 RMB (16,600 USD) in the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education, but could not maintain these personal contributions. To cover our costs, on February 4, with my name appearing for the first time on an official document, we founded the Mother Language International Trading Company Limited. The purpose of this company was to manufacture clothes and produce honey, and then sell these items, with the profits to be used for funding our school expansion. We successfully brought the honey to market, but our license to manufacture and sell clothes was revoked the day after it was granted.

A few days later, on February 8, we finally overcame the Tengritagh District Department of Education. After many months of avoidance and deception, the officials retracted their claim that it was illegal to operate schools that used minority languages as languages of instruction. In their concession, we won verbal approval to open our kindergarten, along with an affiliated primary school.

Relishing our achievement, I returned to Kashgar, where on February 21, we celebrated International Mother Language Day at the Meptun Restaurant (Dolan 2013). There, several Uyghur community leaders spoke about the importance of Uyghur language maintenance to an audience of two hundred, and via live stream, an online audience of hundreds more. In my speech, I articulated my ambition to establish a network of schools that were multilingual, with instruction in minority languages, along with Mandarin and English.

About a week later, I received a phone call from someone inviting me to *he cha* (drink tea), a euphemism for interrogation. The caller wouldn’t give his name, saying only that he was from the Public Security Bureau. At first, I refused, but he made some opaque remarks about holding me responsible for everything, so I relented and agreed to meet.

On my way, I reflected on earlier encounters with the Public Security Bureau. For the first 20 months of operation, the police came to our school in Kashgar on several occasions but found nothing objectionable. In November 2011, the police questioned me extensively, and recorded the interrogation. Twice in 2012, the police visited our school to ask questions and look

around my office and classrooms. Considering the CCP's proclivity for paranoia and surveillance, this police activity was an inevitable annoyance. Also predictable, my associate, whose name was listed as the proprietor, was interrogated twice in 2012 and once in 2013. Our school and company were operating within the law, but I readied myself to defend against allegations.

After arriving at the appointed café, two men approached and asked me to join them in a private room. They were from the *guobao dadui* (Domestic Security Detachment), a division of the Public Security Bureau dedicated to investigating religious and political threats to the CCP. Their overture was kind, but the tone changed when they started asking questions about the International Mother Language Day celebration. They wanted to know the identity of the organizer and the goal of the organization. They wanted to know why prominent Uyghurs, including intellectuals, businesspeople, and religious figures, had gathered amid an audience of students and women, to discuss language and education. And they threatened to hold the organizer responsible for an illegal gathering.

I was in a dangerous situation – illegal gathering is a vague accusation used to justify interrogations, and if substantiated, can lead to prison. However, due to a strange coincidence, I thought of a way out. Two days after the celebration, one of the speakers, Muhammed Tursun, passed away. Seizing on this fact, I said that Tursun, a distinguished educator, had organized the celebration. The officers readily accepted this answer because Muhammed had organized similar events as the principal of a primary school in Kashgar. The officers released me four hours later. When at a safe distance, I contacted my associates and told them, “If you are interrogated, just say that Muhammed was the organizer and plead ignorance to anything else.”

That episode was over, but at the beginning of March, we encountered another setback when the online thread about our school expansion, “For the children, we march” was removed. Fortunately, that negative was offset by a positive, when, on March 12, the Xinjiang Education Institute in Urumchi agreed to lease space for our kindergarten and primary school. This college also agreed to consider leasing additional space for a junior and senior high school.

Urumchi: Just keep silent

For the Muslim communities of East Turkestan, the first day of spring is commemorated with a celebration called Noruz. Because this season is associated with rebirth, our company felt it appropriate to start conversations, at that time, with other ethnic minority groups about replicating my Kashgar model. On March 13, 2013, Dilyar and Muhemmet hosted a Noruz conference at Babahan Restaurant in Urumchi. This meeting was attended by Uyghur, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz intellectuals and community leaders, and featured customary food and entertainment. But, there was also serious discussion of the challenges and possibilities of establishing schools that used multiple languages of instruction. Several hours later, for the sake of the restaurant staff, we agreed to pause our discussion and resume at a later planned conference.

The Kazakh owner of the Uysun Kazakh Restaurant was a strong supporter of mother tongue-based multilingual education, and three months earlier, had offered to host a second Noruz conference. After obtaining permission from the Urumchi Public Security Bureau, we accepted his offer. This venue was larger than the previous restaurant, and we used the additional space to invite more participants. Mongol representatives were to join the Uyghur, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz parties. We also expected Kazakhs from the cities of Chochek and Ghulja, places undergoing cultural transformation from heavy Han migration.

Continuing our adherence to transparency, we published our agenda on an invitation letter for the second conference. First, we planned to continue the discussion about concerns in setting up mother tongue-based multilingual schools. Second, we intended to address how the minority ethnic communities of East Turkestan, building from our strength in numbers, could support each other in our mutual interest to defend and maintain our native languages. The third item was to be a general debate: I wanted to gauge the perceived practicality and effectiveness of my programs – for youth, women, and kindergarten-aged children – in keeping our languages alive.

On March 17, I was in a hotel room, preparing for the next day's conference, when I received a call from Dilyar and Muhemmet. They were at a Urumchi police station, and an officer was requesting that I join them. I refused, contending that we had committed no crime, but eventually relented, and agreed to meet them at a restaurant. Once there, I was greeted by Ekber, the chief of the Urumchi Public Security Bureau.

After some trite pleasantries, Ekber accused us of having subversive motives for using the Uysun Kazakh Restaurant. He suggested that we planned a Noruz celebration there because the name of the restaurant connoted Kazakh nationalism, as it was derived from the Kazakh term *Uysin juz*, a historical Kazakh territory that included a part of East Turkestan and was once independent. We denied this paranoid allegation, and informed Ekber that our choice was simply based on the capacity of the place.

Ekber kept us late into night, with the conversation on a loop. He repeatedly told us that it was too dangerous to hold the conference and that he needed the names of the participants so he could inform them that the conference had been canceled. We repeatedly countered that we had been planning the conference for three months, and could not, on such short notice, cancel. We also asked him to consider that some of the participants were, at that moment, in transit to the conference from far distances and might be difficult to contact. Ekber was unrelenting, so at 2:00 a.m., we agreed to cancel the conference on the condition that we could stand in front of the restaurant and explain, to participants who were unreachable on the road, why the conference had been cancelled.

On the morning of March 18, I called the owner of the Kazakh restaurant to tell him that the conference was off. He then told me that their electricity had been cut. As none of this was his fault, I told him we would honor our obligation to pay the agreed-upon fee. I also said that we would come over to explain the situation to the participants who couldn't be reached by phone.

But all this was for not, because after ending the call with the Kazakh restaurant owner, my phone was disabled.

A few minutes later, to my surprise, my phone rang. The speaker did not reveal his identity, but the voice belonged to Ekber. He told me to meet him at a nearby restaurant. Because the conference was scheduled for 2:00 p.m., I knew that his purpose was to stop me from going to the Kazakh restaurant and meeting with participants. When I arrived at the arranged location, he led me into the restaurant basement.

This was the beginning of a six-hour interrogation. Having experienced several of these (before leaving for Turkey in 2005; before leaving for the US in 2009; after returning to East Turkestan in 2011; and just a few weeks earlier in Kashgar), I recognized that Ekber was

following a routine procedure. First, he was friendly, and claimed to support our movement for mother tongue education. He tried to ingratiate himself by saying, “Uyghur people very much need a person like you.” Then, Ekber asked a few questions about my background, family, and friends, but he seemed less interested in my responses, than displaying his own knowledge of my biography. I suppose to impress me, he repeated line items from my CCP file: I had received a scholarship to study linguistics in the US, and was a leader of the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education. From these details, Ekber tried to establish common ground, saying that we were both Uyghur, and that we needed to do something positive for our people.

After these niceties, Ekber invoked his authority, and issued demands, backed with threats. He said, “We need to protect you because Xinjiang is very complicated. It’s not easy to do cultural activities because Xinjiang is a very dangerous place. We don’t know what will happen during the conference. We don’t know if some bad guys will interfere in your conference and encourage people to protest and go to the streets. If these things happen, it’s not good for you and me.” He then broadened this vague warning, telling me that others had tried to carry out my plans and suffered bad fortunes and that I would have a similar fate. This culminated with a blunt reiteration of his authority, variations of “I’m a government officer and you must listen to me,” and, “If you will not listen to me, you will be sent away.”

Regarding the Noruz conference that was to take place at the Kazakh restaurant, Ekber only said that one invitee, a scholar from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, was allegedly a murderer. Another guy was supposedly a former political prisoner. He also said that some others had bad reputations in their communities. Ekber refused to give any details, but claimed that because I was attempting to assemble people with questionable backgrounds, I was under soft arrest. I couldn’t prove that he was inventing these stories, so I just said, “Okay. I didn’t know these things, so maybe I made a mistake to invite some of these people.”

After a while, I guess because he had completed the interrogation protocol and was bored, Ekber veered from script and began telling me stories about his pathetic life. Some of those stories were harmless, but then he told me an explicit story about a sexual encounter. I felt unsettled because Ekber was around my father’s age, and Uyghur culture dictates that older generations be treated with familial respect. But, the telling of such a story destroys one’s

capacity for respect, so I was dreading what he would say next. Fortunately, he didn't go any further, and we just sat there, with him chain-smoking in my face.

A few hours later, Ekber ended the interrogation with a typical warning, "Don't tell anyone anything about our meeting or about me. Just keep silent. If you say something, we will do something further." With this, at around 6:00 p.m., he let me leave.

I returned to my hotel room and was relieved to find my phone operational. I immediately called Dilyar and found that he had spent all afternoon answering questions at a police station. Muhemmet had been spared this treatment, and went to the Kazakh restaurant, which was teeming with police officers inside and lined with police cars on the streets outside. He didn't stay long.

I felt humiliated by the cancellation of the Noruz conference and my interrogation. And I needed an outlet to express my emotions – I needed to write something online. I could not write a narrative of my experience because that would have endangered both the webmaster and me. So, I wrote a poem expressing my exasperation, but using figurative language. After posting the poem on a Uyghur website, many readers asked questions, and I explained my meanings, line by line. I felt safe having this discussion in the thread because the Chinese internet police usually check the initial title and content of a post. But they typically ignore the thread because comments can be numerous and repetitive.

Using this method, I explained why our Noruz conference was canceled and my experience of interrogation. I wrote, "I have answered all of their questions. I have told them everything they wanted to know. What else do they want from me? What is wrong with the desire to raise your children to speak the language of your ancestors? What is wrong with the desire to instill a cultural and ethnic identity in your children? What is wrong with wanting to educate our youth? Would they have given me this much trouble if I opened a casino instead of a school?" Radio Free Asia caught notice and reported the events described in the thread, spreading this news to the diaspora Uyghur community (2013b).

The next morning delivered no relief. First, an administrator from the Xinjiang Education Institute informed me that they had been contacted by some government agencies, and that we could no longer use space on their campus for our school in Urumchi. I then heard from Mihrigul.

A sign had been posted on the front door of my school in Kashgar by the municipal Business Management Bureau: Closed due to incomplete documentation.

Kashgar: You're going to be arrested

I returned to Kashgar immediately. The students, faculty, and staff were my primary concern. To other language and vocational schools, I coordinated the transfer of over 400 students, and 56 kindergarteners. Still, about half of my adult students did not accept this reassignment and withdrew. I continued teaching English, in secret, to around 200 students at different schools. I was also able to find schools to absorb my faculty and staff.

Over the next three weeks, the leaders of the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education worked on an application to form a new school. As before, a silent partner was registered as the proprietor and delivered the application to the Kashgar Department of Education. The document described with precision how our school adhered to PRC law, and made numerous references to articles of the PRC Constitution, Education Law, and Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law. The head of the department accepted the application and gave us informal approval.

At the end of April 2013, the Kashgar Department of Education granted us permission to open a school. Our new location was on the outskirts of the city, in a nondescript building that once belonged to a community college.³⁴ The building was decent, but not so accessible. I kept searching for a better learning environment in a better location and found one in May – a former primary school with excellent facilities, now being used as a junkyard. The Kashgar Department of Education allowed us to rent this space and was pleased that we were investing in its rehabilitation. We hired workers to restore and decorate the school for three months, all through a stifling Ramadan, in anticipation of opening a kindergarten in the fall.

To demonstrate the resiliency of the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education, I organized a public event in Artux, a city about 50 kilometers northeast of Kashgar, during the summer (Uyushma 2013). At an outdoor basketball court, more than a hundred people

³⁴ Many vacant schools are scattered throughout Kashgar, due to a declining number of students – a result of the CCP campaign to promote birth control among Uyghurs.

gathered to hear me discuss topics related to language and education. I started by describing the resumption of my youth program, including the language and vocational classes. I then addressed my concerns about the consequences of Mandarin as a language of instruction for Uyghurs, focusing on how this practice squandered linguistic and cultural knowledge from home, and formed a wedge between parents and children, because Uyghur parents who lacked proficiency in Mandarin were hindered from assisting in their children's education.

During this meeting, I took questions from the audience, and at one point, a teenage girl raised her hand. When I recognized her as one of my students – and a confident one at that – I invited her on stage to ask her question and demonstrate her ability to speak publicly in academic Uyghur. On stage, she asked if schools could prohibit female students from wearing a headscarf. I responded that neither the PRC Constitution nor the Education Law forbade types of clothing, so a school that prohibited this headwear was not following the law.

As often happened, my words encouraged action, and the day after the event, some of the female students wore burkas and headscarves, and some of the male students wore doppas to school. An angry administrator called me, demanding an explanation, and I repeated my legal defense. He was fuming but could not argue.

* * * * *

In Urumchi, my team continued to face obstacles in setting up our school. We battled Chinese government agencies over our school application, and realtors and government agencies over our school location. Regarding the school application, our choice to write in Uyghur caused months of strife. In April, officials from the Tengritagh Department of Education rejected our kindergarten application because it was in Uyghur.³⁵ Dilyar responded with a lawsuit against the education department, but the district court dismissed it, stating that “the matter was negligible and not worthy of being a case” (qtd. in WUC 2014, 30). After some petitioning, the district education department officials said they would discuss this issue with higher governing bodies, but this was a delaying tactic to wear us down.

³⁵ The Tengritagh Department of Education was in contravention of the law. The PRC Constitution (Article 133) and Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law (Article 21) provide ethnic minorities the right to use minority languages in government affairs.

Though our application was in limbo, we envisioned a positive resolution, and made every effort to rent a space for our school. On April 7, we leased a house in Tengritagh District through Da Wen Property Management Company. But problems then arose with the district fire department. Because we were going to use the house as a school, they would not issue a fire safety license until we obtained a Change of Usage permit from the Urumchi City Urban Planning Department. The realtor refused to provide the documents we needed for the permit and said we could not use the house as a kindergarten. When we reported this news on our internet forum, our supporters were incensed. Some of them launched cyberattacks on the realtor's website, and only relented when Dilyar asked them to stop. In June, another government agency, the Urumchi City Urban-Country Management Group told Dilyar that the rented house was not large enough to operate as a kindergarten. On July 2, nearly three months after signing the lease, Da Wen Property Management Company canceled the contract (WUC 2014, 28-33).

Online too, we met obstructions. On June 6, *Baghdax*, the website where we had been chronicling the creation of our Urumchi school, was shut down for illegally reporting news and information. I asked other webmasters to host a thread on the progress of our school, but we were told that discussion of our movement was now politically sensitive, meaning forbidden. We preferred using websites that hosted a variety of discussions to capitalize on the traffic, but our own website was always a last option. On June 10, we used this resource, and created a thread on our Urumchi school to provide news and updates for supporters of our movement. To our delight, our supporters followed. By July 4, our school website had received over 1.5 million visits and more than 10,000 comments (WUC 2014, 32-34).

Our supporters were a great source of strength, and we made every effort to keep them informed of our challenges and progress. On June 25, in Urumchi, our company hosted a gathering. For supporters who could not attend, we broadcasted the meeting online and provided live updates through WeChat, a social network. To demonstrate our commitment to transparency, we invited police officers from the Tengritagh Public Security Bureau. At the gathering, we described how our school initiative accorded with the PRC Constitution, Education Law, Teachers Law, Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law, and the Law on the Promotion of Non-public Schools. We cited many articles from these legal documents and discussed how our education initiatives, business model, and financial management were in strict compliance.

* * * * *

In 2013, I appeared as a guest on some Kashgar radio and television programs to discuss education-related issues (Uchqundilemma 2012). When audiences requested my return, Kashgar radio and television stations realized that I was a good business opportunity – they could make money by charging more to run commercials when I was on the air – and agreed.

At the beginning of August, a producer from Kashgar TV invited me on a talk show to discuss how Uyghur parents could contribute to their children's education. A few days later, the host contacted me and told me that the show would air that evening. I did not have time to watch, but I told my mother about it. During the scheduled broadcast time, my mother called to tell me that the show was not on the air, so I called the host for an explanation. She said that the Kashgar Public Security Bureau had ordered them to stop broadcasting anything about me.

I felt uneasy and a bit afraid, but also realized that this circumstance was beyond my control. I could not change my past, or disavow anything I had said or written. The government may have been unhappy with the attention I was bringing to CCP language policy on education in East Turkestan, and my advocacy for linguistic rights among ethnic minority groups, but in all my words and deeds, I fully complied with PRC law. The CCP seemed to tolerate me until my message started reaching wider audiences and I became a recognized figure. The government hates competition and I knew they would eventually try to silence me.

But I would not be intimidated. Somebody needed to publicly discuss CCP injustice toward ethnic minority groups. And somebody needed to persevere at the threat of arrest. Why not me? I had seen this cycle several times. I had seen Uyghurs criticize the CCP, receive threats, and then retreat. I was at the point in the cycle where I was supposed to give in to CCP pressure. But the problem was: How could I face my community? We need to protect our language. We need to protect our culture. And we need to protect our rights. In speeches and essays, I described how my actions to protect linguistic rights for ethnic minority groups abided with PRC law. Retreat would have destroyed my credibility. Because I was telling the truth, I had to persist. Even if the CCP silenced me on radio and television, I resolved to continue my struggle until the day they came to arrest me.

Soon after I was declared unsafe for radio and television, a police officer called, asking me to come to the Public Security Bureau station. As soon as I hung up, I received a call from my eldest brother, who was also a police officer. He told me that someone from Urumchi had contacted him, saying that I should remove a thread from my school internet forum on Ehmetjan Qasimi, the president of the Second East Turkistan Republic from 1946 to 1949.³⁶ I followed his advice and deleted the conversation before leaving my home. At the police station, the officers made me sit while they clicked around my school's internet forum. I knew they were looking for the thread on Ehmetjan and were growing frustrated when they could not find it. Finally, one officer asked me where it was. "I deleted it," I told them, but I did not reveal that someone had tipped off my brother. I needed to protect him and the good officer in Urumchi.

When the police were satisfied that the post was gone, the interrogation began. But this time, they did not follow the standard protocol. There was no faux kindness, no mention of solidarity, no invocation of authority, and no threats. One of them said, "You may be a law abiding intellectual, but the people who make up the supporters of your movement are incompetent" (qtd. in WUC 2014, 34). Then, reading from a paper, they asked a set of detailed questions about the incident. I answered and wrote my version of the event, leaving out how I had been informed to delete the thread, and signed at the bottom. I was scared, realizing that the tenor of this interrogation was different. Before leaving the police station, one of the interrogators, a Uyghur officer, approached me. To evade the attention of the Chinese officers, he said to me in Uyghur, "I know who you are, and my wife supports your activity. I will translate your statements in your favor, and I hope nothing will happen to you."

A few days later, two police officers came to the school that I was renovating. They asked me some questions but were more concerned with collecting information about my partners, Dilyar and Muhemmet. Again, at the conclusion, they asked me to sign a document.

Then, on August 15, an anonymous caller asked me to meet with him. I said I didn't have the time, that I was busy working on my school. But then my wife's phone rang, and it was the

³⁶ Ehmetjan Qasimi was notable for advocating democracy in East Turkestan. In August 1949, Ehmetjan and other leaders of the Second East Turkistan Republic died in a plane crash in Soviet territory on route to a meeting with Mao Zedong in Beijing (Millward 2007). The cause of the crash remains a subject of debate.

same guy, telling her that I should comply. Uncomfortable with this level of invasion, I reluctantly agreed to meet the caller. At the designated place, the caller approached and told me, “You’re going to be arrested, so you need to prepare. If you have anything that can be held against you, you need to delete it. You need to bury it. Everything you have. You need to be clean before you are arrested.” After this meeting, I contacted Dilyar and Muhemmet, and learned that they had received the same warning.

I began preparing to be sent away. First, I went home and spent some time with my wife, Mihrigul, and our daughters, five-year-old Masuda, and five-month-old Uyghurye. I also went to my mother’s home and spent some time with her.

Then I returned to work on my future school. I had no option. The informant told me I would be arrested, and when our website was shut down, I knew the day would come soon, but I did not know if it would be at morning, noon, or night. A rotating group of 10–15 friends was helping me renovate the school, but I did not say anything to them – I did not want to involve them. Those days were exhausting, and the work helped divert my attention from the impending doom, but I remained nervous that, at any moment, my world would end.

Doletbagh Detention Center: No choice, brother

On August 20, 2013, I was at the site of my future school, doing some work with one of my brothers and some friends. At around three o’clock in the afternoon, a car with no license plates pulled up and parked in front of my school. Two guys exited and walked directly towards me. When they began speaking to me, I knew from their style of communication that they were police officers. In Uyghur, we typically use the personal pronouns *siz* (you, formal) in polite conversation. These guys, like many of the police I had encountered, used *sen* (you, informal), which was inappropriate because we were strangers. This linguistic quirk was a clue that the police had arrived.

The men asked, “Are you Abduweli?” And I replied, “Yes. You are the parents who are interested in sending your kids to my school, right?” They played along, saying, “Yeah, we are.” Then I asked furtively, “Can we talk in the car?” I made this request because I was surrounded by my brother and friends, and I knew that if the police tried to arrest me in this company, there would be conflict, and maybe blood. So, I did what I could to create some distance between my

people and the police. I got in the back of the car and the officers put me in handcuffs. I told them the handcuffs were unnecessary, that if I were going to resist, I would have done so at my school, where I had backup. They agreed to remove the handcuffs, so I tried to test the limits of their leniency and asked them to return for me in a few days, to allow me to transfer operation of my school. They flatly denied this request, and then confiscated my cellphone.

We went to Doletbagh Detention Center, where the officers led me into a room and put me in a tiger chair. My wrists and ankles were locked into place, with additional chains shackled around my neck, hands, and feet.³⁷ Sometimes knowledge is transferrable, but immobilized in that tiger chair, I thought, *This time is different. My old experiences with interrogation are not going to be useful now.*

I sat in that tiger chair for a long time before the officers showed me a notice: I would be held one week for falsely reporting my company's investments. The officers, four Uyghur and one Chinese, presumed my guilt and started their brutal interrogation, pummeling me with questions, and threatening me with their fists. I felt trapped because they wanted an admission of guilt but surrender to this charge would have set an investigation into motion. And as the investigators would have failed to find corroborating evidence, I would only extend my captivity and torture.

The Chinese officer laid into me, saying, "I know your goal. You want to separate Xinjiang from China. And you are using a language movement as part of a scheme, just like Bengali activists used a language movement to achieve independence. The CIA and the National Endowment for Democracy is helping people like you and Rebiya [Kadeer] form a Uyghur separatist organization. And we have proof of this. The US wants China to dissolve like the Soviet Union. They want Xinjiang and Tibet to separate. I know their ideology and their goals, but it's not going to happen. We are not Russia. We are China, and our Chinese civilization is more than 5,000 years old. So, you are daydreaming and Americans are daydreaming. We cannot be defeated!"

³⁷ For an illustration of a tiger chair, see *Tiger Chairs and Cell Bosses* (HRW 2015).

When the Chinese guy finished his tirade, a conspiracy theory that everyone in the room had heard before, I said, “Guys, I need clear something up. I’m not afraid of anything. Everything you ask me, I will tell you the truth because I only have the truth. I don’t have anything to hide. Everything is online, everything is accessible, everything is clear. Don’t use torture to force me to speak. Everything I know, I’m going to tell you. Don’t use brutality and don’t make me sit like this. It’s useless. Even if you use your fists, it’s useless. You cannot extract anything from my heart. It’s impossible.”

My words had a calming effect on the police officers, who continued to ask questions, but less forcefully. Then, they exited except for one Uyghur guy. He said, “Tell me the truth. What happened?” I responded, “Everything I’ve told you is true. You need to believe me. I was educated in the US and I came back to Xinjiang because our big problem is education. To address this problem, I began my education plan. I have a comprehensive plan to develop mother tongue-based multilingual schools, from kindergarten to senior high school.” After describing my education plan step by step, the officer remarked, “You are different. I have never met a prisoner like you.” To this, I agreed, “Yes. I’m different. I did not do anything wrong. Believe me. I just want to help my people. I just want to solve the education problem among our people.” The officer then showed his human side and conceded that there may be a mistake with my detention. He unchained me from the tiger chair, led me out the detention center, and told me to get back in the unlicensed car. Other police officers were already seated in the vehicle, and once settled in the driver’s seat, the Uyghur guy turned around and said that we were going to my apartment and office to search for evidence. I said, “Fine. You can search everywhere. I will tell you the way.”

On the road to my apartment, I said, “I want to say goodbye to my wife. That’s my final request. I just want to say goodbye to her for the last time.” They agreed, but when we arrived at my apartment, they refused to let me leave the car. Some of the neighborhoods in Kashgar have labyrinthine streets, and the officers only wanted me along so that they would not get lost. As they searched my apartment, I could see my wife and my daughters crying, but due to the tinted car windows, they could not see me. I pleaded with a Chinese officer who remained behind, saying, “It’s only once. I just want to tell my family that I’m going to be okay, and not to be upset. I just want to see them once more, to tell them these few words.” When he refused, I tried

another approach, stating, “Uyghurs are citizens of China, just like you. We are all subjects of the Chinese government, and we all benefit from peace and harmony.”³⁸ My education plan will bring stability to this region. Could I comfort my wife that my arrest is a mistake?” The officer heard me out but did not budge.

We then went to my school. No one was there, so they brought me inside while they searched my office. At one point, the kind Uyghur officer showed me a USB flash drive and said, “I found this. Tell me, should I report it?” I did not know if he was testing me, but I honestly did not recognize the flash drive, so I replied, “Just keep it and don’t report it.” He also said, “We found your passport, and can confiscate it, but I’m going to give it to your brother.” For this, I expressed thanks – however difficult it is for Uyghurs to obtain a passport, it is even more difficult to recover it from government custody.

They then brought me back to the detention center, where a Chinese officer told the kind Uyghur officer to resume the interrogation. The Uyghur guy locked me back into the tiger chair and said, “I know you are tired, but I have to follow procedure. You are going to stay in Doletbagh for one day, and I want you to be comfortable. What kind of cell do you want?” I answered, “Put me in a single-person cell, with no others, because I don’t want people to know of my confinement.” I reasoned that Kashgar was on edge due to a spate of violent incidents, and that public knowledge of my arrest could incite retaliation from my students and friends (RFA 2013c, a). He agreed with my rationale, but no single cells were available, so I was assigned to a double.

The Uyghur officer unshackled me and brought me into the interior of the detention center, where I was handed over to a different set of guards, who addressed me by number, not name. In a room with more than 20 Chinese guards and a few inmate assistants, I was told to remove my clothes.

Standing naked, my humiliation and sexual abuse began (Chao 2019). The guards commanded me to do things – run, sit, stand on my hands, grab my ankles. I felt awkward and

³⁸ My mention of harmony was a reference to *hexie shehui* (harmonious society), a slogan popularized by PRC President Hu Jintao (2003-2012).

angry, and I knew they were trying to dehumanize me. The Chinese guards laughed and pointed at my body. I could only follow their orders and wonder, *What's wrong with you people?*

After this degrading experience, the guards gave me a gray shirt and pants, led me through a foul-smelling corridor, and put me in a cell with another Uyghur guy. Upon entering, I greeted him, saying, “*Yaxshimusiz*” (Hello). This caused the guards to explode; they began berating me for speaking in Uyghur. And my cellmate curtly told me, “Shut up.” This is how I learned that the Uyghur language was forbidden behind bars. This was also my first lesson in the danger of trying to uphold norms from the outside, for communication or behavior, in jail.

My cellmate kept to himself, but he did tell me that he had been in that cell for more than seven months, for studying Islam – what the CCP calls engaging in illegal religious activities (RFA 2013d). He also pointed out the difference in our clothing, saying that his red clothes signified that he was a political prisoner, while my gray clothes indicated that I had committed a less serious offense. I was curious why he had been held in the detention center for so long, instead of being transferred to a prison, but did not feel comfortable asking him for an explanation.

The small cell provided just enough space for the two of us to lie down. But the problem was that the guards needed to see our faces when they checked on us through a window in the door. They also wanted us to see their weapons when they passed. And for our faces to be visible, we had to lie with our feet toward the door, and our heads facing a squat toilet – a cruddy hole in the ground. That night, I could not fathom using the toilet next to our heads and asked my cellmate, “How can I relieve myself here?” He answered, “No choice, brother.” I said, “I can’t do this.” And he responded, “I can understand, but brother we are in a situation where we don’t have any choice.” That night I held in my waste, but in the morning, my cellmate said, “You need to use the toilet because you will have serious health problems if you don’t.” He was right, and I went ahead.

Around 9:00 a.m., a guard brought us breakfast: steamed bread and a bowl of water. I didn’t want to eat the tasteless bread, but told myself, “If I don’t eat, I will die. And I won’t die for the satisfaction of the CCP, so better eat it all.” I repeated this mantra until I finished the bread.

Soon after, some of the police officers from the previous day came to my cell, including one of the Uyghur officers who arrested me and the kind Uyghur officer who interrogated me. Of all the officers, these two seemed the most reasonable, so I felt optimistic. They led me out of the cellblock, into a room where five new Chinese guys were waiting for me, officers from the Urumchi *chengguan* (Urban Administrative and Law Enforcement Bureau), a parapolice force, infamous for abusing their paltry power.

In the company of these seven men, the kind Uyghur officer asked me what happened in the cellblock. I told him that the Chinese guards treated me like dirt. The men looked at each other, and one of the Chinese parapolice officers said, “The Chinese Communist Party is in power now. If these Uyghurs ever have power, they will treat us like this one day.” At his comment, I first felt happy. That guy implied that this brutal Chinese Communist regime was not going to last forever. But then I had a second thought, *If Uyghurs treat Chinese like Chinese treat Uyghurs, what’s the difference between us?*

My concerns shifted as the kind Uyghur officer and Chinese parapolice officers signaled for us to leave, and then marched me out of the detention center, and into a car. As I was handcuffed, I said, “This is not necessary. I won’t try to escape.” But they said they had to follow orders. In two cars, we drove to the Kashgar airport. We parked, and before exiting, they took my handcuffs off. No explanation was offered, but I suspect they did this because the handcuffs would have drawn attention from the many Uyghurs in the airport. I knew the parapolice were afraid of instigating a Uyghur revolt.

I felt odd to have this semblance of freedom after spending the day and night in chains. At the airport, I walked around like other passengers, and entertained myself by thinking of the different possible scenarios for which people were traveling. When the time came, we all boarded a plane for Urumchi. To my relief, the kind Uyghur officer sat next to me. He said that he had asked for us to take the train to Urumchi, so that we could talk more freely, but his superior had denied his request. With deep sincerity, he thanked me for my work on behalf of our Uyghur community and lamented my misfortune.

Urumchi Tengritagh Detention Center: *Qorqma* (Don't be afraid)

I was disguised as a free man from Kashgar to the Urumchi airport – an outside observer would have noticed nothing special about me, nor my company of unsmiling men. After traversing the airport, we got in some cars that were waiting for us outside the arrivals area. I was expecting to be handcuffed, but for whatever reason, I rode unshackled to Tengritagh District in central Urumchi, an area of the city that is densely populated with Uyghurs.

We arrived at Tengritagh Detention Center, where I was bound to a tiger chair and interrogated as before. A few hours later, I was sent to the cellblock and, like before, the guards told me to remove my clothes. I readied myself for humiliation, and they did make me perform some exercises, but I was relieved that the audience was comprised of just a few guards.

When the guards finished their perfunctory abuse, they gave me a gray uniform, along with some toiletries, a towel, and a blanket, and then led me to a cell. When the door slammed shut, an inmate sprang at me and slapped my face. Since my arrest, I had been threatened with physical violence many times, but this was my first assault. Immediately after getting hit, some of the inmates demanded my clothes. I had no choice but to disrobe, and with the rags I received in exchange, I quickly realized why they wanted mine – new prisoners receive new uniforms, and these are a valuable commodity in jail.

The commotion ended and I observed my surroundings: the cell had a *kang*-style platform bed, with a private bathroom at the opposite end of the cell entrance. Two cameras were attached on opposite walls near the ceiling, allowing the guards to see and record everything happening in the room, 24 hours a day. About 20 inmates were in the cell – a typical number – and most of them ignored me, but not all. A couple guys put me in the bathroom and closed the door, creating a cell within a cell. Standing in this small, dark room was one type of torture, but a second type came later, when they returned. Behind the closed bathroom door, and out of camera view, they slapped my face and beat me.

Like in the Kashgar cell, the Uyghur language was forbidden, but some of the Uyghur inmates suspended this prohibition to play a sick language game. They would ask me questions in Uyghur, but require me to answer in Mandarin, or ask questions in Mandarin and require me

to answer in Uyghur. Of course, my inclination was to answer Uyghur with Uyghur, and Mandarin with Mandarin, so I sometimes tripped up and was punished with their fists.

Torture was part of the onboarding process, a practice used to re-inscribe the inmate hierarchy, and to extract information that could be passed to the guards and then the interrogators. The guards were constantly watching the cameras – I knew this because they would spring into action if inmates prayed or had a conversation in Uyghur. So, they knew which inmates were coordinating activities and abuse in the cell. But the guards permitted this because torture was useful for extracting a confession. Such information could expedite the conviction of a detainee, and guards had an economic incentive to have long-term detainees, because prisoners brought money from the government.

Although my abusers were Uyghur, they deferred to a Chinese inmate, who I realized was the *laotou yuba* (cell boss).³⁹ It was not comforting in the least, but interesting to note that torture seemed organized along ethnic lines. After a few hours, my tormentors released me from the bathroom. The Chinese cell boss then approached and asked me a few questions. When I responded, he said, “You speak Mandarin very well.” He then asked me where I studied, and I told him a bit about my background. When I finished, he shook his head in astonishment, saying, “I have never seen a guy like you. You are talking differently, and you act differently. You *are* different.”

As evening gave way to night, I reflected on two other ways in which inmate behavior differed according to ethnicity. First, as on the outside, many of the Chinese inmates spoke freely and loudly. The Uyghur inmates seemed to display subordination by acting with reservation and speaking in hushed tones. Second, when the command came to sleep, though the lights were never dimmed, Chinese inmates occupied the platform bed while Uyghur inmates were relegated to the floor. However, regardless of ethnicity, the cell boss required all the inmates to stand for a two-or- three-hour shift each night.

³⁹ Cell bosses typically had some distinction prior to incarceration, whether that be wealth, political power, or a familial relationship with an officer in the prison system. They were at the top of the cell hierarchy, and enjoyed preferential treatment (e.g. better food, the freedom to lounge in the guards’ office) in exchange for collecting information, enforcing discipline, and doing tasks for the guards. Cell bosses had great authority because, due to the bad smell, guards rarely came inside the cellblock.

* * * * *

The next day, a guard took me from my cell and led me into a windowless room with two cameras attached to the walls. Three Uyghur men entered; during the interrogation, two remained with me, while the third came and went. He must have been watching me on closed-circuit television when he wasn't present because he would periodically enter the room to threaten and curse at me. I was locked in a tiger chair for a while, but then they let me move to a regular wooden chair on the condition that I sit upright and not relax. The interrogators said they knew who I was, implying their respect for me, but were accountable to their superiors, who were less sympathetic. At some point in the interrogation, I looked down and noticed the word *Qorqma* (Don't be afraid) carved into the arm of the chair. I was heartened to see that Uyghur word – it gave me strength.

The interrogators wanted detailed information about me, so every response generated new questions, leading to new paths of inquiry. They sought to reconstruct the stages of my education, along with my professional and personal life. Every topic was explored through enquiries of who, what, when, where, why, and how.

They concentrated on my experience in the US from start to finish. The interrogators wanted to know who picked me up at the airport at Kansas City. They wanted to know my address in Lawrence. And they wanted to know the names of my classmates and teachers at the University of Kansas. I think the interrogators liked collecting names because these could be written down, so I provided a long list of generic names, such as Peter, Sam, and David. The interrogators could not speak English, so they could only record the English names, but they searched online for the Chinese names that I recalled to verify their existence. The interrogators also asked if I had affiliated with anyone from Uyghur expatriate groups, like the Uyghur American Association or World Uyghur Congress while in the US. And they wanted to know if I had met with Rebiya Kadeer. I said, "I didn't have relationships with any of these organizations or people."

I answered many questions about finances, as related to my Ford Foundation Scholarship and school. The interrogators were convinced that some entity in the US had sponsored my studies at the University of Kansas, and then sent me back to Kashgar, and was bankrolling my school. I tried to dispel them of this notion, telling them that the Ford Foundation operated at the

discretion of the CCP. I showed them the Ford Foundation website in Chinese (2013a), which included my name on a list of scholarship recipients (2013b). To prove that my school was funded by students, I provided numbers on enrollment and tuition. I did the math for them to demonstrate how the tuition offset our operating costs.

The interrogators also asked about my movement website, and the thread on the Second East Turkestan Republic leader, Ehmetjan Qasimi. Consistent with my earlier responses on this topic, I claimed that I had taken the initiative to delete this content.

Two days in, the interrogators began recycling their questions. They seemed conscious of this, and apologized at one point, saying that they were following protocol. But I was happy to answer their questions because I knew that my freedom would only come when their investigation was complete. I assured them, “I can tell you everything because I don’t have anything to hide. I’ll always be cooperative with you.”

On the third day of interrogation, one of the officers told me that his wife was a supporter of my movement. She delivered him an ultimatum, “The one thing I can do to alleviate Abduweli’s discomfort is cook him Uyghur food. But if you don’t deliver it to him, I can’t be with you.” The officer said to me, “My wife is sympathetic to you and she’s angry at me for questioning you. I doubted that your organization was good when you first arrived, but I now believe otherwise. I can’t do much for you, but I can bring you food from my wife. What do you want to eat?” I requested *gushnan* (meat pie), so his wife cooked, and he brought me several of these beef-filled patties the next day. That *gushnan* was delicious, and I ate a lot. But, after many days of bread and water, my stomach could not handle this fried food. In pain, I realized that kindness cannot always bring you happiness. Sometimes, it brings you trouble.

* * * * *

The cell boss ended my physical abuse when he discovered that I was highly proficient in Mandarin and realized that my language skills could be used for his benefit. Many of the Uyghur inmates were not literate in Chinese, so they could not read their indictments, and the Chinese inmates could read the charges, but not translate them into Uyghur. The cell boss appointed me as the cell translator. He wanted me to help him translate and get information from the Uyghur inmates, information that he could then give the officers in exchange for benefits.

This role provided a measured opportunity to use Uyghur, protection from torture, and relief from boredom, but it was unsavory work. I had to spend hours with heroin addicts, thieves, rapists, and killers, learning about all the crimes they were accused of. The men in that cell had a unique lexicon and used Uyghur profanities that I had never heard. As a linguist, this was interesting, but as a human being, their language was difficult to endure.

Our cell received one new inmate while I was there, a Uyghur guy in a red uniform, indicating that he was a political or death row prisoner. Without revealing anything specific, the new inmate said he was a political prisoner. I learned that, for such prisoners, physical violence crossed ethnic lines. The Chinese inmates condemned him, saying, “You are an enemy of our country” and “You are against the Chinese people.” Physical violence followed verbal confrontations; the Chinese inmates beat the Uyghur political prisoner day after day. They talked about Rebiya Kadeer, calling her the devil, and accused the Uyghur inmate of collaborating with her. Even behind bars in China, nationalism can be a license to destroy others.

* * * * *

On my seventh day in captivity, the guards informed me that I would be transferred to another cell. This was standard practice – guards often moved inmates to different cells at whim. They said, “You are trained,” meaning that I had acclimated to the rules and regulations of the detention center, and the social order of my cell, “But you are going to train a second time in a new cell. You are going to experience the initiation again.” They said I would be beaten and subjected to the sick language game again – questions in Uyghur with expected answers in Mandarin and vice versa. I would experience all of it again. I was unhappy with this situation, though not afraid because I knew what was coming.

But I was wrong. Physical abuse in my new cell was not organized by ethnicity. Upon entrance, I was attacked by a Chinese guy. At the end of his assault, I thought, *Well, that’s over with*. But the next day, and every day after, he beat me again. The Chinese cell boss was harsh. He made me use my toothbrush to clean the toilet and would use the toilet immediately after I was done cleaning it, and then tell me to clean it again. He would also spit in my water bowl when it was my turn to have a drink. The political prisoners in the cell had it even worse and were beaten incessantly.

When the Chinese inmates learned about my strong Mandarin skills, at first, they used me for recreation. The Uyghur political prisoners were from rural places near Kashgar, Hotan, and Aksu, and said they didn't speak Mandarin. I later learned that some of them were lying; they were feigning ignorance of Mandarin because they did not want the cell boss to collect information from them. The Chinese inmates had no way of knowing this, so they cursed and insulted the Uyghur political prisoners and made me translate. I was forced to listen and say disgusting things to the Uyghur political prisoners, often about Islam, in our mother tongue. After a few days, this cell boss, like the earlier one, realized that my language skills could be put to use, and told me to review the Uyghur inmates' indictments. Like before, I did not want to hear the sad stories of those men, but I had no choice but to comply.

* * * * *

On September 10, Teachers' Day, the guards brought me from my cell to a room. I was expecting another round of questions, but when the interrogators entered, they handed me a new set of clothes. *This is it*, I thought, *They are preparing me for release*. After changing, the guards brought me back to my cell, but the inmates did not take my new clothes, because they too thought I was leaving. Since my arrest in Kashgar, I had been carrying some money, more than 600 RMB (100 USD), but I never spent it because I did not trust the cell bosses to purchase things for me. Anticipating my freedom, I gave the money to a teenage Uyghur thief, saying, "This money is for you. Maybe you can use it." I was called out of the cell again, and led to the cell block exit, but before crossing the threshold, a black sack was thrown over my head. Someone then grabbed my arm, led me out of the detention center and pushed me into a car.

Urumchi Liudaowan Prison: Every color had disappeared

After a short drive, the car stopped, and the sack was pulled off my head. I had arrived at Liudaowan Prison, a maximum-security jail whose name is synonymous with torture. I was escorted directly to the cell block, where the guards made me strip and change into a new uniform, but they did not make me perform any humiliating exercises in front of an audience.

I was led to a cell after receiving my toiletries, towel, and blanket. As I expected, the prisoners asked me some questions and briefly smacked me around. Because I was the only Uyghur in the cell, I was relieved that I would not have to endure the twisted language game. No

Uyghurs also meant I would not have to translate insults or indictments. But I did encounter new forms of torture: The prisoners entertained themselves for many days by removing my clothes and pouring cold water on my body repeatedly. They also played a game where they described a Uyghur custom, asked for an explanation, and then rebuked me if they didn't like my response. For example, when they asked why some Uyghur women wore their hair in 40 braids, I told them that 40 is a sacred number in Uyghur culture, because the birth of a child is celebrated for 40 days. They rejected my answer, telling me that the number of braids is a commentary on how many sexual partners the Uyghur woman can handle. The prisoners used their fists like exclamation points, to ensure that I renounced my thoughts and absorbed their twisted interpretations.

The cell in this place did not have a private bathroom, but a squat toilet like at Kashgar Detention Center. Thus, all of us had to use the toilet in the open, and suffer the sounds and the lingering, horrible smell. A faucet next to the toilet was our source of water for flushing and bathing, but no one was ever thoroughly clean because that would have entailed public nudity. The only improvement was in access to the toilet – my previous cell bosses had restricted use of the bathroom, allowing us access only once per day, while in this new cell, the boss allowed us to use the toilet twice per day.

Mercifully, the squat toilet was in the corner of the cell – at some distance from the platform bed. With the absence of Uyghurs, I wondered where I would sleep. At night, my question was answered when no one objected to me unfurling my blanket on the bed. But any positive change seemed to be offset by a negative, and for sleep, this meant less – in my new cell, we had to stand for four-or-five-hour shifts during the night. Because the lights were always on, whoever was standing with me would watch me, and slap me if I started to doze off.

As was the case at Tengritagh Detention Center, the guards maintained a rigid schedule of activity, and the cell boss strictly regulated our behavior. Every day, we woke at 6:30 a.m. for a breakfast of steamed bread and water. Then we sat on the bed all morning, relieved only by one hour for exercise in a small courtyard. At 11:30 a.m., we had lunch – a bowl of carrot, cabbage, or potato soup. After eating, we were permitted to nap until 1:30 p.m. Later in the afternoon, the guards brought us back into the courtyard, where we could move around for another hour. I took

advantage of opportunities for exercise because I was worried that if my body deteriorated in jail, my family would be devastated.

Our only other break from boredom came at 5:00 p.m., when the guards turned on our cell television and we were greeted with a succession of horns – theme music signaling the start of *Xinwen Lianbo* (News Simulcast), the daily news program, produced by China Central Television. Before my captivity, I hated that theme music and that show because it was saturated with CCP propaganda, but in prison this program had an entirely different meaning. From the opening horns to the closing credits, the news broadcast brought an array of sounds and colors that I was starved of in my monotonous and monochrome cell. In this environment where every color had disappeared, I relished deliverance from shades of gray. The news also brought images of different people. Even if they were newscasters, or Xi Jinping, these images reminded me that other human beings existed in the world, not just prisoners and guards. The images also reminded me that something called freedom existed beyond the bars of my cell. A world existed outside of prison where things happened that were not a relative degree of terrible. When the news ended at 6:00 p.m., we had dinner of bland soup again. And then, more sitting. At 10:00 p.m., we went to sleep. Outside of this routine, the cell boss controlled our every movement: If you wanted to do anything, you had to ask permission.

Prayer was prohibited, but I surreptitiously prayed in the interval between washing and dressing. And occasionally, using noise from the television as cover, other inmates and I prayed during the evening news, but this was risky. The guards encouraged inmates to snitch on those who prayed, and on a few occasions, I was rightly and wrongly charged with praying, and made to clean toilets or stand awake all night as punishment.

The *surahs* (chapters) and *ayahs* (verses) from the Qur'an gave me strength to tolerate the long periods of sitting and stagnation. You see, even though my body was motionless like a sock, my mind remained active, and was occupied with thoughts of my family and life outside of jail – thoughts that brought me sadness and made me long for freedom. Even when thinking of songs, my mind gravitated toward those with mournful lyrics or melodies. Rhythmical verses from the Qur'an provided another focal point, helping me to maintain composure and peace of mind. My belief that Allah helps those on the right and truthful path fortified my confidence that I would be liberated from my horrible situation. I told myself that this difficult experience was a test of life –

I'm taking a test, and if I perform well, Allah will save me. I also prayed to see my mother again, while she was still alive, to see her strong and show her my strength.

The guards in Liudaowan Prison had the same temperament as guards elsewhere, but they seemed more concerned with cell cleanliness. The guards periodically came to check the condition of the cell and would point out areas that needed to be cleaned. Confined to a place defined by stationary boredom, I was happy to have something to do, even if it was scrubbing my cell.

A few days after my arrival, the guards brought me from my cell into a room with a couple of Chinese police officers. They asked me about my crime but rejected the idea that I had committed investment fraud. One officer said bluntly, "You are lying. You are not a common criminal; you are a political prisoner." I resisted his claim, saying that I was wrongly arrested for financial transactions related to my company. But the officer dismissed my words, and handed me an orange uniform, which had the same significance as red uniforms elsewhere. I thought, *This is going to be bad – a Uyghur in orange clothes in a cell filled with Chinese inmates*. When I returned to my cell, the other inmates looked at me with suspicion. They asked if I was a political or death row prisoner. I said neither, but they pointed to my clothing, and accused me of being a political prisoner. From that point on, the Chinese inmates referred to me as a terrorist and a separatist, and took every opportunity to remind me that, as an enemy of China, I was their enemy.

My interrogation continued, still conducted by the guy with the sympathetic wife, but he had a new partner. During our first meeting, the new interrogator shouted and waved his fists at me. But I suspect that the other guy convinced him to change his tone because, in later meetings, he was calm. Though I was spared some forms of intimidation, the new interrogator tried a variety of methods to cause psychological distress. One time, he said, "Maybe you are bored in your cell. I have many mistresses outside. Do you want to talk with them?" Then he called some lady and handed me his phone and told me to talk to her, but I refused and he fortunately relented. Another time, using a laptop computer, he showed me a movie about a troubled guy who changed his ways after converting to Islam. At the end of the film, that interrogator asked me for my reaction. I said nothing, so after a while, he remarked, "You didn't have any response when

watching the movie.” I replied, “Yes, I know you were observing me.” He asked me a few other questions, trying to get me to say something, but I just refused.

The sly interrogator also tried to make me confess to membership in some clandestine group. He said, “We know you have a strong connection with the US and Turkey. Some person or organization sponsored your studies in the US and sent you back to China. You need to tell the truth. Are you working for the CIA or some Turkish organization or a secret society?” He then repeated the widespread conspiracy theory about US agencies supporting separatists in China. I denied any such relationship, but he countered by asking why I had foreign language books in my electronic files. I told him to check the content, and he would see that all the titles were related to linguistics and education; none were concerned with politics.

After reciting conspiracy theories for several hours, the sly interrogator said that the US and Turkish governments were recent enemies of China, but that many adversaries had opposed ancient and imperial Chinese dynasties, including Tamerlane, who in the fourteenth century controlled some territory in East Turkestan that had belonged to the Chagatai Khanate. Before his death, Tamerlane had plans to invade China and battle the Ming Dynasty. The sly interrogator mentioned other historical figures that had opposed Chinese dynasties, and then placed me in this lineage, saying, “If I know what these others have done, how could it be possible that I don’t know about you?” I recognized his historical knowledge, and bridged this compliment by saying, “As someone who values the truth, you must accept the true things I have said to you. I have nothing to hide.” But he was not convinced and dug in further, saying, “Uyghurs have wanted to be separate from China for a long time. The Turkish and US governments are cultivating this aspiration. You were indoctrinated with separatist ideology in Turkey. And you have political and economic support from the US.”

I don’t know if the sly interrogator concocted this story himself, or if he was repeating something he had heard, but this account meant that I was a good enemy for the CCP – the ideal enemy. Then he went one step further and said that the Xinjiang Political and Legal Affairs Commission was behind my arrest. He informed me that, in addition to the “three evil forces” of separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism, my movement – a use of soft power – was a fourth, unpublicized danger and was considered to be the highest form of threat to the Chinese state. After taking all of this in, I could only reply, “This is complete nonsense. I know you want

to prove that my ambitions are evil, but even if you spend the rest of your life trying to do so, you will fail.”

The sly interrogator then changed the topic and turned his attention to my words, written and spoken. He started by saying that I had a reputation among Uyghurs as a writer, but since he had not heard of my work, I held no status as an author. He then listed famous Chinese novels and told me they were beyond my comprehension. I let his insult slide and responded, “I have no doubt that Chinese civilization is great and worthy of respect. And I think Mandarin and Chinese culture are rich. I have never suspected this.” He then cited a fragment from a transcript of one of my speeches, that “fascists are cultural chauvinists,” and asked for an explanation. I replied, “That speech was about the dangers of cultural chauvinism. I was talking about Hitler, a fascist, saying that he was chauvinistic toward ethnic minority groups. I was also talking about Stalin, another fascist, because he promoted a Russian chauvinism that contributed to the fall of Soviet Union. I did not describe the Chinese Communist Party or Chinese officials as fascist. But I did say that a one-party system that excluded ethnic minority groups could enable cultural chauvinism in the dominant group.”

My criticism of the CCP upset the sly interrogator, but he was smart enough to realize that my words could not be submitted as evidence of a crime. I knew that the CCP had initially imprisoned me because I was advocating mother tongue education in Kashgar and in Urumchi, but I also knew that the case against me would eventually fall apart. However, when the sly interrogator showed me a volume of papers filled with my writings and speeches, translated into Chinese, my anxiety rose. I feared punishment for this content because, decontextualized, my words could be interpreted as oppositional to the Chinese state.

As for my spoken words, I was worried that the sly interrogator might force me to defend some of the things I had said. He could have accused me of inciting protest, by bringing up the meeting in Artux, where I had encouraged students to embrace freedoms protected by PRC law, which resulted in students wearing burkas, headscarves, and doppas to school. He could also have accused me of separatism, by citing a speech I made at a high school in a small county in Kashgar in 2013. At that meeting, a student had asked, “Do you think Uyghur people are becoming weaker?” To this I replied, “No. Uyghur people are becoming stronger.” When the student asked why, I said, “If you are weak, it is not necessary to have tanks and the army

positioned in the streets. It's because you are strong. That's a sign that we have become strong. Our conscience, our power, our resilience makes the Chinese government afraid. They point their tanks at us because we are strong." A couple weeks later, I was speaking at another high school, when another student asked me the same question – whether Uyghur people were becoming weaker. I knew how students, even in rural areas, communicated with each other, and I knew they wanted to hear the response that I had given earlier. But I was worried about drawing attention, and just said, "Somebody asked this question and it's a good question. But I answered it before, so you can ask those students who heard my answer."

I was relieved when the interrogators did not ask about these episodes or delve into this trove of material. Instead, they turned their attention to a trip my wife, Mihrigul, took to Washington D.C. They said they knew she had visited an expat Uyghur, named Mamatjan Juma, who was working for Radio Free Asia. I confirmed this, saying, "You are right. My wife went to a friend's home in Washington D.C. to deliver some gifts, but she did not go to the office of Radio Free Asia. Her friend's family is also from Kashgar, and when my wife came to the US, to avoid the high shipping cost, they gave her some traditional Uyghur clothes and quilts for their relatives. The interrogators were not satisfied with this explanation. They said, "Evidence of your relationship with the worker from Radio Free Asia will be damning for your case," and ended the interrogation for the day.

The interrogators pursued this lead and went to Kashgar to interview a brother of Mamatjan Juma, who also happened to be one of my former teachers. I later learned that, when the interrogators arrived in Kashgar, Mamatjan's brother was being held at a detention center, but a structural flaw in the PRC security system prevented them from finding him. The Ministry of State Security and the Ministry of Public Security are separate organizations that do not always cooperate or share information with each other. The interrogators worked for the Ministry of State Security, but the police officers who arrested Mamatjan's brother worked for the Ministry of Public Security, and these agencies were not in communication. Mamatjan's brother was detained for 15 days, but the interrogators were in Kashgar for just one day. When they couldn't find him, they dropped this line of investigation.

Over the next few days, I was called back to the interrogation room only once. They wanted me to tell them everything I knew about Uyghurs conspiring with foreigners, promising

me freedom in exchange for such information. I found myself in the recurring predicament where I could not invent something that could not be substantiated. I said, “I don’t know anything about conspiracies between Uyghurs and foreigners to damage China. I do not know any Western spies or separatist instigators.”

* * * * *

In early October, I was transferred to another cell, and suffered another round of physical abuse. When I recovered, I saw other Uyghur prisoners for the first time at Liudaowan. As I had experienced at Tengritagh Detention Center, Chinese inmates slept on the bed, while Uyghurs slept on the floor. But unlike my previous cell, this floor was filthy. It then dawned on me that cleanliness was less of a regulation, and more of a privilege. Due to the number of bodies and the limited space on the floor, Uyghur prisoners had to sleep close together, like knives in a row. One of the prisoners had scabies, a contagious skin condition, and I was forced to sleep next to him. Sometime during those nights, his mites traveled and infested me. As a result, a rash formed all over my body, accompanied with intense itching. It was especially bad at night and often disrupted my sleep. I pleaded with the guards to ask my brother, the one who was also a police officer, to provide an ointment for me, and they agreed. But nothing arrived, so my rash and itching persisted. Other inmates avoided me due to the severity of my condition, and this isolation engendered another type of pain. When thieves, rapists, and killers do not want to associate with you, one feels a special kind of indignity.

* * * * *

On January 30, 2014, the guards surprised us by turning on the television in the evening, and tuning to the Spring Festival Gala, a four-hour marathon of music, dance, comedy, and dramatic performances. Hundreds of millions of viewers in China and abroad tune into this program on the evening before the start of the Lunar New Year. That show marked the beginning of a week where our strict regulations were relaxed; during this time, we were permitted to sleep and watch television at our leisure.

Our food also was different in observance of the holiday. Instead of soup, we received dumplings and vegetables with rice. For a few meals, we had vegetable soup with meat. I suspect they sometimes served pork, which put me in a compromising situation: The Qur’an prohibits

Muslims from eating pork, but the guards considered the rejection of food to be a punishable form of protest. Fortunately, Islamic law is flexible and allows exceptions for conditions that are beyond one's control. Despite this, I still felt awful eating the suspected meat. For a snack, we were given apples, which tasted amazing after not having fresh fruit for several months. The guards also dispersed *choudoufu* (stinky tofu), a fermented food loved by the Chinese inmates, but not me. I was worried that I would be chastised for declining the *choudoufu*, but no one noticed my refusal.

At the end of Spring Festival golden week, a guard distributed paper and pens, telling us we could write a letter to our parents that they would mail. I penned a letter with great care and handed it to the guard, who rejected it with a scowl. Later I learned the meaning of his expression – the guards only accepted letters written in Chinese. For me, this was not an option because my parents couldn't read Chinese, so I had to write in Uyghur. I held on to the letter, intending to send it to my mother somehow, but during a strip search, the guards found it. In response, they burned the letter in front of my eyes and put me into solitary confinement for a few days.

* * * * *

In early March, I asked a guard to let me see my profile on his computer, and to my surprise, he obliged. When my information appeared on the screen, I saw a note stating that I was not permitted to meet with a lawyer until the end of March 2014, seven months after my arrest, signed by a cadre named Remutulla. The note also included the name and contact information of the lawyer who was assigned my case. I asked other political prisoners about the lawyer and learned that he was from the Ministry of State Security, and though Uyghur, he was infamous for colluding with the police, prosecution, and judges to reach verdicts that were agreeable to the CCP.

Sure enough, in late March, a guard called me over and brought me to my appointed lawyer. He started our meeting by telling me that my indictment had changed three times during my captivity. In Kashgar, I was initially charged with falsely reporting my company's investments. Later, in Urumchi, the charge changed to collecting illegal investments, and then, collecting savings illegally. These were all variations of financial fraud. I didn't bother asking why the changes had occurred – the CCP does this to hold people indefinitely.

The lawyer seemed nervous about disclosing more information, so I took the lead and asked about my family: wife, daughters, and mother. But he shut down my line of inquiry, telling me not to ask those questions. Then he asked some basic questions about my allegations, revealing that he hadn't even glanced at my indictment. Still, he was the only lawyer I had, and I knew that for him to represent me, he needed to know about my case, so I summarized my story, and to my satisfaction, he paid attention and took notes. At the end of our meeting came another shock – the lawyer slipped me a wad of money, saying, “From your brother.”

* * * * *

No one in my family was permitted to visit me in prison, but I knew my brother came because, nearly every two weeks, I received money and a receipt with his signature. I read symbolic meaning into the amounts he provided, imagining that he was sending me messages about the length of my stay. So if my brother sent 600 RMB (100 USD), I would think that, in 60 days, I might be freed. I was always troubled by large amounts because, in my system of meaning, I felt that he was telling me to expect a long period of confinement.

In the cell, as in China and many places elsewhere, money is of great consequence for your standard of living. When assigned to a cell, the cell boss would ask how much money you have. If you were holding a thousand or more *yuan* (dollars), the cell boss would treat you favorably because you could participate in the cell economy. Inmates with purchasing power could buy food and toiletries, the money first passing through the cell boss, and then to the guards, with everyone skimming money along the way. Regarding the purchase of food, on Mondays the cell boss would distribute a commissary list, including chicken, beef, milk, chocolate, and different types of fruit. Those with money would indicate quantity of item and day of delivery. Conversely, if you didn't have money, you couldn't participate in the cell economy, so you were of less value to the cell boss and guards. In reality, my brother's money had no connection with the length of my time in jail – he was simply trying to make me more comfortable.

Though I was eating sufficiently, my general health was in decline. I had been suffering from scabies for six months, and lesions from the parasitic mites had formed all over my body. Some of the lesions were infected and getting worse. Long before, my brother had sent the ointment I requested, but for whatever reason, it wasn't given to me. By the end of March, I

could not bear the pain any longer and begged for treatment. The prison warden finally took notice and gave me a tube of ointment. I put it on that night, and by the next day, my condition had drastically improved. It would take a few weeks for my skin to heal, but I was no longer in constant agony.

* * * * *

A couple of weeks later, I had another meeting with my lawyer. This time, he came with a box containing 12 files, each filled with at least 100 papers; these were reports compiled from my month-and-a-half long interrogation. The lawyer asked if I wanted to read the documents, but I declined, saying, “No, it’s impossible to read all of them.” He then asked a few questions about my educational enterprise, a welcome change from the interrogators who only wanted to discuss my experiences in Turkey and the US. When our meeting was winding down, I again asked about the condition of my family. Without a word, he opened a file and showed me a picture of my wife and daughters. When I saw them, I cried, causing him to snap, saying, “Don’t cry because there is a camera recording us. You’ll put me in danger.” I asked to hold the photo, but he said no.

After several visits from the lawyer, the guards began to change their attitude toward me. I think his presence signaled that my guilt was not certain. At any rate, the guards no longer treated me like a dangerous criminal. One Uyghur guard was especially kind and showed me a supportive WeChat post from his phone featuring me and Ilham Tohti, who had been imprisoned since January 2014. He said that the post, featuring our pictures and information about our cases, was circulating among Uyghurs. And after one meeting with my lawyer, the same guard approached us and said, referring to me, “Do you know who this guy is? He’s the pride of our people and did very good things for our community. You should be proud to represent our hero.” My family and friends had been trying to send me food during my captivity, but prior to the arrival of my lawyer, the guards did not accept it. After I had legal representation, the guards began delivering me food from outside. I’ll never forget eating the *polu* (rice pilaf with lamb) that one of my wife’s friends sent to me. I was so happy to have this clean food.

More auspicious signs followed. A Uyghur police officer from the Special Police Unit came by my cell and greeted me in Uyghur, which shocked the Chinese inmates. Also, a Chinese guard told me that he was learning Uyghur, and at his request, I recommended some language

learning materials and helped him prepare for an exam. These interactions gave me hope. For the first time in a long time, I felt like a human being and someone of value. At the end of April, from the window in my cell, I noticed a tree, and every morning thereafter, I would look at it, observing its growth. Eventually, a leaf emerged from one of its branches, and I thought, *This is good. Things are changing.*

* * * * *

I was transferred to a new cell in April, where there was a Pakistani, a guy who was convicted of killing his fiancée. He was the only foreigner I saw at Liudaowan, and because he spoke only Urdu and English, the guards needed me to be his translator. I don't know why, but that guy had special status. He was served the same food as the guards though I never saw him pay for anything. And he had milk every morning. He also quickly received any requested medicine.

Although physical and psychological abuse was routine in the cell, the Pakistani was not subject to any ill treatment. No one touched him, and he slept in a broader space than others. And because I was associated with the Pakistani, I also received some preferential treatment, like a bigger space on the bed, and freedom to sleep at any time. When he was bored, the Pakistani would tell the guards that he wanted to talk, and the two of us would sit in a clean office with the guards. Yes, this man was a killer, but he also had a good sense of humor, and would say ridiculous things, that upon my translation, made us all laugh. Though he was a foreigner, that Pakistani provided me with hospitality in my own homeland.

One day, we both were looking at the tree from our cell window, and the Pakistani said that the tree symbolized his life in prison. He said, "If this tree grows without any obstacle, it means my path is clear, but if it gets cut down, I will have trouble." As I had done with the money from my brother, it seemed that the Pakistani was creating his own world of symbolic meaning. But that guy was always joking, so I asked, "Are you kidding? Do you believe this kind of stuff?" And he said, "Yes, I do." A few days later, the Pakistani was staring out the window, visibly upset – the tree had been cut down. He didn't eat that noon.

My time in the cell with the privileged Pakistani, from April to the end of June, was the easiest of my incarceration. I was relieved to be around someone who was college-educated.

Because no one else spoke English, no one could monitor our conversations, freeing us to speak about politics, history, film, literature, and poetry. He even taught me some Urdu to better appreciate the poetry of the Pakistani politicians, Muhammad Iqbal and Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Chinese police officers stopped by our cell occasionally to confirm that he was being treated well. After one of these checks, the Pakistani told me that he liked Chinese police more than Uyghur police. When I asked why, he said that Chinese police have the real power. I guess such a thing wasn't hard to see.

* * * * *

Around three o'clock one morning in May, a Uyghur wearing an orange uniform was put in my cell. I hadn't seen a Uyghur guy for a long time and was happy, but my joy was extinguished when the cell boss ordered a Chinese prisoner to beat him. I hadn't been attacked when I was transferred to this cell because I was protected by my relationship with the Pakistani, but the Uyghur political prisoner had no such security. I could not endure his treatment, and confronted the cell boss, asking, "What are you doing? Why are you hurting him this badly? What's wrong with you?" The guards, who had been watching everything on camera, rushed to our cell, asking me, "What's going on? Why are you interfering?" I replied, "This isn't good. If you treat this guy badly, maybe there will be another ethnic conflict. I have a responsibility to keep them separate." The guards were irate with me for upsetting the balance of power in the cell and defending the political prisoner. The Pakistani did not try to mediate, nor did I expect him to. This battle was not his to fight.

I was moved to another cell, with a cell boss who was determined to reset my aversion to violence. Several Uyghur political prisoners were in the cell, and the cell boss asked me to train them, meaning that I was to assault these men.⁴⁰ The cell boss also expected me to translate his demeaning insults from Mandarin into Uyghur. I would have had a difficult time doing these things to Uyghur men of my own age, but in this cell, some of the political prisoners were from my father's generation, and some of them could have been my son, so my reluctance to harm

⁴⁰ In April and May 2014, Uyghur assailants committed suicide bombings and knife attacks in Urumchi, resulting in many deaths and injuries (Forsythe 2014, Jacobs and Tatlow 2014). In response to these attacks, President Xi Jinping promised to deliver a "crushing blow" to enemies of the PRC (Xinhua 2014). Many Uyghurs were subsequently jailed as political prisoners.

them was even stronger. When I would not comply, the cell boss forced the Uyghur political prisoners to repeat offensive phrases and commanded the Chinese inmates to retaliate with physical violence.

These cruelties were typical in prison, but what I experienced next was a unique form of depravity. The cell boss forced Uyghur political prisoners to wipe Chinese inmates' asses after using the bathroom. He also asked the Chinese inmates to shit in the courtyard, and then made us clean the mess. On my fourth day in the new cell, I told a guard that I needed a pen and paper to record some information about a Uyghur political prisoner's case. But this was just a pretense to secure a means to communicate with the guards. I wrote them a note, explaining what was happening, and minutes after receiving it, a guard announced that I was being transferred. Before releasing me into my new cell, the guard told me not to speak of this experience.

* * * * *

In mid-June 2014, I was visited by two prosecutors who presented me with some dire options. They reiterated that I was charged with collecting savings illegally and pressured me to plead guilty. I countered that I could not do so because I was innocent. They seemed prepared for my response, and said, "If you don't accept guilt for this crime, you will be charged with opposing the Chinese bilingual education policy." I refused their option, but they persisted, saying, "Take the first charge, and you'll be an economic criminal, or take the second, and you'll be a political prisoner and never released from jail." But I didn't budge, contending, "That's fine. I rather accept being a political prisoner than an economic criminal. I did not collect savings illegally." We went back and forth about the charges for four hours, until one said, "I know your eldest brother. He told me that you need to accept the first charge." At this, I took pause, and replied, "If this is true, then I will follow his advice. But," I added, "I will only accept my own guilt. Do not use my decision to implicate my partners, Dilyar and Muhemmet. We are all individuals, with separate backgrounds, so don't use me to force them to accept guilt for this economic crime. It's their freedom to accept or not."

Soon after this meeting, I found that Dilyar had been transferred to the cell next to mine. Though I couldn't risk speaking with him directly, there was a thief in my cell who had previously shared a cell with Dilyar, and agreed to be our intermediary. Communicating through

the thief, I learned that, like me, Dilyar had accepted guilt for the economic crime. And the prosecutors had kept their word; they did not use my decision to compromise Dilyar.

A few days later, the prosecutors returned and asked me to prepare an admission of guilt that I would deliver in court. And a few days after that, I switched uniforms from orange to gray, and was transported from prison to the Tengritagh District Court. Entering the courtroom, I walked past an empty gallery, and joined Dilyar and Muhemmet – the leaders of the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education reunited for the first time in nearly a year. The only other people in the room were our appointed lawyers, the prosecutors, some clerks, and a judge.

The hearing felt like a quick read-through of a play. With cameras rolling, the judge asked a series of questions, most of them addressed to the prosecution, but a few directed at our lawyers and us. At the end, Dilyar, Muhemmet, and I signed papers related to our indictment and confession. And then it was over, and we were marching to the exit.

My lawyer returned a couple weeks later, and in our meeting, I learned that the earlier hearing felt like a rehearsal because it was a rehearsal. That trial was private because it was practice for a public trial to take place in a few days. The rehearsal was to prepare the judge and prosecution to deliver a smooth proceeding in public. And if the public performance deviated from the private session, such as a defendant recanting their confession, the recording from the private session could be inserted.

On July 11, we were called back to court for our public trial. The script was nearly identical; the actors with the main speaking roles, the judge and the prosecutors, delivered their lines as before. But there were a few notable differences in this re-run. First, an audience packed the gallery, including my wife, mother, and eldest brother. Second, the prosecutors complemented our good conduct and cooperativeness. I welcomed these two changes, but a third difference caused me discomfort: The prosecution claimed that Muhemmet had caused our arrest by going to a police station and reporting our crime by his own volition. I knew that this was untrue; the prosecution must have promised him leniency if he agreed to claim such nonsense. All the other content remained the same. In a single day, this seemingly complex trial, involving the activities of three people over the course of two years, was over.

Urumchi Koktagh Prison: Do you want to defend yourself?

At the end of August 2014, I had the black bag treatment again and was transferred to Koktagh (Midong) District Prison, in northern Urumchi. The inmates at Koktagh engaged in the same practices as elsewhere. Upon entering my new cell, I was assaulted and then assigned toilet cleaning duty, all while enduring a torrent of insults. Like in other cells, the Uyghur language was not permitted, and at night, we had to stand in pairs for three-hour shifts.

Yet Koktagh differed in some ways. For one thing, sleeping locations were determined, not by ethnicity, as at Tengritagh Detention Center, but by crime: Common criminals slept on the platform bed, while political prisoners slept on the cold and dirty cement floor. Having been convicted of an economic crime, I was given a gray uniform and had bed privileges. Naturally, I felt guilty for having better sleeping conditions than the Uyghur political prisoners in my cell, but I could not dispute this arrangement.

During our waking hours, when the other inmates were sitting on the platform, the political prisoners also sat on floor. This new cell also differed materially, having a sealed window. With no fresh air in the room, a wretched stench from the toilet and the men hovered stagnant in the air. I think the guards were also repulsed by the smell because none of them ever stopped by, a circumstance that the common criminals capitalized upon by spewing ceaseless insults at the political prisoners.

* * * * *

On August 21, more than five weeks after my trial, I was visited by my lawyer and learned that the court had issued a verdict. One year and a day after being detained, we had been found guilty of abusing public money. There was no mention of the previous charges. I was sentenced to prison for 18 months and fined 80,000 RMB (13,000 USD). Dilyar was punished more heavily, receiving two years in prison and a fine of 100,000 RMB (16,260 USD), and Muhemmet received the harshest penalty: two years and three months in prison and a fine of 130,000 RMB (21,130 USD). The only bright spot with the court ruling was that our jail sentences were effective from the date of detention, meaning that I could be released in six months. After reading the verdict and sentences, my lawyer asked for my reaction. He must have

predicted that I would defer to my eldest brother because his response was ready: My brother accepted the judgment and said I should quietly serve the rest of my time.

* * * * *

When our cell boss was feeling generous, he would allow us to move at our leisure, and I used these opportunities to maintain my health by walking around the cell. But he never relaxed his strict regulation about speaking in Uyghur, and one morning, I had the misfortune to discover the extent of his resolve. During some free time, I was pacing, and one of the Uyghur political prisoners, walking behind me, asked, in Uyghur, for the date of the Islamic holiday, Qurban Heyt. I responded in a hushed tone, but the cell boss noticed. He sprang on the political prisoner and began beating the hell out of him. When the cell boss rested his knuckles, the Chinese prisoners took over and delivered blow upon blow to the political prisoner. As I watched in horror, I thought about intervening. But then I recalled my earlier experience defending a political prisoner, and my punishment. Despite my knowledge of the possible outcome, I could not watch him suffer and tried to stop the fight. This time I was hit, and my glasses were broken.

The guards came and asked for an explanation. Though I knew they had watched the brawl on their closed-circuit televisions, I told them my version of the event – the Chinese inmates had pounced upon the Uyghur political prisoner, and I had tried to separate them. The guards looked at the scene: the Uyghur guy lying on the blood-smeared floor, holding his nose and mouth. Perhaps because of the severity of his condition, the guards did not criticize me for attempting to intervene. They punished us rather lightly, by making us sit until 3:00 a.m. that night, and not providing food. My broken glasses were a far worse consequence of the fight – after that day, I could not see clearly.

The cell boss didn't hold my actions against me. In fact, we had a decent relationship. He was from a wealthy Hui family and had worked in the automobile industry in Guangzhou and Shenzhen. When he discovered that I could help him advance his novice-level English skills, he began treating me with respect. At first, I despised the cell boss for triggering the beatdown of the political prisoner, but I could not let myself be consumed with hatred. That guy was young – about 20 years old – so I decided to be a positive influence on him.

I taught the cell boss English for about a month, at all hours of the day. I had no language learning materials, so I wrote and he recited, short passages and stories in English on virtues, such as compassion and altruism. When he established a degree of comfort with these short texts, I composed longer essays for his recitation. One day he confronted me, saying, “I’m not stupid. I know you are trying to influence me gradually, to correct my bad habits, to correct my heart. I know you are a good guy, and I accept your plan. I’m not going to insult Uyghur political prisoners anymore. I know it’s wrong.” I replied, “Good, but I don’t mean to protect these men only. I want to protect everyone. I hope you treat others just like I treat you because we are all human beings.”

After discussing the moral substance of my lessons, the cell boss told me details about his family and upbringing. Both his paternal grandparents were Hui, and very religious. His father married a Chinese woman, whose family didn’t value religious beliefs, so the cell boss was discriminated against by his mother’s side of the family. He dealt with his unhappy home by staying away as much as possible and leaving for inner China at his first chance. With nothing to anchor him, he drifted toward the underworld and got involved in criminal activities. I assured him that his mistakes had much to do with his difficulties at home, and the trauma he experienced due to rejection by his mother’s relatives.

My greatest achievement in that cell was convincing the boss to let the Uyghur prisoners learn Mandarin. This required the cell boss and other Chinese inmates to overcome, or at least suspend, their stereotype of Uyghurs as subhuman. I convinced the cell boss that the Uyghur prisoners shared his enthusiasm for language learning and wanted to improve their Mandarin, even though I had not consulted them on this matter. When he agreed, I told the Uyghur prisoners to take this opportunity, because proficiency in Mandarin could help them communicate with the Chinese people they encountered: cellmates, cell bosses, and guards. I said that they could use Mandarin to protect themselves from mistreatment. As I had predicted, when the cell boss and Chinese inmates began teaching Mandarin to the Uyghurs, the aura of hostility abated, and I was able to glimpse, during their relaxed exchanges, humane interactions.

* * * * *

In the middle of October, we were brought to court again, a public trial with a small audience. Contrary to earlier proceedings, after reviewing our indictment, conviction, and

sentence, the judge asked me, “Do you want to defend yourself?” This was the first time that someone seemed interested in seeking the truth of our case, so I dropped my claim of guilt, and said, “Yes. Of course, I want to defend myself.” I spoke at length about my school and our company. I asserted that we hadn’t committed any type of financial fraud when raising funds for our Urumchi school. I told the judge that prosecutors had pressured me for hours to plead guilty or be charged with a political crime. Dilyar and Muhemmet also took the opportunity to defend themselves, and went even further, by appealing for a sentence reduction.

At the end of our hearing, the judge asked if we had anything else to say. I spoke up, saying that I had disclosed everything of relevance to the case, but had a personal request: I needed a new pair of glasses. I said that, for the last three months, on account of my cracked glasses, I had been unable to see clearly. The judge was noncommittal to my request and adjourned court, but on the way out, I saw the blurry image of my brother. He had been in the audience the entire time, but I couldn’t see him from a distance. As I walked closer, his face came into focus, and then I saw his outstretched hand: He was trying to hand me a pair of glasses! I later learned that one of the guards had told him of my need, but he had been unable to get the glasses to me in my cell, and the public hearing was his best chance. I reached out to my brother, but a police officer stepped between us, intentionally obstructing the hand-off. I didn’t have a moment to try again; the guards were escorting us by arm out of the courtroom. Looking over my shoulder, my brother’s face faded from focus with each step away.

Urumchi/Kashgar: Release and return

On November 27, 2014, some guards came to my cell, called me forth, and put me in handcuffs. Their actions indicated that they were preparing to transfer me to another prison. I felt nervous and miserable as they led me down a corridor and into a room, where two Uyghurs, whom I recognized as court clerks from my last trial, were waiting for me. The female clerk told me brusquely, “You’re going to be free.” With three months left on my sentence, I was stunned, and asked, “What? Are you kidding?” She angrily shot back, “I don’t have time to kid with you.” Not wanting to change her mind, I clarified, “No, don’t misunderstand me. I want to leave.” Because I had no way to contact anyone, she let me use her phone to call my eldest brother. I told him that I would be freed at the Urumchi Municipal Courthouse, and he said he would arrange for someone to pick me up.

Then came some paperwork, including a document that needed to be stamped before my release. But the prison officer in charge of the stamp wasn't working that day. I dreaded the possibility of returning to the cell, so I pleaded with the female clerk to let me use her phone once more, to consult with my brother. I recapped the situation for him, and he said tersely, "Don't worry about that. Just get out of there as soon as possible. We can resolve this later." I took the unstamped paper and left. The court clerks drove me to the Urumchi Municipal Courthouse and told me to get out of the car. So there I was, in the freezing cold, shivering in filthy and tattered prison clothes and worn slippers in front of that imposing, columned building. From the window of a parked car, I saw the reflection of a thin man with straggly hair and an unkempt beard.

My niece and a friend pulled in front of the courthouse and I got into their car, quickly changing in the backseat from my prison rags into a set of clean clothes. The only thing they forgot was shoes, so I was wearing a nice shirt and pants with dirty prison slippers. We went to a restaurant, and I remember looking around at the people, trying to reconcile my thoughts. The customers were joyfully chatting and eating, in a relaxed environment with upbeat music playing in the background. I thought, *What's going on here? I am so concerned with protecting culture and fighting for rights, but these people live in a different world: They are eating, they are happy, they are free. So is something wrong with them? Do they not see something? Or am I the one with the problem?*

After eating, I got a haircut, and then went to my cousin's home. That first night, my mind was occupied with competing visions of reality, and I could not sleep. In the early morning, I took my niece to the bus station, and saw her off to school. When returning to my cousin's home, though the sun hadn't risen, another nephew recognized me in the darkness. He looked at me in disbelief, saying with a stutter, "You are, you are..." "Free!" I said, and we embraced.

* * * * *

My eldest brother took a flight from Kashgar and met me in Urumchi. It was a Friday, so we went to mosque for Jumu'ah prayer. After the service, we boarded a plane to Kashgar. My wife Mihrigul and my daughter Masuda met us on arrival. The day before, I had spoken with them, and Masuda had promised that she wouldn't cry, but upon our reunion, she was unable to

hold back her tears, saying, “I couldn’t see my father for one and a half years. How can I not cry?”

We drove from the airport back to Toquzaq, to see my mother. Thank Allah, she was safe and healthy. And then we returned to my home in Kashgar, where I saw Uyghurye, who came to me and kissed me and sat on my lap. When I was arrested, Uyghurye was five months old, so she was now nearly two – a little girl. It took about three weeks for her to recognize me as her daddy, but when she finally said this word with regularity, I was very happy.

The next morning, by invitation, I visited Golden Key, a language learning center that had been started by a former student, who was currently an English major at Kashgar Teachers College. After my school closed, he had employed Mihrigul and accepted many of my students. Upon arrival at his school, he offered me a teaching position, which I accepted, and then he immediately assigned me a class. As I walked down the hall, I reflected on how, in less than 48 hours, I had gone from prisoner to teacher. I then entered a classroom, where my former students were waiting for me, and they began to cry with joy.

I didn’t have a lesson prepared, so I told my students a story: At Urumchi Koktagh Prison, one of the Uyghur prisoners was convicted for using Freegate, software used to circumvent the Great Firewall of China, to access English language websites. That Uyghur guy was only interested in learning English, but the court rejected his defense, thinking he had subversive intentions. While I was teaching English to the Hui cell boss, that Uyghur prisoner sat on the floor below us, and followed the lessons. He picked up everything I taught the Hui cell boss. One day, when I was pacing the cell, the Uyghur prisoner approached me, and said quietly, “Abduweli, *aka* (older brother), I want to recite the texts to you, all of them.” I replied, “I taught the Hui guy more than 30 texts. You know all of them?” He said yes, and then recited the texts with great precision.

I praised that Uyghur guy and continued to listen to him recite the texts that I had composed for the Hui cell boss, but after a while, he said that he needed something more challenging. Because speaking opportunities were restricted, I said that our only option was to use time during exercise and time allotted for the bathroom at night, when no one was paying attention. I suggested that, while walking for 30 minutes before the evening news, I could tell him a story in advanced English, and later in the evening, while he used the toilet, I could sit next

to him, and he could recite the content. He initially demurred, saying, “It’s very dirty beside that hole, and I would feel embarrassed to sit like this in front of you.” But as my first cellmate in Kashgar had said to me, I said to him, “No choice brother.” And I added, “Don’t waste your time here; learn something.” We did this for two weeks, but the Chinese inmates eventually noticed. They then beat the Uyghur prisoner and he was moved to another cell.

I was not warning my students against doing anything that might land them in jail. In our world, under control of the CCP, arbitrary arrest and detention is a fact of life, especially for young Uyghur men, and all my students knew people who had been sent to prison for spurious reasons. They knew that my story was about endurance and how to be productive, even in a seemingly hopeless situation. As I completed my story, I could see my students’ eyes glowing with admiration, and knew they had received my message.

* * * * *

That evening, my thoughts turned to the 80,000 RMB (13,000 USD) fine that the judge had imposed. I was worried because I had invested all my savings into my company. My lawyer had offered no guidance on this issue and had even laughed at my concern. Now speaking with my eldest brother about this topic, I understood my lawyer’s blithe response. My brother said, “It’s just a Chinese game they are playing. You don’t need to pay this.” I also found out that, compared with others convicted of financial fraud, our fines were a pittance.

* * * * *

In the following days, I learned about the international campaign to expose my incarceration and correct this injustice – knowledge that engendered a deep sense of gratitude for the people and organizations behind this work. Radio Free Asia reported extensively on my case in both Uyghur and English. The *New York Times* published articles on my detainment and release (Jacobs 2014b, a). My friends gave interviews, created petitions, and used social media to bring notice to my situation (@Abduweli.Ayup 2014, Mamat 2014, Michael 2014, Wikipedia contributors 2018). I also discovered that the Linguistic Society of America (2014) and the Committee of Concerned Scientists (2014) wrote to President Xi Jinping and other politicians, calling for my liberation. All this attention vindicated my decision to be a voice for oppressed

Uyghur people and fight for the protection of Uyghur human rights. I received this concern as a form of love, a love that encourages my commitment to Uyghur language advocacy.

I know that my friends, at home and abroad, were worried that their activism for my freedom might have the opposite effect, and provoke the CCP to extend my punishment. I also know that some Uyghurs in East Turkestan and inner China feared they might be arrested for advocating for my release. I'm reluctant to say anything about the consequences of such actions because it's difficult to discern patterns in the CCP's treatment of political prisoners and their supporters. Take my early release for example – no explanation was offered for that. But despite the unknown consequences, I still believe that inaction and silence, even if enforced through fear, are types of complicity. If you publicly criticize an injustice, and a government retaliates, this is not the fault of the person who spoke, but evidence of the ignominy of a rotten government. Personally, I denounce injustice because I feel it is my responsibility – I must do something because I want to prove my love.

Because my friends were not afraid to speak about my case, more people around the world learned about CCP human rights violations against Uyghurs in East Turkestan. The CCP saw my advocacy for the Uyghur language and culture as a political threat because activities that promote identity, when viewed through a distorted political lens, can be interpreted as acts of sedition. But, Uyghurs have a human right to speak their language and practice their culture. Speaking in my mother tongue is a not an anti-government activity.

Kashgar: Open-air prison

In Kashgar, I was a free man, to an extent. My first challenge was renting an apartment. This was a forced circumstance – Mihrigul's landlord did not welcome me, a former convict, to reside on their property. In our search for a new place, we faced a couple obstacles. Household registration was always problematic. My resident ID was issued in Lanzhou, and Mihrigul's ID was issued in Urumchi. Renting outside of our registered areas was always difficult, but surmountable with the right *guanxi* (interpersonal connections). My criminal record presented an additional obstacle. My eldest brother told me not to get my prison release document stamped because, if I participated in this procedure, I would be expected to report to the police station in any neighborhood I lived on a weekly basis, locking myself into a perpetual form of probation.

But even without this document, I still had to register at the local police station, and they had access to my criminal record. Upon seeing this, the local police would uniformly say, “You are not welcome here.” This is because, in addition to ubiquitous cameras, the CCP has multiple layers of human surveillance, including police, parapolice, and nosey civilians with armbands labelled Public Security Volunteer, in all residential areas of East Turkestan. For any newcomers, it is tough enough to rent a place because anyone involved in neighborhood surveillance feels extra responsibility to monitor you. But because my record indicated that I had served jail time, no police stations wanted to accept my registration, and the burden of watching and continuously checking on me. Though it took some time, we eventually found and rented an apartment from a woman with *guanxi* among the police, who agreed to turn a blind eye.

My second challenge was dealing with stress from constant harassment by the police. Wherever you walk in Kashgar, police officers are on patrol, and can demand your ID card for no reason. They would scan my ID in a handheld device, and invariably give me trouble, asking questions about my charge and sentence, expecting me to answer respectfully, with the bearing that they could snatch my freedom for any perceived slight. Mihrigul’s cousin had suffered the same treatment. He was imprisoned for about seven years for painting a slogan on a wall that criticized the CCP. After being released from jail, he was walking down the street, and a police officer stopped him, checked his ID, and then arrested him for no reason other than his past conviction. That was in July 2014, and he was held without charge in a detention center for about six months. I was always anxious to avoid the police when walking around, but it was difficult – they were everywhere.

* * * * *

I settled into my English teaching position at Golden Key and was there for about a month and a half, when in the middle of class, a couple police officers barged into my room. I had been anticipating their arrival for some time. On entry, they asked, “What are you doing?” To which I replied, “I’m teaching.” They demanded, and I provided, contact information about the owner of the language learning center. Then they scanned my ID card and rifled through my lesson plans, textbook, and the students’ notes and homework. After this pathetic display of power, the police officers left.

Later, I learned from a friend that the police had entered my classroom to investigate a rumor that some of my female students were wearing headscarves. I'm not sure how this rumor got started – no women wore headscarves in my class. Officials in Kashgar had banned all types of veils for female students, and I reluctantly enforced this regulation in my classroom. The only possibility was that one of the parents, some of whom wore headscarves, might have been mistaken for a student.

Another day, I received a message from the police, warning me not to tell any stories from my time in prison to my students. I complied, but angrily asked how they got this information. The officer didn't reveal his source – they clearly had planted a spy among my students.

I felt the police circling me for some time, and I knew they would ultimately descend. That day came in early December. I was walking to my classroom at Golden Key, when some police officers sprang upon me and demanded my ID. After running my card through their machine, they said, ominously, that they saw something questionable. Then, more police officers arrived, and I was arrested. The whole lot of them berated me, ordered me into a car, and drove me to a police station near the Id Kah Mosque.

At the station, I sat in a room for more than three hours while they checked my laptop and cell phone. Finding nothing objectionable, they spitefully erased my computer, which had digital copies of many books and teaching materials. Then, a bully officer ordered me to clean the toilet. This triggered a stream of memories of abuse I had suffered during my imprisonment. When I asked for a reason, the officer retorted, "Are you a maniac?" To that I replied, "No, I'm not. I cleaned toilets for a year and a half, and I'm not going to do that again because now I'm free." The officer was about to pummel me, but I would not be intimidated. I said, "You don't need to hit me with your fist because you may break your hand. Just use your gun to shoot me. It's okay with me." This caused him to pause, and he said, "This one is too crazy. Put him in a cell."

After sitting in the cell for over an hour, another police officer, an older guy, walked by and said I looked familiar, like my eldest brother, who had worked at that police station several years earlier. I said, "Yes, I am his younger brother." He then asked, "Why are you here?" I replied, "I don't know." He then took me out of the cell and called my brother, asking for an

explanation, but my brother knew nothing. When the older guy asked the others to justify my arrest, the bully officer said that my ID card indicated that I had a criminal record. The older guy told me, “Just go home and don’t say anything.”

* * * * *

At the end of December 2014, I traveled to Lanzhou, to visit my Hui friend at the Center for Studies of Ethnic Minorities in Northwest China. Because that institute conducts research that informs government policy in East Turkestan, I went there to find out what he had been working on, and about any forthcoming CCP policy changes.

My friend told me that he had been sent to Lukqun, a township near Turpan, for a month, after a riot on June 26, 2013, that resulted in 35 deaths. In his investigation into the cause of the riot, he found that the CCP had habitually sided with Chinese landowners in conflicts with Uyghur farmers over land and water resources. Angry about this unfair treatment, Uyghurs attacked a police station and some government offices.⁴¹ My friend compiled his findings in a report for the Chinese government, but on submission, it was ignored.

I asked my friend questions until late in the night, making every attempt to get a grip on CCP policy in East Turkestan, but he couldn’t explain what the government was trying to achieve. After a while, he confided that he wrote reports for the government, not because he expected his analysis and advice to influence policy, but because this job provided financial security. He asked me to join him in Lanzhou and work with him, but I declined, thinking, *Why write reports with recommendations that are ignored? This doesn’t help solve any problems.* I know he also recognized the futility of his work. At the end of the evening, he said what some other scholars had said to me in Kashgar, “I don’t have any hope for the future. Don’t try to solve these problems; it’s useless.” I returned home dejected.

* * * * *

On the morning of July 6, 2015, I was commuting to Golden Key, when a Special Police Unit officer at a checkpoint flagged down my bus for an ID check. Such stops had become

⁴¹ Other sources indicate that Uyghur discontent was fueled by CCP policies aimed to regulate religious expression, such as long beards for men, and veils or other Islamic clothing for women ("Ethnic unrest in Xinjiang" The Economist 2013).

typical, with Chinese and Uyghurs receiving different treatment. Officers allowed Chinese passengers to remain in their seats, while Uyghur passengers were expected to exit the bus and submit their ID for digital inspection and respond to questions about their purpose and destination. The same thing always happened when sharing a taxi with Chinese people – Uyghurs would be checked, while the Chinese passengers were given a free pass. According to the CCP Constitution, all citizens are equal, regardless of ethnic background. However, in East Turkestan, Uyghurs are subject to systematic indignities.

After scanning our IDs, the officer told the Uyghur passengers to reboard the bus, except for me. I protested that I had a class to teach and that my students were waiting, but he wasn't persuaded and told the bus driver to leave without me. As my bus drove away, I told the officer, "Every day, I make two round-trips to Kashgar. You guys have checked my ID many times. Nothing has changed. Why are you making me miss my class?" He responded with his fists, knocking me down and beating me on the side of the road.

I scrambled to my feet and delivered a variation of what I had said to the bully officer, "During my time in prison, I saw more than ten Uyghurs sent to their deaths. One day we were sharing a cell, and the next day, they were killed. So, death is nothing new for me. We Uyghurs will be killed someday – It's only a matter of time. Maybe it will be today, maybe it will happen tomorrow, so what's the difference? You have a gun. You don't need to beat me like this on the road. Just kill me. I'm ready to die." As the bully officer had said, that awful guy repeated, "You are a maniac."

The Special Police Unit officer put me in a holding cell in their outpost, telling me that I would be transferred to a police station in the city. Another officer guarded me and passed the time by asking inane questions, such as, "Are Chinese or Uyghurs good?" Those guys would beat you for ignoring them, so I responded to such questions perfunctorily, saying things like, "Chinese are excellent. Uyghurs are bad guys." After a while, they put me in a car and drove me to the station, hurling insults at me the entire way. When I arrived, the station was overcrowded and I was placed in a cell near the front, where I could see people come and go. Fortunately, in the traffic, an acquaintance recognized me, and she told my eldest brother that I was in jail. My brother, in turn, called the chief of that station, and after they spoke, the chief came to my cell and released me. As he walked me out, I was more angry than relieved, and demanded to know,

“Why did you arrest me? Why are you setting me free? I want to know what’s wrong.” But he said, “Just keep quiet, and leave here as soon as possible.”

I left, but I could not bear the abuse anymore, living with the constant threat of assault, arrest, and detention. I went to the Kashgar municipal government and asked an official, “Who is accountable for my arrest?” but they denied any knowledge or responsibility. So I then went to a police station, asked the same question, and received the same response. But unlike the government official, the police officers showed a modicum of interest, asking me about my assailant. When I said that he was wearing a Special Police Unit arm patch, they said I needed to go to that bureau, though they did not provide any contact information.

After some calls, to a friend who was a police officer, and then his chief, I got the phone number of a commander from the Kashgar Special Police Unit bureau. He gave me the address of their station, and upon arrival, I told him about the event and wrote it down. In both speaking and writing, after my description, I asked, “Why was I arbitrarily attacked and arrested?” And, “When will this cycle end?”

It was 10:00 a.m. when I entered the station, and after my initial meeting with the commander, I waited until 5:00 p.m. until I saw him again. At that time, he led six officers into the room, and asked if the guy who beat me was among them. My assailant was not there, although I did recognize the guard who had asked me the stupid questions. I knew they had cameras at the outpost, so I suggested they let me identify my assailant by showing me the film, but the commander told me the camera was broken. I knew he was lying, but played along, saying, “Yes, okay, maybe that camera is broken, but the guy who beat me took me to the police station, and I know there are cameras there...” But he cut me off, saying, “You need to decide if you want to be safe or if you want to be in trouble. Choose one.”

The commander excused the officers, dialed a number on his phone, and then handed it to me. It was the chief of the police station who had freed me earlier. Keeping in mind the commander’s ultimatum, I also knew this was my best, and maybe last chance to resolve my problem. I told the chief that I was seeking an explanation for my arrest and detention because I didn’t want to experience these things again. He impatiently told me, “I set you free because of your brother, because you have friends among the police. But if you keep looking for answers, your eldest brother and friends will have trouble.” To this, I said, “Okay, I’m not going to ask

about this anymore,” and walked out the door, throwing my report in the trash. Because my face was black and blue from the beating, I avoided seeing my mother for several days. With a heavy heart, I had to accept that, for me, Kashgar was an open-air prison, and I had to leave.

* * * * *

One day after returning home from work, at the beginning of August, an eviction notice was posted on my door, saying that we needed to leave as soon as possible. I went to the local police station for an explanation, and an officer told me we had to leave because my ID wasn't issued in Kashgar. This was a perennial issue, but I tried to elicit some sympathy, asking, “If we go to Lanzhou, they will ask us to leave because my wife's ID wasn't issued in Lanzhou. If we go to Urumchi, they will ask us to leave because my ID wasn't issued in East Turkestan. Where are we going to live?” But the officer had none, replying, “I don't know. I don't care where you're going to live. Just know that because of your criminal record, you are not welcome here.”

The CCP would not allow us to live anywhere in East Turkestan, yet I knew they didn't want me to leave China, and enjoy a life free from their surveillance and control. Escaping from the CCP is not easy, so I took an incremental approach. First, Mihrigul and my eldest daughter Masuda tested their ability to travel by going on a short trip to Japan. Though they were successful, the Japanese visas were difficult to obtain, so we considered other nations. Kyrgyzstan was not possible because their consulate only granted visas to citizens holding a resident ID issued in East Turkestan. But Turkey looked promising because an electronic visa could be obtained online. Mihrigul and I decided that I should attempt to leave first, because my exit would be the most uncertain. And then, she and our daughters would follow.

Fortunately, during the summer, I met some Uyghur businesspeople who were investing in a hospital in Turkey. They needed a Turkish interpreter, so I accepted this job. After filling out my Turkish e-visa application, I booked my flights, from Kashgar to Urumchi, and from Urumchi to Ankara.

Though I was not authorized to live in Urumchi, I owned an apartment in the city, and this is where I went after arriving in Urumchi, on the evening of August 23. Soon after entering, a few police officers knocked on the front door, asking, “What are you doing?” I said, “Going to sleep.” They demanded my ID card, and we had a tedious argument, with them stating repeatedly

that I was not registered to live in Urumchi, and me asserting that I owned the apartment. They finally left, but implied that they would return, saying the same thing I was told in Kashgar, “We are sorry, but because of your ID card and criminal record, you are not welcome here.”

On the night of August 25, I went to the Urumchi airport. After checking in with the ticketing agent, I watched all the Chinese passengers pass through border inspection smoothly, but when Uyghurs reached the checkpoint, their passports and visas were scrutinized by officers from the Ministry of Public Security. I waited until all of the Uyghurs cleared inspection, and then stepped up to the counter. The border inspection officers asked me many questions about my itinerary and plans in Turkey. After examining my passport at length, they said, “Your name is associated with two resident ID cards. All the information is the same, except one was issued in Upal, and one was issued in Lanzhou.” I had canceled the ID card from Upal when I obtained a new card in Lanzhou in 2001, so there was an error in their system. But I could not acknowledge that both IDs were mine because this would have caused them to look deeper into my background, which might have periled my travel.

Fortunately, the officers didn’t dwell on this discrepancy and asked, “What’s your job?” I said I was an English teacher. “In Lanzhou?” they probed. I said, “Yes.” One officer then picked up his phone and called my former place of employment, the Northwest Nationalities College in Lanzhou. Though it was late in the evening, the officer reached someone from the university, and asked if there was someone named Abduweli working there. And, inexplicably, whoever answered the phone in Lanzhou said, “Yes.” Then the officer told me, “It’s okay. You can go.”

The inspection delayed the flight, with the crew and passengers waiting more than 30 minutes for me to clear the checkpoint. I remember the flight attendant hurriedly helping me board the plane, and then we lifted off.

Ankara: Stateless and stranded

I arrived in Ankara and checked into a hotel. The next day, I began interpreting for the Uyghur businesspeople, and continued this work for the following three weeks. But at the end of my assignment, I did not take a return flight to China. Instead, I moved into a friend’s vacant apartment and coordinated my family’s arrival.

On November 4, 2015, Mihrigul arrived with our daughters, and we began a new life as refugees. That first night, I told my daughters that our move was temporary, saying, “This year you are in Turkey, maybe next year, you will be in Times Square. Don’t feel bad. At the end, our destination is home in East Turkestan.”

Although we had escaped from China, I was paranoid that the CCP would pursue me. One day when writing at home, I was startled by a knock at my door. This sound brought back memories of police coming to question me and check my ID. I had to remind myself that I was in Turkey, and reassure myself, that even if police were on the other side of the door, they wouldn’t be Chinese, and were not going to harass or detain me.

My emotional wounds only started to heal in December 2015, when my mother and some relatives were visiting us, and we were sight-seeing in Istanbul. While walking in the city, we were approached by a soldier who said my mother had a striking resemblance to his mother. He asked to take a picture with my mother, and after doing so, I requested to take a picture with him. The soldier readily agreed, and while we stood together, my hand brushed against his gun. In that instance, I realized that a gun doesn’t make someone a dangerous person. There is nothing inherently dangerous about such an object – the difference lies in the heart and mind of the person holding the gun. This realization helped me forgive the Chinese and Uyghur police officers, interrogators, guards, and prisoners who abused me. Those people are not inherently evil – their monstrous acts were enabled by a depraved government and normalized by a cruel society.

* * * * *

Before my escape to Turkey, some young Uyghur teachers at Golden Key asked me if they should seek refuge in another country. At the time, I urged them to stay in East Turkestan, saying, “I’ll be here so don’t go anywhere.” After leaving, I had to write to them, apologizing for being unable to stay, and explaining how my criminal record made my life unbearable. I told them that they were essential to the Uyghur community because they embodied hope for the future, by exemplifying how to be a dignified human being in difficult circumstances. I reasoned that they could make a meaningful contribution to more lives from the inside and confided my regret that I could only talk about human rights from abroad, and not provide support on the ground.

Before the Xinjiang CCP Secretary Chen Quanguo expanded the internment camps in the spring of 2017, I stood by my advice to my colleagues to remain in East Turkestan, and for colleagues in Turkey to return to East Turkestan. But now the conditions have changed, and it would be irresponsible to encourage their residency or return. However, I still believe that the Uyghur diaspora must prepare to return to East Turkestan, when the CCP relaxes its assault against Uyghurs. In the same way that the Chinese government has been opportunistic in suppressing our language and culture, we must be opportunistic in actions of revitalization. Still, freedom is relative; anywhere outside East Turkestan is a prison because my heart is at home.

In Turkey, I tried to sustain a connection with Uyghurs in East Turkestan through online forums. In a campaign called Change Yourself, I encouraged young Uyghurs to do or say something positive every day for a month for their own or someone else's benefit. In the fall of 2015, and twice in 2016, I wrote messages every day reminding them to perform an altruistic deed. My intention was to help young Uyghurs form positive habits that might carry over beyond the month. The third time I did this was during Ramadan. I told my readers to fast, but also to use this time to reject apathy and do something useful for their community.

At the end of July 2016, all my writings on Uyghur websites, hosted on servers in China, were deleted, and since then, I've ceased to write on these platforms. I wish I could interact with friends in East Turkestan because, in that oppressive environment, passivity and despair are endemic, but the CCP wants to erase my influence.

* * * * *

In Turkey, I continued my Uyghur mother tongue movement, by discussing heritage language maintenance in conferences, writing Uyghur language learning books for children among the Uyghur diaspora, and communicating with Uyghur expatriates in other countries about Uyghur language curricular issues. At conferences around Turkey, I discussed how Uyghur diasporic communities could maintain our mother tongue in contexts where other languages were dominant. To demonstrate this possibility, I arranged friendly competitions for Uyghur children to sing songs and tell stories in Uyghur. To facilitate language learning among Uyghur diasporic children, I wrote two books that are now being used by 60 teachers in 19 Uyghur language schools and classes across Australia, Canada, Turkey, the US, and several countries in Europe (Uyghur Aid 2018). The Uyghur diaspora is growing worldwide, and I am in

frequent contact with Uyghur educators. Some of our challenges are universal, and some are local, but the Uyghur diaspora is unified by an objective to cultivate Uyghur language competency among our children and instill a sense of Uyghur cultural awareness and pride.

From January to June 2016, I was the manager of a private school, funded by wealthy Saudis and Uyghurs from Saudi Arabia, that served Uyghur diaspora students in Istanbul. However, I had to resign from that position for a number of reasons. First, the curriculum was centered on Arabic language and Qur'anic studies. I tried to add other subjects but had a mixed reception. The administration rejected my efforts to include math and science courses, but they accepted my rationale to teach Turkish and Uyghur. Second, I realized after a while, that the administration was using me to attract students. Enrollment was important to the administration because, more students brought more money from the Saudi-based Uyghurs. Because I am a respected figure in Uyghur society, I gave that school credibility, but due to their focus on religious over secular education, and their ambition for personal enrichment, I could not justify working for them.

* * * * *

At the same time, I was exploring graduate school programs in the field of conflict resolution, programs that would allow me to research historical and contemporary relations between Uyghur and Chinese communities, for the purpose of identifying practices and perspectives that contributed to ethnic conflict, and those that facilitated peaceful coexistence. Considering destructive tendencies, I wanted to research how cultural hierarchies encourage chauvinism in the dominant group, and how subordinate groups resist oppression. The CCP supports the idea of a cultural hierarchy because it accords with Confucianism and can be used to justify the Sinicization of Uyghurs and other ethnic minority groups, but I feel that attempts to supplant or eradicate cultural practices are unethical. Further, I feel that by treating Uyghurs differently, by attempting to redefine our linguistic and cultural practices, the CCP encourages Uyghurs to dream of a separate state. The Chinese government's radical policies provoke radicalization. Contrary to actions that exacerbate ethnic conflict, I also wanted to describe methods for solving disputes. For example, tea can be used in Uyghur culture to initiate conflict resolution. If you have a disagreement with someone, and want to settle the matter, you can invite your adversary to drink tea with you. The presentation of tea is an act of humility; it brings

honor to the initiator and creates an occasion to communicate and work toward resolution with the recipient. By documenting and analyzing such examples, I hoped to recognize patterns that could be applied to conflict resolution in present circumstances. After forming my preliminary research questions, I applied to the Asian Sphere, a doctoral program at Haifa University in Israel that focuses on cultural issues in Asia. In May 2016, I was accepted and awarded a scholarship, providing tuition and a stipend.

To get to Israel, I needed a visa, but to get a visa, I had to renew my Chinese passport. So, in October, carrying my letter of acceptance, I went to the Chinese Embassy in Ankara. The officials first rejected my request outright, but after pleading with them, they agreed to consider my passport renewal. Over the next few weeks, I went to the embassy many times to check on the status of my passport. Several offices approved my request, but I was denied by the Xinjiang Bureau of Public Security. When I called their office for an explanation, they said that I didn't obtain their permission before leaving China. No law required me to obtain such permission, but the officer said that he didn't agree with my decision. They embassy officials then told me to wait for my case to be reviewed, but in November, the Xinjiang Bureau of Public Security flatly refused to renew my passport. I petitioned the Chinese Embassy to reconsider, but on December 13, they seized my passport, canceled it, and then told me to return to East Turkestan to get a new passport, giving me a certificate authorizing single-entry travel to China. I asked to speak to a consular official, so I could ask them why they were treating Uyghurs unfairly, and why they were doing things that created needless animosity toward the Chinese government, but I was given no audience. I exited the embassy in utter dismay. I was then stateless and stranded in Turkey.

As I walked back home, I was crushed at the prospect of not being able to attend graduate school. But I was even more upset at the thought of never returning to East Turkestan. I knew that I couldn't return there with the current crop of CCP leaders in power, and the internment camps in operation, but I had kept alive a small flame of hope that one day, conditions would change, allowing for my return. Indeed, I felt a responsibility to return. But with my passport confiscated and cancelled, this flame felt more dim than ever.

In a final effort, I wrote letters to the Chinese Embassy, requesting the return of my passport, and offering my services to the CCP. I told them that East Turkestan was dangerous,

not because of separatists, religious extremists, or terrorists, but because Uyghurs are deprived of basic rights. I offered to organize a group of expatriate Uyghurs to return to East Turkestan, where we could work with the government to address problems in education and the environment, and issues of social and economic inequality. I also promised to assist them with Uyghurs who had grievances with the CCP, to find solutions within the system. This was my last interaction with the Chinese government – an entreaty answered with silence.

* * * * *

On January 1, 2017, a terrorist named Abdulkadir Masharipov shot and killed 39 people, and injured many more, at a nightclub in Istanbul. The Uyghur diaspora in Turkey was anxious after this incident because some news organizations initially reported that the guy was Uyghur (Butler and Karadeniz 2017). Some Uyghurs are members of Syria-based Islamic militant groups (Shih 2017), so it was easy to imagine that a Uyghur had carried out the attack. Fortunately for us, the guy was not Uyghur, but a Tajik with Uzbek citizenship, though he did have Uyghur friends whom were later arrested (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2017).

Islamic militants are known to recruit Uyghurs from the city of Kayseri in central Turkey, inviting new arrivals to Syria, with the promise of food, housing, and money. The Uyghur diaspora is vulnerable to these enticements because, though the Turkish government welcomes Uyghur refugees, they are considered stateless according to Turkish law, and must struggle to obtain work permits, health insurance, or schooling for their children (Shih 2017). Uyghurs who decline to join the militants, and settle among the several thousand Uyghurs, concentrated in a district of Kayseri, remain susceptible to Islamic militants. For Uyghur parents who cannot enroll their children in public schools, Qur'anic schools, funded by Emiratis, Saudis, and Kuwaitis, are an option. The problem is that these students study only Arabic and the Qur'an, so when they complete secondary school, they are not qualified to apply to college, have no skills to secure employment, and can be exploited by Islamic militants.

Uyghurs are also vulnerable in Istanbul, where Islamic militants offer material and emotional support that surpasses what the Turkish government can supply. There, Islamic militants give Uyghur refugees money and housing, and provide a sense of community, using our shared faith and conceptions of brotherhood, to ingratiate Uyghurs into their social network. Turkic Muslims are also lured to participate in jihad by rhetoric about re-establishing Khorasan,

a historical territory that encompassed the northeast of Greater Persia, and parts of Central Asia and Afghanistan. Uyghurs are vulnerable to such fantasies because of the allure to liberate East Turkestan from Chinese rule. For the Islamic militants, religion is a weapon, and they are adept at manipulating people to imagine themselves as martyrs for a noble cause.

When discussing these issues with community leaders, I encouraged them to admit that terrorists were among us and to provide their names to the Turkish government. I also wrote an article for a Uyghur magazine in Saudi Arabia on this topic – the origin of radicalism and extremism among Uyghurs – but they would not publish it. Islamic leaders also avoided public discussion of this topic because they feared retaliation from Islamic militants.

Qur’anic schools for Uyghurs are also expanding in Istanbul, creating the same vulnerable Uyghur population that exists in Kayseri. On my last visit to Istanbul, I counted 13 Qur’anic schools, with teachers from Egypt, Syria, and Yemen providing a strictly religious education to over 500 Uyghur diaspora students. I am concerned about infusing our Uyghur children with ideas imported from failed Islamic nations because this type of education will isolate them from Turkish society and degrade Uyghur society.

The Islamic militants will go after anyone – they even tried to recruit me. Two guys affiliated with Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) visited me once. After making their pitch, I said, “I don’t judge your way, but I don’t admire your way because Uyghurs have nothing to do with Iraq and Syria. The Chinese government is killing us and arresting us, so we don’t need to look for more problems.”

A few months before the nightclub attack, in September 2016, the CCP began preventing Uyghurs from leaving China, even if they resided in Turkey. In cases where Uyghur families were divided, as when both parents had traveled to China, the children were left behind in Turkey with no long-term caregiver. Presently, hundreds of Uyghur children are living in orphanages or group homes, the majority located in Kayseri and Istanbul. Recognizing the implications of this problem, for the Uyghur diaspora, and the security of the Turkish state, I documented the plight of around 200 Uyghur orphans in Kayseri, by visiting this population 20 times over a year. In multiple reports to the Turkish government and Uyghur international organizations, I wrote about how a quarter of Uyghur orphans were not enrolled in a school of any sort, and how those in school were receiving a Qur’anic education that was absent of secular

content. I also informed them of other social problems among the Uyghur youth, such as young girls being forced to marry older guys. I was saddened to see fifteen-year-old year old Uyghur girls caring for their own children. With a heavy heart, in November 2017, I had to discontinue this work, because no agencies were interested in resolving these issues.

* * * * *

Because I was stateless under Turkish law, and because I feared political retaliation by the Turkish and Chinese governments, I applied for international protection with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. I was worried that the Turkish government would imprison me for associating with the Gulen Movement and criticizing Recep Tayyip Erdogan. And I was worried that the Chinese government would try to extradite, and then imprison me. For these reasons, I wanted to obtain refugee status and resettlement in a third country.

Regarding Turkey, first, I was concerned about my pen name Gulen. When I started using this penname, the Gulen movement was allied with Erdogan's Justice and Development Party, but since 2012, they have been in conflict. This friction spiked in May 2016, when the Turkish government designated the Gulen movement as a terrorist organization, and again, in July 2016, when the Gulen movement was blamed for an attempted coup d'état.⁴² Second, I was concerned about my participation in the Intercultural and Interfaith Dialog Student Association, while at the University of Kansas. After coming to Turkey, I learned that this group was started by Turkish students inspired by Gulen, and sponsored by the Institute of Interfaith Dialog, an organization associated with the Gulen movement. And third, I was concerned about my online writing, including essays expressing my disdain for dictatorships and one-party rule, and praise for achievements by the Gulen movement. After the coup d'état, the Turkish government closed schools linked to the Gulen movement, but I disagreed with this decision.⁴³ Just as guns are not inherently good or evil, schools can serve different purposes, and if they are being used in ways

⁴² After the attempted coup d'état in 2016, Turkey declared a State of Emergency, which was lifted in July 2018. During this period, at least 50,000 people were charged for being connected with the Fethullahist Terrorist Organization, and are being held in pre-trial detention (HRW 2018b).

⁴³ The Turkish government closed 35 hospitals and more than 1,000 schools in Turkey and pressured other nations to close all Gulen-linked institutions.

that are detrimental, I advocated reform, not elimination. Any one of these activities could have brought retaliation from the Turkish government, so I was worried about their combination.

Turkey and China signed an extradition treaty in 2017 (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and though it hasn't been implemented, I was concerned about being victimized by this arrangement. Through substantial bribes, the Chinese government has convinced many nations to deport Uyghurs to China. In every case, the source nation is committing refoulement because Uyghurs are not just likely, but certain to be persecuted in China. Everyone has heard the rumor that Turkish government representatives offered millions of dollars to Donald Trump's former national security adviser Michael Flynn and his son to render Fethullah Gulen to Turkey (Grimaldi, Harris, and Viswanatha 2017). If Turkey could possibly influence the US, a nation that claims to respect human rights, I thought, why couldn't China influence Turkey for the right price?

I didn't tell Mihrigul about my concerns because I needed to be strong for her and for our daughters. In East Turkestan, we lived in great insecurity and I refused to be consumed with fear of the unknown. I just focused on writing and doing meaningful work for the Uyghur diaspora and earning enough to survive. When feeling despondent, I reassured her and myself, "Whatever happens, our knowledge is important, our skills are important. These things cannot be taken from us. Just keep studying and keep learning and, as for other things, we will see what will happen. But don't worry, I will do everything I can to take care of us."

Paris: A new beginning

On April 29, 2019, my family and I relocated to Paris, France. I kept this plan secret because my other attempts to leave Turkey had failed, and I didn't want to reveal this possibility until it had been realized. Having no passport, and with Mihrigul and our daughters' passports soon to expire, our window of opportunity to leave Turkey was closing. Through the introduction of Dilnur Reyhan, founding President of the Uyghur Institute of Europe, I applied for and received a scholarship to a PhD program at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences in Paris. With my acceptance letter in hand, I went to the French Consulate in Istanbul and was issued a laissez-passer, a one-way permit to France, typically issued for travelers whose passport had been stolen or lost. Now in Paris, I begin a new chapter of professional work at the

Uyghur Institute of Europe, and continue research on and writing about ways that diaspora Uyghurs can maintain the vitality of our language. My family and I will seek asylum in France, but no matter the country of exile, home will always be East Turkestan.

3. CCP geopolitical ambitions and East Turkestan

The Chinese government suppressed Abduweli Ayup's Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education because it was seen as a source of interference with CCP ambitions to secure wealth and expand control. East Turkestan is important to the CCP because of its location, natural resources, and role in the Belt and Road Initiative (Kinzley 2018, Laruelle 2018). The Chinese government considers Uyghur ethnic identity to be a threat because it differs from Han ethnic identity. And the CCP is worried that Uyghurs who dream of an independent Uyghur state may cite distinct Uyghur cultural practices to advocate for separation from China. To mitigate this perceived threat, and concerns about Uyghur assertions of autonomy, the CCP has enacted policies in an effort to subdue and dominate the Uyghur population of East Turkestan (Bovingdon 2010, Zenz 2018b). Abduweli and his partners were imprisoned because they were considered an impediment to the CCP's campaign to exercise complete control over the ethnic minority inhabitants of East Turkestan. This chapter discusses the CCP's geopolitical ambitions in East Turkestan, educational and legal concerns attendant to Mandarin language assimilation, and the CCP's concern with neutralizing the symbolic power of Uyghur.

The CCP has long leveraged East Turkestan's geographic features and natural resources for the purposes of national development (Kinzley 2018), and these assets are now key aspects of President Xi Jinping's immense infrastructure, foreign policy, and economic project, known as the Belt and Road Initiative (Laruelle 2018). East Turkestan is the largest administrative division of China, covering over 1.6 million square kilometers. At the crossroads of Eurasia, it borders Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. This territory also has abundant natural resources, including oil, natural gas, coal, wind, and water energy. East Turkestan accounts for 30% of China's oil resources, 34% of its natural gas, and nearly 48% of its coal; among renewable natural resources, wind energy accounts for nearly 21% of storage, and water energy accounts for nearly 6% of the national total (Duan et al. 2016, Tu 2016).

The Belt and Road Initiative was proposed by Xi Jinping in 2013 and enshrined in the Constitution in 2017 (Xinhua 2017a). According to the CCP, this project is designed to facilitate global trade and economic growth over land and sea, though critics contend that the Belt and Road Initiative is a mechanism to advance CCP political and military influence (Thorne and

Spevack 2017). Regardless of intent, this project continues to advance, with the CCP spending around 150 billion USD a year in 68 countries ("What is China's belt and road initiative?" The Economist 2017). Roads, rails, pipelines, and telecommunications networks are planned to traverse East Turkestan, including the New Eurasian Landbridge Economic Corridor, the China-Central Asia-West Africa Economic Corridor, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (Thorne and Spevack 2017). Considering implications, Toops predicts that, "Xinjiang will see some economic benefit from international trade with neighbouring countries, but more of the economic benefit will accrue to the production centres of China in the eastern part of the country" (2016b, 7). That is, East Turkestan is intended to be the site of several nodes in the Belt and Road Initiative, a nexus for trade and the projection of CCP political and military power.

Successive dynasties in China, from ancient to modern, have regarded the territory and people of East Turkestan as problematic (Bovingdon 2010, Millward 2007), and until today, "Uyghurs' very presence in the land is an inconvenient reminder of Xinjiang's alternative identity as the eastern fringe of the Islamic and Turkic-speaking world – one that Beijing would prefer to erase if it could" (Brophy 2018). According to Anderson's definition of a nation as an imagined political community, such an entity is "always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (1991, 7). Uyghur ethnic identity is viewed as a threat because the CCP believes that cultural practices, including language and religion, that diverge from Han norms are an impediment to a "deep" national fraternity. The CCP is paranoid that Uyghurs could cite these differences to justify claims for autonomy, strengthen ties with other nations who share cultural practices, or attract support from nations or communities who back Uyghur claims for autonomy (CCP 2013).

The Chinese government's high valuation of East Turkestan is illustrated by the numerous efforts it has made to secure this territory and control its indigenous populations. These efforts consist of policies and initiatives designed to achieve political, social, and cultural dominance (Clarke 2017). Politically, the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law (1984) proclaims the CCP's "respect for and guarantee of ethnic minorities' right to administer their internal affairs," but for every right, "the exercise of the power of autonomy is subject to approval by higher-level government organs" (Bovingdon 2005). Articles 16–18 in the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law state that ethnic minorities should have appropriate and equitable representation in the

government, but this vague language has been exploited. The 2010 census recorded 21.82 million people in East Turkestan (Xinjiang Provincial Bureau of Statistics 2012); Han comprised 40.48% of the population and occupied 64% of senior CCP positions, while Uyghurs comprised 45.84% of the population and occupied 20% of these positions (UHRP 2017b, Toops 2016a).

To achieve control of East Turkestan, the CCP has implemented diverse strategies, including the migration and settlement of Han populations from outside the region, and the dispersal of indigenous populations throughout inner China. Based on a historical system of military agricultural colonies, the CCP founded the *bingtuan* (Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps) in 1954 as an economic and paramilitary organization to “develop the land in East Turkestan, secure the border, and maintain stability” (UHRP 2018a, 3). In 2018, the *bingtuan* had a population of 2.68 million (out of a total regional population of 21.82 million), comprised of 86% Han, with 14 divisions controlling an area of 80,000 square km, and 14 companies that constitute 17% of East Turkestan’s GDP (Toops 2016a, UHRP 2018a). The *bingtuan* is a multibillion-dollar enterprise and an instrument for large-scale Han migration. Coupled with the Chinese government’s effort to settle Han in East Turkestan are labor programs for ethnic minority dispersal, mainly targeting young, unmarried Uyghur women, that recruit thousands of Uyghurs for factory jobs around inner China (FMO 2009, Wong 2014). While the CCP strives to diffuse segments of the Uyghur population, the authorities have impeded Uyghur ambitions to go abroad, or escape, by issuing a nation-wide order for Uyghurs to surrender their passports (RFA 2017b).

The CCP in East Turkestan, under the leadership of Xinjiang CCP Secretary Chen Quanguo has implemented several strategies to create a “21st-Century Police State” (Rajagopalan 2017, Zenz and Leibold 2017a, b). These measures include the creation of a database, with “DNA samples, fingerprints, iris scans, and blood types of all residents in the region between the age of 12 and 65” (HRW 2017). Chen has also introduced grid-style social management, a system he implemented earlier as the party secretary in Tibet, by investing heavily in security personnel, technology, and infrastructure (Zenz and Leibold 2017a). Security personal investments include “the recruitment of nearly 90,000 new police officers and a 356 percent increase in the public security budget” from 2009 to 2016 (Leibold and Zenz 2016, Zenz and Leibold 2017b). Technology investments include the installation of cameras with facial

recognition technology, even at the entrances of mosques (Feng 2018), and apps that monitor “illegal religious” content and “harmful information” (Lam 2017). But paramount is a “predictive policing program based on big data analysis” that produces composite scores from personal information and biometric data, ranking people as safe, normal, or unsafe (HRW 2018a). “Based on those categories, you may or may not be allowed to visit a museum, pass through certain neighborhoods, go to the mall, check into a hotel, rent an apartment, apply for a job or buy a train ticket” (Millward 2018). Infrastructure investments include the installation of thousands of convenience police stations (Rajagopalan 2017), where security surveillance officers have “authority to inspect and monitor local residents’ wireless activities and digital devices” (RFA 2017c).

In April 2017, Chen expanded a network of internment camps, where Uyghur and other Turkic Muslims are detained indefinitely if deemed unsafe according to their social credit score, or are alleged of having strong religious views or politically incorrect ideas, for having traveled or studied abroad, or for having family members abroad that are suspected of harboring anti-CCP sentiments (Brophy 2018, Greer 2018). In an expanding detention network, detainees are required “to learn the Chinese language, recite Chinese and Xinjiang laws and policies, watch pro-government propaganda videos, express their gratitude to the Communist Party and General Secretary Xi Jinping, and renounce their ethnic identities, religious beliefs, and mainstream cultural and religious practices” (Currie 2018, 2, Yin 2014). Although the CCP conceals numbers on detainees and internment camps, the US Department of Defense estimates that close to 3 million Turkic Muslims are being held in East Turkestan (Schrivver 2019). Due to an overflow in crowded camps, some Uyghur internees have been transferred to prisons in inner China (Hoshur 2019). To compound this crime against humanity, the children of detainees are often not allowed to stay with relatives and sent to state-run orphanages. Because many local orphanages are at capacity, some children have been transferred to orphanages in inner China (RFA 2018a, Hoja and Hoshur 2017). It appears that the CCP is using these camps as a form of psychological warfare against their internal enemy (Brophy 2018), a final solution to re-engineer the culture of Turkic Muslims in East Turkestan (Lim 2018, Millward qtd. in Shih 2018). But even this dire interpretation may be sanguine and must be balanced with a fear expressed by the historian Rian Thum:

What we know from history is that when you get large detention systems that are operating in legal grey zones, or in this case, perhaps, even entirely extra-legal zones, there is a lot of room for improvisation on the part of those who are running those camps. The most frightening purpose is the one that hasn't occurred yet. While right now, torture and deaths in the camps seem to be happening at pretty low levels, that can change, and in fact, I don't think we can rule out the possibility of mass murder. (2018b)

The internment camps in East Turkestan serve as a site for state-sponsored indoctrination and corporeal violence, but this recent effort by the CCP to alter Uyghur identity is preceded by a series of CCP policies aimed to dilute Uyghur cultural practices, focused on religion and language (RFA 2018a). Regarding religion, the Chinese government has sought to undermine Uyghur piety to Islam by imposing national and regional regulations that have progressively narrowed the definition of lawful religious activity, conflating peaceful religious practices among Uyghurs with illicit and violent activity (UHRP 2013). These regulations require religious leaders to attend political education classes. State-approved versions of the Qur'an must be used and sermons are monitored for content. Private religious education is forbidden. And state employees, people under the age of 18, and students of any age cannot enter a mosque. The CCP further interferes with religious practices by not permitting state employees, teachers, students, or students' parents to fast during Ramadan (RFA 2018b), and prohibiting Uyghurs from performing Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca, "unless it is with an expensive official tour, in which state officials carefully vet applicants" (UHRP 2013). Concerning visible expressions of faith, women are prohibited from wearing veils and men are not allowed to grow beards (Hunt, Luu, and Jiang 2017). Uyghurs are also restricted from giving their children "extreme" names, that is, names with Islamic significance (RFA 2017a). Along with religion, the CCP is trying to undermine the Uyghur language as a marker of Uyghur ethnic identity, using education and law as tools to promote Mandarin language assimilation.

Educational concerns

Scholars and international agencies have long recognized the importance of mother tongue education (Ball 2011, Benson 2004a, Cummins 2000, Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). The advantages of bilingualism and bilingual education are also well-documented (Baker 2014, Bialystok 2001, García 2008). Abduweli sought to apply these findings for the benefit of Uyghur

students and established a school with a curriculum designed to develop proficiency and literacy in Uyghur, before adding other languages, and using content that empowered Uyghur students by incorporating their culture and experiences into the school environment and classroom activities. The CCP could not tolerate the existence of such schools because they promoted knowledge and a sense of Uyghur ethnic consciousness that was antithetical to the geopolitical interests of the Chinese government, evidencing a clash in philosophy of education, with competing ideas about the purpose of schooling and what should be taught.

Mother tongue education has a positive impact on a child's cognitive, pedagogical, and sociocultural development. Echoing the conclusions of many studies, a UNESCO report, "If you don't understand, how can you learn?" affirms that "to ensure that children acquire strong foundation skills in literacy and numeracy, schools need to teach the curriculum in a language children understand" (2016, 3), with Benson specifying that "use of a familiar language to teach beginning literacy facilitates an understanding of sound-symbol or meaning-symbol correspondence" (2004a, 4). Mother tongue education also has a strong impact on the affective dimensions of cognition, positively influencing students' confidence, self-esteem, identity, and cultural pride (Ball 2011), while increasing motivation, initiative, and creativity (Benson 2004a).

Research indicates that a foundational education in the mother tongue "helps develop not only the mother tongue but also children's abilities in the majority school language" and that "spending instructional time through a minority language in the school does not hurt children's academic development in the majority school language" (Cummins 2000, 18). To the contrary, a longitudinal study indicates that "bilingually schooled students outperform comparable monolingually schooled students in academic achievement in all subjects, after 4–7 years of dual language schooling" (Thomas and Collier 2002, 13). In addition to enabling the ability to learn in multiple languages, bilingualism promotes cognitive advantages, such as metalinguistic awareness, divergent thinking, and communicative sensitivity, along with social advantages, like cultural awareness and empathy (Fan et al. 2015, García 2008).

Abduweli initiated a mother tongue-based multilingual education program that accorded with recommendations by scholars and international agencies. Recognizing the importance of mother tongue education in early childhood and the first years of primary school, Abduweli designed a curriculum that used Uyghur as the language of instruction for kindergarten. He

intended to maintain Uyghur-medium instruction through primary school, with Mandarin and English taught as second/foreign languages, fostering additive bilingualism (Lambert 1974). As advised by UNESCO, Abduweli recruited and trained local teachers, created inclusive teaching materials, and provided culturally appropriate assistance for students to facilitate the transition from home to school (2016, 9). His proposed secondary school was envisioned to be a dual language program, with instruction in Uyghur and Mandarin, or Uyghur and English, allowing for the development of bilingualism and biliteracy, grade-level academic achievement, and intercultural competence (Baker 2006). Abduweli intended for Uyghur students to maintain their native language while adding other languages and develop pride in their own culture while learning to understand others. Once students had basic literacy skills in Uyghur and communicative skills in Mandarin and English, they would begin reading and writing in these second languages, “efficiently transferring the literacy skills they acquired in the familiar language” (Benson 2004a, 3, Cummins 2000).

Along with attention to language of instruction, Abduweli advocated an approach to education that evoked Dewey (1900) and Freire (1970). Reminiscent of Dewey, Abduweli felt that formal schooling should develop students’ natural resources (i.e. linguistic and cultural knowledge) with a curriculum and learning experiences that were practical and relevant to students’ lives (Dewey 1900). And reminiscent of Freire, Abduweli practiced critical consciousness, that is, having learned to recognize social, political, and economic contradictions, his Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education was a form of action against oppressive elements of reality (Freire 1970) – an innovative solution to the crisis in education affecting Uyghurs. While modeling critical consciousness, Abduweli’s long-term goal was to create a school where students could use prior knowledge and cultural experience as source material, and through dialogue and action, advance their own education (Dewey 1916).

In contrast, the CCP’s is operating with a “solve the problem” orientation (Cummins 2001, 16) to linguistic diversity in East Turkestan, by viewing the Uyghur language as a hindrance to their nation-building enterprise – a troublesome tongue to be severed. Because of this perspective, the Chinese government might recognize as advantages the many disadvantages that scholars and international agencies identify in denying mother tongue education for ethnic minority students. Uyghur students learn Mandarin through submersion, “a programme where

linguistic minority children with a low-status mother tongue are forced to accept instruction through the medium of a foreign majority/official language with high status” (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, 582). This approach promotes subtractive bilingualism because the new language is learned at cost to the mother tongue, resulting in a diglossic situation where Uyghur is used at home and Mandarin in other domains (Lambert 1975, Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, 72). The rejection or marginalization of students’ first language at school can have a negative impact on affective factors consequential for learning, such as confidence, self-esteem, and creativity (Ball 2011, Benson 2004a). Education in Mandarin has negative implications for the family domain because this mode can create a “linguistic gap between parents and children,” leading to an “emotional chasm” (Cummins 2001, 19). Researchers have also recognized that shift in one domain may precipitate shift in other domains (Wei 1994), meaning that the dominance of Mandarin in the domain of education could encroach on language practices in the Uyghur family domain (Fishman 1972). By refusing to offer Uyghurs a mother tongue education, especially in the first years of primary school, the CCP is jeopardizing the cognitive, pedagogical, and sociocultural development of Uyghur youth. Yet, a stunted generation of Uyghurs may be desirable to the CCP because this condition may facilitate domination.

The CCP’s reaction to Abduweli’s school reveals a conflict in philosophy of education, with their approaches representing responses to different concerns. Abduweli was interested in using the education system to help Uyghurs actualize the noble aspects of their human potential, while the CCP is interested in using the education system to assimilate Uyghurs, by colonizing their minds and making them compliant subjects of the state. Both Abduweli and the CCP desired to provide a transformative education, but their objectives differed, with Abduweli dedicated to supporting a progressive, linguistically and culturally relevant education – to cultivate independent thinkers and lifelong learners – and the CCP in habituating a mental and physical disposition to follow government policies and abandon all cultural practices that distinguish Uyghurs as distinct from Han. The CCP’s language policy on education in East Turkestan is consistent with an ideology that views ethnic minority practices as impediments that will eventually erode in route to fusion with the Han majority.

Legal concerns

This section contains a review of articles that address language in education from six UN treaties and declarations that China is a party to, and three pieces of PRC national legislation.⁴⁴ Following this review, and a summary of seven language policies on education in East Turkestan, the data is coded according to degrees of overtness and promotion for the language rights of minority language speakers (Kloss 1971, 1977, Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). From these codes, a pattern emerges, indicating that the CCP's stance toward minority languages in education in East Turkestan has shifted from toleration to prohibition.

The Republic of China (ROC), represented by the Nationalist Party of China, was a founding member of the United Nations, and ratified the UN Charter (1945), which claims, in Article 1.3, to promote and encourage “respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.” The ROC government also signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which states, in Article 26.2, that “education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality,” and in Article 26.3, that “parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.”

In 1949, after being defeated by the CCP in the Chinese Civil War, the Chinese Nationalist Party fled to Taiwan. Although the CCP established the PRC upon victory, the UN continued to recognize the ROC as the sole legal government of China. Mainland China did not participate in the UN until 1971, when the PRC was recognized as the sole legal government of China. In this transfer of representation, the PRC reaffirmed acceptance of the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Kent 1999).⁴⁵

Under CCP leadership, the PRC signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) in 1990, and ratified it in 1992. In addition to a statement affirming that education should be

⁴⁴ The UN treaties and declarations are listed by date of PRC signature (if not ratified) or ratification. Also note that, while the PRC has ratified some of the UN treaties, making them legally binding, some are signed but not ratified. The UN declarations cited are all signed, but not subject to ratification, and thus not legally binding.

⁴⁵ According to UNESCO (2005, 2018), the CCP did not adopt the ROC-ratified Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960) in 1965, which, in Article 5.1(c)(i), recognized the right of national minorities to maintain schools and teach in their language(s).

directed to “the development of the child’s personality,” this treaty states, in Article 29.1(c), that education shall be directed to “the development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values.” Article 29.2 prohibits governments from “interfer[ing] with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions,” as long as they comply with national standards. And Article 30 provides that indigenous or minority children “shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.” The same assertion is expressed in Article 27 from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966a), signed by the PRC in 1998, but never ratified.

The ROC signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966b) in 1967, and it was ratified by the PRC in 2001. This treaty, in Article 13.1, extends the purpose of education beyond the full development of human personality to include “the sense of its dignity.” Article 13.3 binds covenant parties to respect parents or guardians right “to choose for their children schools, other than those established by the public authorities.” And Article 13.4 repeats Article 29.2 from the Convention on the Rights of the Child, disallowing the government to obstruct the creation and maintenance of private schools that comply with national standards.

In 2007, the PRC signed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, “a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity, well-being and rights of the world’s indigenous peoples.” Articles in this declaration assert the rights of indigenous people to transmit their “histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures” across generations (Article 13.1), and to establish and maintain mother tongue schools with culturally relevant curriculums (Articles 15 and 16). However, after signing the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the PRC “promptly disavowed any obligation under the declaration, by proclaiming there were no indigenous peoples in China,” with “5,000 years of

unity and harmony” and “55 designated national minorities living in peace on their own land” (Davis 2014).⁴⁶

PRC national legislation contains statements on linguistic rights, including allowances for minority languages in education. The PRC Constitution (1982) states, in Article 4, that, “all nationalities in the People’s Republic of China are equal...The people of all nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own ways and customs.” The Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law (1984) repeats this statement in Article 10, and specifies, in Article 37, that “schools (classes) and other educational organizations recruiting mostly ethnic minority students should, whenever possible, use textbooks in their own languages and use these languages as the media of instruction.” However, Article 37 also states that, “Beginning in the lower or senior grades of primary school, Han language and literature courses should be taught to popularize the common language used throughout the country and the use of Han Chinese characters.”

The promotion of Mandarin and displacement of minority languages was advanced by the Education Law (1995), with Article 12 stating that “the Chinese language, both oral and written, shall be the basic oral and written language for education in schools and other educational institutions. Schools or other educational institutions which mainly consist of students from ethnic minority groups may use in education the language of the respective ethnic community or the native language commonly adopted in that region.”

In addition to national legislation, the CCP has designed language policies in education that are specific to East Turkestan. These include the primary and secondary school ‘bilingual’ education policy, conceived in the mid-1980s, and reaching over 1.5 million ethnic minority students in 2014; the Xinjiang Class, a boarding-school program in inner China for senior high school students, established in 2000, with 90,000 participants by 2017; the 2002 shift to Mandarin as the language of instruction at Xinjiang University, significant because of the ripple effect on other regional educational institutions; the 2005 extension of ‘bilingual’ education to

⁴⁶ Because the PRC does not observe the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, it is not included in the forthcoming analysis, but it is described here because the episode reveals how the Chinese government avoids responsibility to enforce human rights in treaties and declarations.

preschools and kindergartens, reaching over 1.3 million students in 2018; the 2013 suppression of the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education, aimed at obstructing mother tongue-based multilingual education; the 2017 Hotan Prefecture and Ghulja County Department of Education directives that restrict minority languages in the domain of education, significant because smaller administrative units often experiment with policies before they are adopted regionally; and Chen Quanguo’s internment camps, under expansion since 2017, where detainees are required to speak Mandarin, and prohibited from using ethnic minority languages.

The UN treaties and declarations, PRC national legislation, and East Turkestan-specific policies can be coded on a grid according to degrees of overtness and promotion (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). This grid is based on Kloss, who made a distinction between tolerance-oriented and promotion-oriented language rights, with the former defined as state non-interference with minority efforts to preserve one’s first language in private spheres of life, including the right to establish private schools with mother tongue education, and the latter defined as state promotion of minority languages in public institutions, including public schools, and at its apotheosis, “self-government for the minority group” (1971, 1977, 24). Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) expanded upon Kloss, by locating toleration under an assimilation orientation and adding prohibition as an extreme, where “the goal...is clearly to force the linguistic minority group to assimilate to the dominant language” (513). In this grid, Skutnabb-Kangas located promotion under a maintenance orientation, and added a vertical axis to illustrate degrees of overtness, to “mark the extent to which laws or covenants are explicit in relation to the rights of minority languages in education” (513).

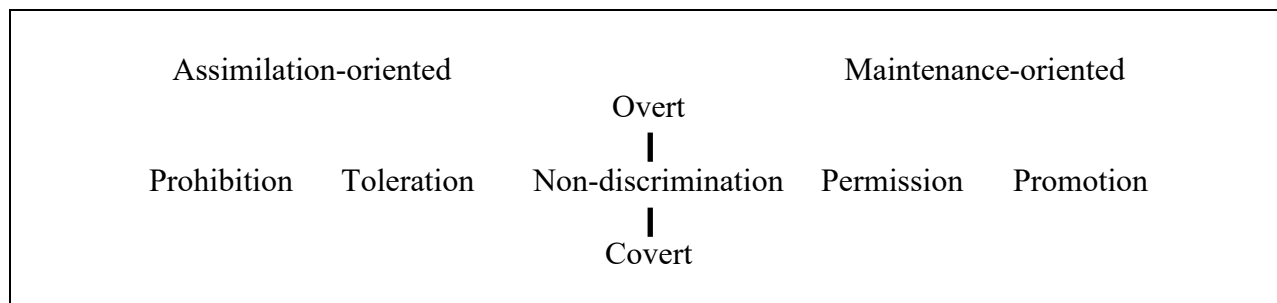


Figure 1. Degrees of promotion-prohibition and overtiness-covertiness (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000)

The five UN treaties and declarations convey covert toleration of minority languages in education (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, Zhou 2004). All these documents have an overt non-discrimination prescription, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights can be interpreted as providing overt permission for the restricted use of minority languages. However, none of them overtly mention language in clauses that address education, implying that “minorities are allowed to use their languages in private, but not in schools” (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, 526).

UN treaties and declarations	Degree of overtness	Degree of promotion
UN Charter	covert	toleration
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	covert	toleration
Convention on the Rights of the Child	covert	toleration
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	covert	toleration
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	covert	toleration

Table 1. UN treaties and declarations: Degrees of overtness and promotion for minority languages in education

The three pieces of PRC national legislation differ in degrees of overtness and promotion for minority languages in education, though all are assimilation-oriented. Following a general non-discrimination prescription, the PRC Constitution provides minority groups the freedom to use and develop their languages, expressing overt toleration for minority language use. The Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law states that schools “recruiting mostly ethnic minority students should, whenever possible, use textbooks in their own languages and use these languages as the media of instruction.” But the modal ‘should’ and hedge ‘whenever possible’ mitigate the force of this provision, making it a nebulous recommendation. The subsequent suggestion to start teaching Mandarin in primary school covertly prohibits ethnic minority languages. The Education Law can also be coded twice; one article states that Mandarin “shall” be used as the basic language in education, covertly prohibiting minority languages, while another article states that minority languages “may” be used in education, expressing overt toleration.

PRC national legislation	Degree of overtness	Degree of promotion
PRC Constitution	overt	toleration
Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law	overt	toleration
	covert	prohibition
Education Law	overt	toleration
	covert	prohibition

Table 2. PRC national legislation: Degrees of overtness and promotion for minority languages in education

The seven policies specific to East Turkestan vary in degrees of overtness, but all are assimilation-oriented. Primary and secondary school ‘bilingual’ education policy, with its mandate to use Mandarin as a language of instruction “as much as possible,” covertly prohibits minority languages in education (Dwyer 2005, 38, RFA 2004). And though some ethnic minority students take courses where minority languages serve as languages of instruction, this tolerance is assimilation-oriented because the societal and educational aim remains Mandarin language assimilation. For ethnic minority students enrolled in the Xinjiang Class, Mandarin is the sole language of instruction, and students lose grade points for speaking in their mother tongue, a circumstance that overtly prohibits minority languages. When the executives of Xinjiang University imposed Mandarin as the language of instruction, minority languages were covertly prohibited. Preschool and kindergarten ‘bilingual’ education policy replicates, for younger students, the conditions described for primary and secondary levels, also producing a mixture of covert prohibition and overt toleration of minority languages. The suppression of the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education exemplifies the violation of an unwritten code to eradicate minority language instruction, and thus epitomizes the CCP’s commitment to covertly prohibit minority languages in the domain of education. The Hotan Prefecture Department of Education directive overtly prohibits minority languages in educational and public activities, along with school administration and reduces their prominence in the linguistic landscape.⁴⁷ And the Ghulja County Department of Education directive overtly prohibits the use of Uyghur and Kazakh textbooks and educational materials. Finally, regarding the internment camps, sites for minority linguistic erasure, Turkic Muslims are overtly prohibited from using minority languages.

⁴⁷ Some webpages for prominent universities in East Turkestan previously featured seals in Uyghur, Chinese, and English script, but have now eliminated Uyghur (Lu 2019). This change in the virtual linguistic landscape is not complete, but consistent with the CCP imperative to incrementally remove the Uyghur script from the domain of education.

East Turkestan-specific policies	Degree of overtness	Degree of promotion
Primary and secondary school ‘bilingual’ education policy	overt	toleration
	covert	prohibition
The Xinjiang Class	overt	prohibition
Mandarin as the language of instruction at Xinjiang University	covert	prohibition
Preschool and kindergarten ‘bilingual’ education policy	overt	toleration
	covert	prohibition
Suppression of the Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education	covert	prohibition
The Hotan Prefecture and Ghulja County Department of Education directives	overt	prohibition
Internment camps	overt	prohibition

Table 3. East Turkestan-specific policies: Degrees of overtness and promotion for minority languages in education

After coding for degrees of overtness and promotion for minority languages in education, the UN treaties and declarations exhibit a consistent pattern of covert toleration, while PRC national legislation and policies specific to East Turkestan progressively trend toward overt prohibition. While the UN has confronted China for violating treaties and conventions, by detailing how the PRC has restricted minority languages in education (2014), the PRC has not responded to this criticism. Despite the lack of response, it is important to document and publicize CCP human rights violations to show solidarity with the oppressed ethnic minority groups of East Turkestan and affirm an ethical position that refuses to accept depraved state behavior as legitimate or natural.

The Uyghur language and symbolic power

The CCP is engaged in a campaign of Chinese linguistic imperialism in East Turkestan and is using the education system and law as tools to promote Mandarin language assimilation among the region’s ethnic minority communities. Applying Phillipson’s definition of linguistic imperialism (1992), the CCP asserts and maintains the dominance of Mandarin by establishing and continuously reconstituting structural and cultural inequalities between Mandarin and minority languages. In channeling material resources and language ideologies that encourage a shift to Mandarin, the CCP intends to facilitate ethnic minority integration into a great ethno-national unity. However, evidence suggests that the Chinese government’s attempt to restructure

the linguistic habitus of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities of East Turkestan may be counterproductive to goals of Chinese national unity. That is, the Chinese state sponsorship of symbolic violence, even if effective at depleting the vitality of minority languages, may contribute to the rise or fortification of an oppositional consciousness, “an empowering mental state that prepares members of an oppressed group to act to undermine, reform, or overthrow a system of domination” (Mansbridge 2001, 4-5). Further, the CCP’s campaign of Chinese linguistic imperialism, understood as a strategy to advance the CCP’s geopolitical interests, rests on the assumption that forms of cultural capital can be converted directly. However, even if ethnic minorities possess Mandarin language skills, state-sponsored discrimination and Han chauvinism may disrupt conversion of this cultural capital to social and economic capital, thus fueling ethnic minority discontent.

Chinese linguistic imperialism in East Turkestan, as managed by the CCP, is an effort to legitimate and naturalize structural and cultural inequalities that privilege the status of Mandarin and diminish the status of minority languages. The CCP has created structural inequalities in the linguistic ecology of East Turkestan (Haugen 1972) by providing material support for Mandarin language assimilation, including the allocation of funds to train ethnic minority educators to teach in Mandarin, incentivize the migration of Han teachers from inner China, subsidize the expenses of Han volunteer teachers from inner China, construct ‘bilingual’ preschools and kindergartens, and support the Xinjiang Class boarding-school program. For minority languages, previously tolerated spaces and materials are now prohibited by the CCP, such as schools that provide instruction in minority languages, and Uyghur and Kazakh textbooks and teaching materials. The CCP has created cultural inequalities in the linguistic ecology of East Turkestan by publicizing language ideologies that position Mandarin as modern and developed, and minority languages as backward and deficient. Government officials have also conflated a lack of proficiency in Mandarin with criminality, with Xinjiang chairman Nur Bekri stating in 2009 that “Terrorists from neighboring countries mainly target Uyg[h]urs that are relatively isolated from mainstream society as they cannot speak Mandarin. They are then tricked into terrorist activities” (Jia 2009). And perhaps more insidious, a Uyghur cadre said in 2017 that Uyghur youths should learn Mandarin to counter a perception that they are “terrorists” (Shepherd 2017).

The CCP's effort to promote Mandarin language assimilation is one part of a general objective to Sinicize the ethnic minority communities of East Turkestan. By eliminating markers of ethnic difference, the Chinese government is participating in a heinous tradition of linguistic and cultural erasure and producing a variation on crimes against humanity committed by countries, such as the US, Canada, and Australia, in their systematic efforts to force the acculturation of indigenous peoples. As a point of comparison, the 1892 speech by US Captain Richard H. Pratt, known for its phrase to "Kill the Indian, and Save the Man," justifies the eradication of Native American cultural heritage as part of an effort to "Americanize" and "civilize" Native Americans, including the prohibition of Native American languages at school (1973). Although apologies cannot compensate for linguistic and cultural erasure, the US, Canadian, and Australian governments have uniformly expressed remorse for moves to assimilate indigenous minority communities, including the oppression of their languages (Kelley 2000, Rudd 2008, Stewart 1998), raising the question of why the CCP would willfully write a dark chapter in its own history.

Although the CCP is using language policies in education to accelerate the fusion of ethnic minorities with the Han majority in a great unity, evidence suggests that these policies are provoking ethnic minority discontent (Schluessel 2007) and contributing to the reification of an oppositional consciousness, with agency expressed through everyday acts of resistance (Scott 1985), including speaking Uyghur as much as possible (Clothey and Koku 2017, Bovingdon 2010, 2002). At the same time, the CCP is attempting to undermine possibilities to perform acts of symbolic resistance and boundary maintenance (Finley 2013) by continuously reconstituting structural and cultural inequalities, causing the domains for minority languages in East Turkestan to shrink (Dwyer 2016). This circumstance is adversely affecting the vitality of minority languages (Simons and Fennig 2018), and may limit expressions of discontent, as articulated in minority languages.

However, scholars have documented communities that have shifted languages, such as Indo-Trinidadians (Eriksen, Amit, and Mitchell 2010) and Sindhis of Malaysia (Khemlani-David 1998), while maintaining a distinct ethnic identity. The ethnic minority communities in East Turkestan differ from these other groups because the Chinese government is committed to rapid assimilation, and is deliberately trying to "re-engineer the psyche" of Uyghurs (Mamtimin Ala

qtd. in Vanderklippe 2018b) to compel their identification as members of the *Zhonghua minzu* (Chinese nation). The CCP's attempt to promote Mandarin language shift and marginalize minority languages, among other cultural practices, may result in cultural trauma, with members of ethnic minority communities feeling they have been "subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (Alexander 2004, 1). Even if the CCP is able to advance Mandarin language assimilation, an ethnic minority oppositional consciousness may still exist and be performed in everyday acts of resistance. Private speech, including statements of cultural antipathy, moral disapprobation, and anger (Finley 2013) that "strengthen Uyghurs' collective identity and resolve to remain distinct from the 'Chinese nation'" (Bovingdon 2010, 86), can be expressed in any language.

The CCP is committed to building a nation that is both monocultural and monolingual, and does not seem to recognize how state-sponsored discrimination and Han chauvinism (Johnson 2018, UN 2018) disrupt the conversion of cultural capital into social and economic capital, fueling ethnic minority discontent. Bourdieu describes language as a form of cultural capital, with the subset of official national languages imbued with symbolic capital because of their role in the formation and maintenance of nation-states (1991). For this reason, the CCP fears the Uyghur language. Because of its potential as symbolic capital for the formation of a separate nation-state, the CCP feels compelled to diminish the vitality of this perceived competition. In sum, the Uyghur language is a form of cultural currency that the Chinese government is trying to take out of circulation. Abduweli's Movement for Uyghur Mother Tongue-Based Education was suppressed because it was interfering with the government's efforts to rid East Turkestan of this form of symbolic capital.

According to Bourdieu's theory, speakers of Mandarin, the official and legitimate language of the PRC, should be able to convert this form of cultural capital into Chinese social capital, as a means of entry into "a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition," that is, a social network made of connections, which are convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital (1986, 246). However, scholars have documented how ethnic discrimination, and exclusive Han networks, restrict job opportunities for ethnic minorities in East Turkestan, despite graduates having strong command of Mandarin

(Finley 2013, Tohti 2015). From a CCP or Han chauvinist perspective, Uyghurs have a tribal stigma, and are perceived as having a “spoiled identity” (Goffman 1963) by virtue of their distinct race, nation, and religion – attributes that discredit and lead to the rejection of Uyghurs in Han-dominated society. The possibility remains that, as a consequence of the durability of state-sponsored discrimination and Han chauvinism, the tribal stigma will persist beyond the CCP’s attempt at ethnic minority linguistic and cultural erasure, contributing to ethnic animosity and conflict.

4. Resisting Chinese linguistic imperialism with family language policy

Drawing from the disciplines of language policy and child language acquisition, the subfield of family language policy may be of interest to Uyghurs in East Turkestan because of its concern with heritage language maintenance, and the acquisition of more than one language in the family domain (King, Fogle, and Logan-Terry 2008). Referred to by Fishman as the fulcrum for reversing language shift, the family domain is crucial for the intergenerational transmission of heritage languages (2001, 467). A Uyghur-dominant family language policy may facilitate the maintenance and intergenerational transmission of Uyghur if multidimensional (i.e. overt and covert) and negotiated (King 2013). Given the multitude of variables that influence language acquisition, the following strategies cannot guarantee heritage language maintenance, but they are offered in good faith as pillars of support.

In establishing a family language policy, it is important to identify language ideologies, that is, “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (Silverstein 1979, 193), and recognize how ideologies are shaped by and shape social, cultural, and political contexts. For Uyghurs in East Turkestan, contextual factors include Han internal colonialism (Gladney 1998, Toops 2014) and CCP policies that restrict or prohibit minority cultural practices (UHRP 2013, 2015). A Uyghur-dominant family language policy would, at its foundation, explicitly challenge the CCP’s “ideology of contempt” (Tsung 2014a, 57), in which minority languages are disparaged as backward and deficient (Dwyer 2005, Wang and Phillion 2009). A critique of CCP language ideology would also recognize that ethnic discrimination often undermines the promise of job opportunities for Mandarin-speaking Uyghurs. CCP language ideology legitimates and naturalizes Mandarin language assimilation among ethnic minorities of East Turkestan, and also disincentivizes the acquisition of Uyghur by Han migrants, thus reinforcing the perception of internal colonialism. Yet its recognition could help fortify an oppositional stance, and a commitment to use Uyghur as the main language in the family domain. Consciousness of CCP language ideology could also make language practices in the family domain more visible, including the unconscious use of Mandarin. In summary, the analysis of beliefs and ideologies (thoughts about language) are fundamental for raising consciousness of language practices

(actions with language), providing rationale and momentum for efforts to strategically regulate those practices (Spolsky 2017).

To create a heritage language-rich environment, parents can apply a set of strategies. A number of studies indicate that sensitivity to language begins in the fetal period (Minai et al. 2017, Kisilevsky et al. 2009), so parents should provide their progeny a high quantity of high quality linguistic input from conception. Consistent use of Uyghur will provide for exposure to different aspects of the language, including phonetics (sounds), phonology (sound patterns), morphology (words and parts of words), syntax (sentence structure), and pragmatics (meaning in context). An early start is “a key element in laying the groundwork for a successful outcome in terms of both linguistic proficiency and continued use” (Grosjean 2008, Pauwels 2016, 119). Parents interested in creating a Uyghur-rich environment should also provide opportunities for children to engage in activities with other Uyghur-speaking family members and friends. Different speakers will speak different varieties of Uyghur, broadening the child’s exposure to other dialects, registers, and styles.

Regarding the development of literacy skills, parents must make a deliberate effort to support transmission. Uyghur parents should seek age-appropriate books in Uyghur and habitually read to their children from infancy.⁴⁸ From preschool, Uyghur students in ‘bilingual’ classes may receive Uyghur literacy instruction, while Uyghur students in Han-stream Mandarin classes will receive no Uyghur literacy instruction. Parents of children in Han-stream Mandarin classes will have to teach, or arrange for someone to teach, their children to read and write in Uyghur. Either option requires a commitment, but this must occur if parents desire to transmit Uyghur literacy skills. To further support reading skills, Uyghur parents should model this activity, by reading Uyghur language books and magazines in the presence of children. Though the CCP has restricted the publication and sale of Uyghur language reading materials (Tyson 2019), parents should do their best to provide children a diverse selection of Uyghur books.

⁴⁸ Reading aloud to young children promotes the development of language and other emergent literacy skills (Duursma, Augustyn, and Zuckerman 2008). This practice also instills a love for reading, a valuable disposition in any language.

Uyghur parents can strengthen their children's Uyghur language skills through exposure to Uyghur language materials, including print, such as newspaper and magazines, and broadcast media, such as radio and television, along with films, music, and the internet. Because East Turkestan print and broadcast media are vehicles for CCP propaganda, some Uyghurs may be inclined to avoid this material, but Uyghur language radio and television can be used as tools for media literacy. Uyghur family members could read, listen to, or watch the news, and then discuss articles and stories, challenging each other to distinguish facts from opinion.⁴⁹ Parents could ask if any information or perspectives were missing, and how the article or story might sound if told with additional data or from a different perspective. Though film, music, and the internet are regulated by the government, selected materials could also be used to foster a Uyghur-rich environment.

A Uyghur-dominant family language policy that maintains Uyghur as normal and appropriate in the family domain may more adequately ensure that children develop competency in Uyghur. But, as a consequence of the CCP promotion of Mandarin language assimilation, it is likely that young Uyghur children will use Mandarin in the family domain. Lanza identifies five ways that heritage language caregivers can respond to a child's use of a non-heritage language, and lists them on a continuum for encouraging an "interaction that is *more monolingual* or *more bilingual* in quality" (Lanza 2004, 267). The first two strategies, Minimal Grasp and Expressed Guess, prompt the child, when using Mandarin, to repeat their utterance in Uyghur. These requests for clarification differ only in the degree to which the adult feigns monolingualism in Uyghur. With the Minimal Grasp strategy, a caregiver might ask for clarification by using wh-questions or expressions, such as "I don't understand." While with the Expressed Guess strategy, the caregiver displays their comprehension of the Mandarin utterance, but then provides the target utterance in a yes-no question, such as "Did you mean to say [Uyghur word or phrase]?" In the third strategy, Adult Repetition, the parent repeats in Uyghur what the child said in Mandarin. This repetition is in the form of a statement, requiring no response from the child. In

⁴⁹ Radio Free Asia (<https://www.rfa.org/uyghur/>), Istiqlal News (<http://www.istiqlal.net>) and the Facebook Page for the World Uyghur Congress (<https://www.facebook.com/Qurultay/>) are excellent sources for news in Uyghur, and produced by Uyghurs, but these websites are blocked in China. The Great Firewall can be circumvented with a Virtual Private Network, but such an action, if discovered by the CCP, carries considerable risk of punishment.

the fourth strategy, the Move-on Strategy, the caregiver continues the interaction in Uyghur, indicating comprehension and acceptance of the Mandarin word or phrase. The final strategy is Code-Switching – alternations between Mandarin and Uyghur – which entail the caregiver switching to Mandarin in their next utterance (i.e. inter-sentential code-switching), or the caregiver, in their next utterance, embedding the child's Mandarin word or phrase into the matrix of Uyghur (i.e. intra-sentential code-switching).

Uyghur communities may consider using holidays where families and friends congregate, such as Qurban Heyt, as occasions to negotiate family language policy, and discuss challenges and strategies. For parents, this could serve as a chance to reflect on language ideologies and language practices, and to think about language socialization – how their children are learning behaviors that are culturally appropriate for their community (Ochs and Schieffelin 2011), and how they are modeling who speaks what to whom, where, and when (Fishman 1965). Uyghur parents may also want to encourage positive views of diglossia and bilingualism, celebrating proficiency in Uyghur and Mandarin (and other languages), but emphasizing that these languages are to be used in different domains and for different functions (Ferguson 1959, Fishman 1967). Parents may also want to warn their children that if Mandarin replaces Uyghur in the family domain, the vitality of their heritage language will be at risk.

Part of this conversation may be centered on the parents, but all family members should be involved in discussing efforts to change language practices through any kind of intervention, planning, or management (Spolsky 2017). A family language policy is more likely to be implemented if all stake-holders participate in its design, so all family members should discuss their thoughts about language and the balance of language use in their home and evaluate if it is important for them to use Uyghur as the primary medium of communication. In the spirit of commitment to the cause, all family members could identify what they are doing to maintain or develop their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in Uyghur. They might even articulate goals, such as a pledge to read a Uyghur-script book, or for Uyghur school-aged children, limiting Mandarin to the completion of homework assignments.

While these strategies are conceived for Uyghur families headed by two Uyghur parents, ethnically diverse families (i.e. those comprised of one Uyghur parent and a parent from another ethnic group) could also use them for successful Uyghur language transmission.⁵⁰ If the non-Uyghur parent supports the intergenerational transmission of Uyghur, the parents could follow the “one person, one language” model, where the Uyghur parent uses Uyghur and the non-Uyghur parent uses another language (Barron-Hauwaert 2004). In addition to providing consistent high quality Uyghur linguistic input, and creating a Uyghur-rich environment, the Uyghur parent should display a positive attitude toward Uyghur, give positive reinforcement when the child uses Uyghur, and provide corrective feedback (Pauwels 2016). Assuming the Uyghur parent is proficient in Mandarin, they must also be vigilant not to unconsciously shift to Mandarin. However, if the non-Uyghur parent does not support the intergenerational transmission of Uyghur, the Uyghur parent might try to change their partner’s opinion by citing the cognitive, pedagogical, and sociocultural benefits of bilingualism, and the long-term interests of the child (Baker 2014). If this issue is not resolved in favor of a bilingual Uyghur-Mandarin family language policy, it is difficult to imagine a child successfully acquiring Uyghur as a first language.

These strategies also assume that one or both Uyghur parents are proficient in Uyghur, but additional considerations must be made for families headed by Uyghur parents who possess differing levels of Uyghur language skills, resulting from, for example, first language attrition from subtractive bilingualism in the domain of education, or a Han-stream education that did not cultivate Uyghur literacy skills. Such configurations may become more common as Uyghurs grow up in environments with a dominant language that is different from their heritage language, and where they appear more competent and comfortable in the dominant language (Valdés 2000). Provided that heritage language speakers “received some crucial input during the critical period, given optimal amounts of input and time to develop the underdeveloped skills through instruction, they should be able to catch up with educated native speakers if that is what their linguistic goal is” (Montrul 2010, 18-19). That is, Uyghur parents with low Uyghur language

⁵⁰ The CCP, perhaps aware of the challenges faced by ethnically diverse families in Uyghur language transmission, encourages Uyghurs and Chinese to marry by providing financial, housing, medical, and educational incentives (RFA 2014).

skills possess the cognitive and linguistic potential to reach nativelike grammatical competence in Uyghur, but to realize this potential, as a precursor to transmitting such skills to children, depends on practice, motivation, and needs.

When a heritage language is maligned as having low status and value, or stigmatized through association with criminality, the family domain would appear to be the final safe space for intergenerational transmission. Yet the CCP has also intruded into the family domain. Some Uyghurs, fearing that the CCP may accuse them of radicalism for possessing Uyghur language books (especially religious texts), have burned these items, removing a source for the maintenance of Uyghur literacy skills (Thum 2018a, Vanderklippe 2018c). The CCP has also labeled Islamic greetings as manifestations of extremism, undermining a linguistic and religious connection across generations and nations (Wang 2018). But most pernicious and invasive is the CCP's homestay campaign, begun in 2014, which, by 2017, involved more than a million Chinese cadres, implanted in the homes of rural East Turkestan residents for at least five days every two months, for indoctrination and surveillance. Tasked with observing Turkic Muslim families, the cadres' reports are used to make recommendations about who should be sent to internment camps (Wang 2018, Byler 2018). In these homestays, conversations are conducted in Mandarin, and cadres note the Mandarin proficiency levels of Uyghur family members and their general use of Mandarin. Thus, language practices serve as one point of evidence for who should be allowed to remain at home or who "should be sent away to have their defects repaired by the state" (Byler 2018, 2019, Shih 2018). Instead of offering an education that aligns with and develops the first language of Uyghur children, as is recommended by scholars of education, the CCP is attempting to alter the linguistic habitus of ethnic minority speech communities, by promoting a shift to Mandarin in the family domain.

* * * * *

With the CCP campaign of Chinese linguistic imperialism in East Turkestan, individuals and collectives among the Uyghur diaspora must be celebrated for their efforts to maintain the intergenerational transmission of Uyghur language and culture. Members of the Uyghur diaspora do not have to contend with a state-sponsored initiative that promotes language shift, but they still must negotiate how to balance use of their heritage language with the dominant language(s) of their community. To achieve this balance, the recommendations offered for Uyghur families

in the context of East Turkestan apply elsewhere, and, principally, the advice that families create a Uyghur-rich environment that facilitates opportunities for reading, writing, listening, and speaking in Uyghur. Although the CCP is reducing the amount of materials published in Uyghur, individuals among the Uyghur diaspora, such as Abduweli Ayup, are resisting this trend by publishing in Uyghur, including Uyghur language learning materials. And though the CCP is marginalizing minority languages in the school system in East Turkestan, collectives among the Uyghur diaspora are resisting this trend by establishing Uyghur language schools in major cities across the globe. These efforts are crucial now, and diaspora Uyghur communities that emphasize the intergenerational transmission of Uyghur language and culture may serve as important resources in the future, should the day come that Uyghurs in East Turkestan have the chance to reconnect with and revitalize their cultural heritage.

References

- @Abduweli.Ayup. 2014. "Justice for Uyghur Linguist Abduweli Ayup."
<https://www.facebook.com/Abduweli.Ayup/>.
- Abdilim, Mihray. 2011. Teachers Fired Over Mandarin Ability. *Radio Free Asia*.
- Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2004. "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma." In *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 1-30. University of California Press.
- Amnesty International. 1999. People's Republic of China: Gross Violations of Human Rights in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.
- Amnesty International. 2018. China: "Where are they?"; Time for answers about mass detentions in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.
- Anaytulla, Guljennet. 2008. "Present State and Prospects of Bilingual Education in Xinjiang: An Ethnographic Perspective." *Chinese Education & Society* 41 (6):37-49.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*: Verso.
- Associated Press. 2018. US Lawmakers Urge Export Restrictions Targeting China's Xinjiang. *VOA*.
- Ayup, Abduweli. 2018. "Personal Communication." Nov. 15 2018.
- Ayup, Ablajan Awut. 2016. "Dear Teacher (Söyümlük Muellim)." The Art of Life in Chinese Central Asia. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yPmdkB8Ww3Y>.
- Baker, Colin. 2006. *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism*. 4th ed. UK/USA/Canada: Multilingual Matters.
- Baker, Colin. 2014. *A Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism*: Multilingual Matters.
- Ball, Jessica. 2011. *Enhancing learning of children from diverse language backgrounds: Mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education in early childhood and early primary school years*: UNESCO.
- Barron-Hauwaert, Suzanne. 2004. *Language Strategies for Bilingual Families: The One-parent-one-language Approach*: Multilingual Matters.
- Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. 1991. "Script Changes in Xinjiang." In *Cultural Change and Continuity in Central Asia*, edited by S. Akiner. London.
- Bellér-Hann, Ildikó. 2000. *The Written and the Spoken: Literary and Oral Transmission Among the Uyghur*. Berling: Das Arabische Buch.
- Benson, Carol. 2004a. The importance of mother tongue-based schooling for educational quality. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005*.
- Benson, Linda. 1990. *The Ili Rebellion: the Moslem Challenge to Chinese Authority in Xinjiang, 1944-1949*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.
- Benson, Linda. 2004b. "Education and Social Mobility among Minority Populations in Xinjiang." In *Xinjiang : China's Muslim borderland*, edited by S. Frederick Starr, 190-215. New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc.
- Bialystok, Ellen. 2001. *Bilingualism in development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bilik, Naran. 2013. "How Do You Say "China" in Mongolian?: Toward a Deeper Understanding of Multicultural Education in China." In *Minority Education in China*, 65-82. Hong Kong University Press.

- Blachford, Dongyan Ru. 1999. "Language Planning and Bilingual Education for Linguistic Minorities in China: A Case Study of the Policy Formulation and Implementation Process." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto.
- Bourdieu, P. 1986. "The forms of capital." In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by J. Richardson, 241–58. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Bourdieu, P. 1991. *Language and symbolic power*. Translated by John B. Thompson. Edited by John B. Thompson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bovingdon, Gardner. 2002. "The Not-So-Silent Majority: Uyghur Resistance to Han Rule in Xinjiang." *Modern China* 28 (1):39-78.
- Bovingdon, Gardner. 2004. *Autonomy in Xinjiang: Han nationalist imperatives and Uyghur discontent*: East-West Center Washington.
- Bovingdon, Gardner. 2005. "Statement of Gardner Bovingdon." China's Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law: Does it Protect Minority Rights?
- Bovingdon, Gardner. 2010. *The Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land*: Columbia University Press.
- Brophy, David. 2016. *Uyghur Nation: Reform and Revolution on the Russia-China Frontier*: Harvard University Press.
- Brophy, David. 2018. China's Uyghur Repression. *Jacobin*.
- Buckley, Chris. 2018a. China Breaks Silence on Muslim Detention Camps, Calling Them 'Humane'. *New York Times*.
- Buckley, Chris. 2018b. The Leaders Who Unleashed China's Mass Detention of Muslims. *New York Times*.
- Butler, Daren, and Tulay Karadeniz. 2017. Turkey says Istanbul nightclub attacker probably Uighur. *Reuters*.
- Byler, Darren. 2018. China's Government Has Ordered a Million Citizens to Occupy Uighur Homes. Here's What They Think They're Doing. *ChinaFile*.
- Byler, Darren. 2019. The 'Patriotism' Of Not Speaking Uyghur. *SupChina*.
- CCTV. 2018. 筑牢根基 源头治理 (Building the Roots of Governance).
- Chao, Steve. 2019. *Uighurs: Nowhere To Call Home*: Al Jazeera.
- Chaudhuri, Debasish. 2016. "China's policy in Xinjiang, 1948-78." In *Xinjiang – China's Northwest Frontier*, edited by K. Warikoo, 56-81. Routledge.
- Chen, S. M. 2010. *Xinjiang minhan shuangyu xianxiang yu shehui fazhan zhi guanxi (The relationship between Xinjiang's bilingual Han and ethnic minorities and social development)*. Beijing, China: Minzu chubanshe.
- Chen, Yangbin. 2008. *Muslim Uyghur students in a Chinese boarding school*: Lexington Books.
- Chen, Yangbin. 2015. "Young Uyghurs' Perceptions of Han Chinese: from Xinjiang to Inland, from State to Individual." In *Language, Education and Uyghur Identity in Urban Xinjiang*, edited by Joanne Smith Finley and Xiaowei Zang, 132-156. Routledge.
- China Education and Research Network. 2000. 内地新疆高中班管理办法试行 (Administration Regulations for the Xinjiang Class).
- China Fellowship Program. 2013a. "International Fellowships Program – China (Chinese)." <http://web.archive.org/web/20130901023148/http://www.china-ifp.org/>.

- China Fellowship Program. 2013b. "Selected Recipients."
<https://web.archive.org/web/20130913104353/http://www.china-ifp.org/docs/FellowsTable.htm>.
- China Global Television Network. 2017. Volunteer-teacher program debuts in Tibet and Xinjiang.
- ChinaAid. 2018. Ethnic minority teachers fired in Xinjiang.
- Chinese Communist Party. 1949. Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.
- Chinese Communist Party. 1954. Constitution of the People's Republic of China.
- Chinese Communist Party. 1982. Constitution of the People's Republic of China.
- Chinese Communist Party. 1984. Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law of the People's Republic of China.
- Chinese Communist Party. 1995. Education Law of the People's Republic of China.
- Chinese Communist Party. 1999. National Minorities Policy and Its Practice in China. Beijing: Information Office of the State Council of the Peoples Republic of China.
- Chinese Communist Party. 2002. 国务院办公厅转发教育部等部门支援新疆汉语教师工作方案的通知 (State Council General Office Transmits to Education and Other Departments a Notice on the Plan to Support Work Related to Xinjiang Mandarin Language Teachers). edited by General Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China.
- Chinese Communist Party. 2011. 新疆维吾尔自治区少数民族学前和中小学双语教育发展规划 (2010-2020 年) (Bilingual Education Development Plan for Preschool, Primary and Secondary School (2010-2020)).
- Chinese Communist Party. 2013. "Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere." In *The China Reader: Rising Power*, edited by David Shambaugh, 70-74. Oxford University Press.
- Chinese Communist Party. 2017. (Under the Microscope: Five Years of Encouragement) Xinjiang's Economic and Social Standards Have Developed Steadily and Healthily, People's Sense of Achievement Has Continuously Risen [(Weiguan: dili wu nian jian) xinjiang jingji shehui pingwen jiankang fazhan, renmin qunzhong huode gan buduan zengqiang]. edited by United Front Work Department.
- Chinese Communist Party. 2019. The Fight Against Terrorism and Extremism and Human Rights Protection in Xinjiang. China's State Council Information Office.
- Clark, William Carl. 1999. "Convergence or divergence: Uighur family change in Urumqi." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington.
- Clarke, Michael. 2019. China's Uyghur 'Re-Education' Centers and the Ghosts of Totalitarians Past. *War on the Rocks*.
- Clarke, Michael E. 2012. *Xinjiang and China's Rise in Central Asia: A History*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Clarke, Michael E. 2017. China's 'three warfares' in Xinjiang. *East Asia Forum*.
- Cliff, Tom. 2016. *Oil and Water: Being Han in Xinjiang*. University of Chicago Press.
- Clothey, Rebecca A., and Emmanuel F. Koku. 2017. "Oppositional consciousness, cultural preservation, and everyday resistance on the Uyghur Internet." *Asian Ethnicity* 18 (3):351-370.

- Committee of Concerned Scientists. 2014. Uyghur Linguist's Whereabouts Unknown Since Arrest for Attempt to Teach Language.
- Congressional-Executive Commission on China. 2008. Xinjiang Authorities Recruit More Teachers for Mandarin-focused "Bilingual" Education.
- Congressional-Executive Commission on China. 2009. Governments in Xinjiang Continue to Sponsor, Sanction Job Recruitment That Discriminates Against Ethnic Minorities.
- Congressional-Executive Commission on China. 2010. Discriminatory Job Hiring Practices Continue in Xinjiang.
- Congressional-Executive Commission on China. 2011. Xinjiang Authorities Accelerate Promotion of Mandarin-Focused Bilingual Education.
- Crawford, James. 1995. "Endangered Native American languages: What is to be done, and why?" *The Bilingual Research Journal* 19 (1):17-38.
- Cummins, J. 2000. *Language, power, and pedagogy. Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Cummins, J. 2001. "Bilingual Children's Mother Tongue: Why Is It Important for Education?" *Sprogforum* 7 (19):15-20.
- Currie, Kelley E. 2018. "Statement of Kelley E. Currie." Surveillance, Suppression and Mass Detention: Xinjiang's Human Rights Crisis.
- Davis, Michael C. 2014. "China & the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: The Tibetan Case." *University of Hong Kong Faculty of Law Research Paper* No. 2014/044.
- Dewey, John. 1900. *The School and Society: Being Three Lectures*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Dewey, John. 1916. *Democracy and Education*. New York: Free Press.
- Dolan, Uyghur. 2013. "Abduweli Ayup'un İçeri Girmesine Neden Olan Konuşması." <https://youtu.be/JXg3SWK0sqg>.
- Duan, Jinhui, Shuying Wei, Ming Zeng, and Yanfang Ju. 2016. The Energy Industry in Xinjiang, China: Potential, Problems, and Solutions. *Power*.
- Dupont, Sam. 2007. China's war on the "Three Evil Forces". *Foreign Policy*.
- Duursma, E., M. Augustyn, and B. Zuckerman. 2008. "Reading aloud to children: The evidence." *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 93 (7):554-7.
- Dwyer, Arianne M. 2005. *The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse*: East-West Center Washington.
- Dwyer, Arianne M. 2016. "Endangered Turkic languages of China." In *Tehlikedeki Türk Dilleri: Kuramsal ve genel yaklaşımlar / Endangered Turkic Languages: Theoretical and general approaches*, edited by Süer Eker and Ülkü Çelik Şavk, 431-450. Ankara: International Turkic Academy and Astana: International Turkish-Kazakh University.
- Elishat. 2015. 民族压迫中的维吾尔人—被牺牲的维吾尔儿童 (Uyghurs in Minority Oppression - Uyghur Children Sacrificed). *Boxun*.
- Elliott, Mark. 2015. "The Case of the Missing Indigene: Debate Over a "Second-Generation" Ethnic Policy." *The China Journal* 73:186-213.
- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, Vered Amit, and Jon P. Mitchell. 2010. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*: Pluto Press.

- Fan, Samantha P., Zoe Liberman, Boaz Keysar, and Katherine D. Kinzler. 2015. "The Exposure Advantage: Early Exposure to a Multilingual Environment Promotes Effective Communication." *Psychological Science* 26 (7):1090-1097.
- Fay, Greg. 2016. "China Targets Uyghurs with Severe Human Rights Abuses." *Centre for Policy and Research on Turkey (ResearchTurkey)* V (4):6-26.
- Feng, Emily. 2018. China steps up surveillance on Xinjiang Muslims: Hikvision to supply 1,000 facial recognition cameras to mosques in the region. *Financial Times*.
- Ferguson, Charles A. 1959. "Diglossia." *Word* 15:325-40.
- Finley, Joanne N. Smith. 2013. *The Art of Symbolic Resistance*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill.
- Fishman, Joshua A. 1965. "Who speaks what language to whom and when?" *La Linguistique* 1 (2):67-88.
- Fishman, Joshua A. 1967. "Bilingualism with and without diglossia: Diglossia with and without bilingualism." *Journal of Social Issues* 23 (2):29-38.
- Fishman, Joshua A. 1972. *Language in sociocultural change, Language science and national development*. Stanford: Calif., Stanford University Press.
- Fishman, Joshua A. 2001. *Can Threatened Languages Be Saved? Reversing Language Shift, Revisited: A Twenty-First Century Perspective*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Forced Migration Online. 2009. Relocation of Uyghur Women in China.
- Forsythe, Michael. 2014. Assaults Attack Train Station in Restive Western China. *New York Times*.
- Freire. 1970. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- García, Ofelia. 2008. *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Ghai, Yash P. 2000. "Autonomy Regimes in China : Coping with Ethnic and Economic Diversity." In *Autonomy and ethnicity : negotiating competing claims in multi-ethnic states*, edited by Yash P. Ghai, 77-98. New York.
- Gladney, Dru C. 1998. "Internal Colonialism and the Uyghur Nationality: Chinese Nationalism and Its Subaltern Subjects." *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien* 25:47-63.
- Gladney, Dru C. 2004. *Dislocating China: Reflections on Muslims, minorities, and other subaltern subjects*. University of Chicago Press.
- Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma; notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. : Prentice-Hall.
- Greer, Tanner. 2018. 48 Ways to Get Sent to a Chinese Concentration Camp. *Foreign Policy*.
- Grice, H.P. 1989. *Studies in the Way of Words*. Harvard University Press.
- Grimaldi, James V., Shane Harris, and Aruna Viswanatha. 2017. Mueller Probes Flynn's Role in Alleged Plan to Deliver Cleric to Turkey. *Wall Street Journal*.
- Grose, Timothy A. 2010. "The Xinjiang Class: Education, Integration, and the Uyghurs." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 30 (1):97-109.
- Grose, Timothy A. 2016. "Reluctant to Serve their Hometowns and Country." In *Educational Development in Western China: Towards Quality and Equity*, edited by John Chi-Kin Lee, Zeyuan Yu, Xianhan Huang and Edmond Hau-Fai Law, 163-175. Rotterdam: SensePublishers.

- Grose, Timothy A. 2019. "Personal Communication." 15 Feb. 2019.
- Grosjean, François. 2008. *Studying bilinguals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Große, Karl. 2002. "Kein Studium in Muttersprache: Peking schaltet Uigurisch ab." *Frankfurter Rundschau* 2.
- Guowuyuan. 1995 [1956]. "Guowuyuan guanyu tuiguang putonghua de zhishi." In *Dangdai Zhongguo de wensi gaige*, edited by J. Wang, 765-8. Beijing: Dangdai Zhongguo Chubanshe.
- Han, Da, ed. 1998. *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu jiaoyu shi (The history of Chinese minority education)*. Vol. 2. Guangzhou: Guangdong Jiaoyu Chubanshe, Guangxi Jiaoyu Chubanshe, Yunnan Jiaoyu Chubanshe.
- Hao, Shiyuan. 2016. *How the communist party of China manages the issue of nationality: An evolving topic*: Springer Science and Business Media.
- Harrell, Stevan. 1995. "Introduction: Civilizing Projects and the Reaction to Them." In *Cultural encounters on China's ethnic frontiers*, edited by Stevan Harrell, 3-36. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Harris, Rachel. 2008. *The Making of a Musical Canon in Chinese Central Asia: The Uyghur Twelve Muqam*. Aldershot: Ashgate Press.
- Harris, Rachel. 2018. Uyghur pop star detained in China. *Free Muse*.
- Haugen, Einar Ingvald. 1972. *The ecology of language, Language science and national development*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- He, Baogang. 2005. "Minority Rights with Chinese Characteristics." In *Multiculturalism in Asia*, edited by Will Kymlicka and Baogang He, 56-79. Oxford University Press.
- He, Baogang. 2013. "The Power of Chinese Linguistic Imperialism and its Challenge To Multicultural Education " In *Minority Education in China: Balancing Unity and Diversity in an Era of Critical Pluralism*, edited by James Leibold and Chen Yangbin, 45-64. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Hoja, Gulchehra, and Shohret Hoshur. 2017. Children of Detained Uyghurs Face 'Terrible' Conditions in Overcrowded Xinjiang Orphanages. *Radio Free Asia*.
- Hoshur, Shohret. 2018a. Dozens of Uyghur Children of Xinjiang Village Camp Detainees Sent to Live in Orphanages. *Radio Free Asia*.
- Hoshur, Shohret. 2018b. Threat of Re-Education Camp Drives Uyghur Who Failed Anthem Recitation to Suicide. *Radio Free Asia*.
- Hoshur, Shohret. 2018c. Uyghur Former Xinjiang University Vice President Detained For 'Two-Faced' Tendencies. *Radio Free Asia*.
- Hoshur, Shohret. 2019. China Spiriting Uyghur Detainees Away From Xinjiang to Prisons in Inner Mongolia, Sichuan. *Radio Free Asia*.
- Howell, Anthony, and C. Cindy Fan. 2011. "Migration and Inequality in Xinjiang: A Survey of Han and Uyghur Migrants in Urumqi." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 52 (1):119-139.
- Human Rights Watch. 2015. Tiger Chairs and Cell Bosses: Police Torture of Criminal Suspects in China.
- Human Rights Watch. 2017. China: Minority Region Collects DNA from Millions: Private Information Gathered by Police, Under Guise of Public Health Program.

- Human Rights Watch. 2018a. China: Big Data Fuels Crackdown in Minority Region: Predictive Policing Program Flags Individuals for Investigations, Detentions.
- Human Rights Watch. 2018b. Turkey: Events of 2017.
- Hunt, Katie, Chieu Luu, and Steven Jiang. 2017. Why China is banning beards and veils in Xinjiang. *CNN*.
- Jacobs, Andrew. 2014a. China Is Said to Have Freed Jailed Uighur Linguist. *New York Times*.
- Jacobs, Andrew. 2014b. A Devotion to Language Proves Risky. *New York Times*.
- Jacobs, Andrew, and Didi Kirsten Tatlow. 2014. Attack Kills More Than 30 in Western China Market. *New York Times*.
- Jia, Cui. 2009. Mandarin Lessons in Xinjiang 'Help Fight Terrorism'. *China Daily (Online)*.
- Jia, Cui. 2013. 'Xinjiang class' helps to mold tomorrow's leaders, deputy says. *China Daily*.
- Johnson, Ian. 2018. The Uighurs and China's Long History of Trouble with Islam. *The New York Review of Books*.
- Kelley, Matt. 2000. Indian Affairs Head Makes Apology. *Washington Post*.
- Kent, Ann. 1999. *China, the United Nations, and Human Rights: The Limits of Compliance*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Khemlani-David, Maya. 1998. "Language shift, cultural maintenance, and ethnic identity; a study of a minority community: the Sindhis of Malaysia." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 130 (1):67.
- King, K. A. 2013. "A tale of three sisters: Language learning and linguistic identity in a transnational family." *International Multilingual Research Journal* 7:49-65.
- King, K. A., L.W. Fogle, and A. Logan-Terry. 2008. "Family language policy." *Language and Linguistics Compass* 2:1-16.
- Kinzley, Judd C. 2018. *Natural Resources and the New Frontier: Constructing Modern China's Borderlands*: University of Chicago Press.
- Kisilevsky, B.S., S.M. Hains, C.A. Brown, C.T. Lee, B. Cowperthwaite, S.S. Stutzman, M.L. Swansburg, K. Lee, X. Xie, H. Huang, H.-H. Ye, K. Zhang, and Z. Wang. 2009. "Fetal sensitivity to properties of maternal speech and language." *Infant Behavior and Development* 32 (1):59-71.
- Kloss, H. 1971. "The language rights of immigrant groups." *International Migration Review* 5:250-268.
- Kloss, H. 1977. *The American bilingual tradition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Kuo, Lily. 2018. 'My soul, where are you?': families of Muslims missing in China meet wall of silence. *The Guardian*.
- Lai, Hongyi Harry. 2002. "China's Western Development Program: Its Rationale, Implementation, and Prospects." *Modern China* 28 (4):432-466.
- Lam, Agnes. 2005. *Language education in China: Policy and experience from 1949*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Lam, Oiwan. 2017. 'Web cleansing': China's Xinjiang residents forced to install surveillance apps on their mobile phones. *Hong Kong Free Press*.

- Lambert, W. E. 1974. "Culture and language as factors in learning and education." In *Cultural factors in learning and education*, edited by F. E. Aboud and R. D. Meade, 91-122. Bellingham: Western Washington State College.
- Lambert, W. E. . 1975. "Culture and language as factors in learning and education." In *Education of Immigrant Students*, edited by A. Wolfgang. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Lanza, Elizabeth. 2004. *Language Mixing in Infant Bilingualism: A Sociolinguistic Perspective*, *Oxford Studies in Language Contact*: Oxford University Press.
- Laruelle, Marlene, ed. 2018. *China's Belt and Road Initiative and its Impact in Central Asia*. The George Washington University, Central Asia Program: The George Washington University, Central Asia Program.
- Leibold, James. 2012. Toward A Second Generation of Ethnic Policies? *China Brief* 12 (13).
- Leibold, James. 2013. *Ethnic Policy in China: Is Reform Inevitable?* Singapore: East-West Center.
- Leibold, James. 2018. Hu the Uniter: Hu Lianhe and the Radical Turn in China's Xinjiang Policy. *China Brief* 18 (16).
- Leibold, James, and Chen Yangbin. 2014. "Introduction: Minority Education in China: Balancing Unity and Diversity in an Era of Critical Pluralism." In *Minority Education in China: Balancing Unity and Diversity in an Era of Critical Pluralism*, edited by James Leibold and Chen Yangbin, 1-24. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Leibold, James, and Adrian Zenz. 2016. Beijing's Eyes and Ears Grow Sharper in Xinjiang. *Foreign Affairs*.
- Leitch, David. 2005. "Canada's native languages: Wrongs from the past, rights for the future " First Nations, First Thoughts, University of Edinburgh, Centre of Canadian Studies, 5-6 May 2005.
- Li, Xiaoyu. 2017. Empowerment Through Education. *Beijing Review America*.
- Lim, Louisa. 2018. China: re-engineering of Uyghur culture. *The Interpreter*.
- Lin, Xin. 2014. China's Mandarin Teaching Drive Sparks Uyghur Anger. *Radio Free Asia*.
- Linguistic Society of America. 2014. LSA Advocates on Behalf of Detained Uyghur Linguist.
- Liu, Xiqian. 2013. "A multiple view: A study of bilingual education on Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region." Master of Arts, Pennsylvania State University.
- Lo Bianco, J. 1990. "Making language policy Australia's experience." In *Language Planning and education in Australia and the South Pacific* edited by R. B. Baldauf Jr. and A. Luke, 47-49. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Long, Qiao. 2017. China Recruits 30,000 Teachers, Police, Civil Servants to Move to Xinjiang. *Radio Free Asia*.
- Long, Qiao, and Yang Fan. 2017. China Bans Use of Uyghur, Kazakh Textbooks, Materials in Xinjiang Schools. *Radio Free Asia*.
- Lu, Xi. 2019. Network of Xinjiang colleges and universities to change the school badge: New school badge to remove Uighur. *Radio Free Asia*.
- Lytle, Sarah Roseberry, and Patricia K. Kuhl. 2017. "Social Interaction and Language Acquisition." In *The Handbook of Psycholinguistics*, edited by Eva M. Fernández and Helen Smith Cairns, 615-634.

- Ma, Rong. 2012. "The development of minority education and the practice of bilingual education in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region." In *China's Assimilationist Language Policy: The Impact on Indigenous/Minority Literacy and Social Harmony*, edited by Gulbahar H. Beckett and Gerard A. Postiglione, 33-74. Taylor and Francis.
- Mamat, Anwar. 2014. Uighur Linguist Remains Jailed Despite International Protest. In *Here & Now*, edited by Robin Young: WBUR.
- Mansbridge, Jane. 2001. "The Making of Oppositional Consciousness: The Subjective Roots of Social Protest." In *Oppositional Consciousness*, edited by Jane Mansbridge and Aldon Morris, 1-19. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mao, Zedong. 1936. "Declaration of the Soviet Central Government to the Moslem People, 12/25/35." In *Collected Works, 1917-1949*, 35-36.
- McKenzie, David. 2014. Is China's grand ethnic experiment working? *CNN*.
- Mei, Ya. 2018. Mandarin education available for 96 pct of Xinjiang kindergarten students. *Xinhua Net*.
- Michael. 2014. Q&A With Student of Imprisoned Linguist Abduweli Ayup. edited by Greg Fay: Uyghur Human Rights Project.
- Millward, James A. 2007. *Eurasian crossroads: A history of Xinjiang*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Millward, James A. 2009. "Introduction: Does the 2009 Urumchi violence mark a turning point?" *Central Asian Survey* 28 (4):347-360.
- Millward, James A. 2018. What It's Like to Live in a Surveillance State. *New York Times*.
- Minai, Utako, Kathleen Gustafson, Robert Fiorentino, Allard Jongman, and Joan Sereno. 2017. "Fetal rhythm-based language discrimination: a biomagnetometry study." *NeuroReport* 28 (10):561-564.
- Moeller, Aleidine J., and Theresa Catalano. 2015. "Foreign Language Teaching and Learning." In *International Encyclopedia for Social and Behavioral Sciences*, edited by J.D. Wright, 327-332. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Montrul, Silvina. 2010. "Current Issues in Heritage Language Acquisition." *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 30:3-23.
- Mu, Xuequan. 2018. Xinjiang allocates fund for rural preschool education. *Xinhua Net*.
- Ochs, Elinor, and Bambi Schieffelin. 2011. "The theory of language socialization." In *The Handbook of Language Socialization*, edited by Alessandro Duranti, 1-21. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Pauwels, Anne. 2016. *Language Maintenance and Shift, Key Topics in Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pawan, Sawut, Rahile Dawut, and Saadet Kurban. 2017. "Uyghur Meshrep Culture and Its Social Function." *Fourth World Journal* 15:81-90.
- Peters, Michael A., and Tina Besley. 2018. "China's double first-class university strategy: 双一流." *Educational Philosophy and Theory*:1-5.
- Phillipson, Robert. 1992. *Linguistic Imperialism*: Oxford University Press.
- Ping, Wang. 2016. "Assessment on language rights in education domain: shift-oriented, maintenance-oriented or something else?" *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 19 (1):89-107.

- Pratt, Richard H. 1973. "The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites." In *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by "Friends of the Indian" 1880–1900*, edited by Francis Paul Prucha, 260–271. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Radio Free Asia. 2004. China Imposes Chinese Language on Uyghur Schools.
- Radio Free Asia. 2013a. Imam Stabbed to Death After Supporting Crackdown Against Uyghurs.
- Radio Free Asia. 2013b. Urumchida Noruz Bayrimi Majbury Emeldin Qalduruldi (Noruz Festival Permission Cancelled in Urumchi).
- Radio Free Asia. 2013c. Xinjiang Clash Leaves Two Village Officials Dead.
- Radio Free Asia. 2013d. Xinjiang Raids Point to Religious Controls.
- Radio Free Asia. 2014. China Offers Cash For Marriage to Promote Assimilation in Xinjiang.
- Radio Free Asia. 2017a. China Bans 'Extreme' Islamic Baby Names Among Xinjiang's Uyghurs.
- Radio Free Asia. 2017b. China Expands Recall of Passports to Uyghurs Outside of Xinjiang.
- Radio Free Asia. 2017c. Xinjiang Introduces 'Convenience Police Stations' to Closely Monitor Uyghurs.
- Radio Free Asia. 2018a. China Locks Up, Tortures Muslims in 'Re-education Camps'.
- Radio Free Asia. 2018b. Uyghur Schoolchildren, Parents Forced to Abstain From Fasting During Ramadan.
- Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 2017. Turkish Police Detain Central Asian Suspects Linked To Nightclub Attack Suspect.
- Rajagopalan, Megha. 2017. This Is What A 21st-Century Police State Really Looks Like. *BuzzFeed News*.
- Ramzy, Austin. 2018. After U.S.-Based Reporters Exposed Abuses, China Seized Their Relatives. *New York Times*.
- Rauhala, Emily. 2018. New evidence emerges of China forcing Muslims into 'reeducation' camps. *Washington Post*.
- Rudd, Kevin. 2008. Text of the Apology to the Stolen Generations.
- Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- SBX (Statistical Bureau of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region). 2010. Xinjiang Tongji Nianjian (Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook 2010). Beijing, China: China Statistics Press.
- Schiffman, Harold F. 1996. *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Schluessel, Eric T. 2007. "'Bilingual' education and discontent in Xinjiang." *Central Asian Survey* 26 (2):251-277.
- Schluessel, Eric T. 2009. "History, identity, and mother-tongue education in Xinjiang." *Central Asian Survey* 28 (4):383-402.
- Schrivver, Randall G. 2019. Press Briefing on the 2019 Report on Military and Security Developments in China. In *U.S. Department of Defense, Asia-Pacific Security Affairs*.
- Scott, James C. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*: Yale University Press.
- Shan, Wei, and Cuifen Weng. 2010. "China's New Policy in Xinjiang and its Challenges." *East Asian Policy* 2 (3).

- Shaohui, Tian. 2015. Bilingual education boosts development in Xinjiang. *Xinhua Net*.
- Sheng, Han. 2018. More personal accounts about camps in Xinjiang. *Bitter Winter*.
- Shepherd, Christian. 2017. China party urges Uighur youth to 'love motherland' to avoid 'terrorist' label. *Reuters*.
- Shih, Gerry. 2017. China's Uighurs work to fend off pull of jihad. *AP News*.
- Shih, Gerry. 2018. China's mass indoctrination camps evoke Cultural Revolution. *AP News*.
- Shih, Gerry, and Dake Kang. 2018. Muslims forced to drink alcohol and eat pork in China's 're-education' camps, former inmate claims. *The Independent*.
- Silverstein, M. 1979. "Language structure and linguistic ideology." In *The Elements: A Parasession on Linguistic Units and Levels*, edited by R. Clyne, W. Hanks and C. Hofbauer, 193-247. Chicago: Chicago Linguistics Society.
- Simayi, Zuliyati. 2014. "The Practice of Ethnic Policy in Education : Xinjiang's Bilingual Education System." In *Minority Education in China : Balancing Unity and Diversity in an Era of Critical Pluralism*, edited by James Leibold and Chen Yangbin, 131-159. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Simons, Gary F., and Charles D. Fennig, eds. 2018. *Language Status*. 21 ed, *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International.
- Sinica. 2018. Nury Turkel and the Uyghur plight.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove. 2000. *Linguistic genocide in education-or worldwide diversity and human rights?* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Spolsky, Bernard. 2017. "Language Policy in Education: Practices, Ideology, and Management." In *Language Policy and Political Issues in Education. Encyclopedia of Language and Education*, edited by McCarty T. and May S., 3-16. Springer, Cham.
- Stewart, Jane. 1998. *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*. edited by Indian Affairs and Northern Development.
- Stites, R. 1999. "Writing cultural boundaries: National minority language policy, literacy planning, and bilingual education." In *China's national minority education: Culture, schooling, and development*, edited by G. A. Postiglione, 95-130. New York: Falmer Press.
- Sulaiman, Eset. 2017. China Bans Uyghur Language in Schools in Key Xinjiang Prefecture. *Radio Free Asia*.
- The Economist. 2013. Ethnic unrest in Xinjiang: Unveiled threats. *The Economist*.
- The Economist. 2017. What is China's belt and road initiative? *The Economist*.
- The Leading Group Office for XUAR Bilingual Education (Xinjiang Weiwu'erzu Zizhiqu Shuangyu Jiaoxue Gongzuo Lingdao Xiaozu Bangongshi). 2012. *Policy Interpretation of Bilingual Education for Xinjiang Ethnic Minorities (Xinjiang Shaoshu Minzu Shuangyu Jiaoyu Zhengce Jiedu)*. Urumqi: Xinjiang People's Publishing House.
- Thomas, Wayne P., and Virginia P. Collier. 2002. *A National Study of School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students' Long-Term Academic Achievement*.: Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence.
- Thorne, Devin, and Ben Spevack. 2017. *Harbored Ambitions: How China's Port Investments are Strategically Reshaping the Indo-Pacific*.

- Thum, Rian. 2018a. China's Mass Internment Camps Have No Clear End in Sight. *Foreign Policy*.
- Thum, Rian. 2018b. Hearing on Surveillance, Suppression, and Mass Detention: Xinjiang's Human Rights Crisis. In *Congressional-Executive Commission on China*.
- TianShan Net. 2007. 内高班招生首设加分政策 (Xinjiang Class enrollment institutes bonus point policy).
- Tibet Justice Center. 2009. Communist Constitution 1931. In *Legal Materials on Tibet, Third Edition*.
- Tohti, Ilham. 2013. "Uighurbiz." <https://web.archive.org/web/20131019093409/http://uighurbiz.net/>.
- Tohti, Ilham. 2015. Present-Day Ethnic Problems in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region: Overview and Recommendations (1) Unemployment. *China Change*.
- Toops, S. 2014. "Where inner Asia meets outer China: The Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region." In *Eurasian corridors of interconnection*, edited by S. Walcott and C. Johnson, 49-71. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Toops, S. 2016a. Spatial Results of the 2010 Census in Xinjiang. *China Policy Institute*.
- Toops, Stanley. 2004a. Demographics and Development in Xinjiang after 1949. *East-West Center Washington Working Papers*.
- Toops, Stanley. 2004b. "The demography of Xinjiang." In *Xinjiang : China's Muslim borderland*, edited by S. Frederick Starr, 241-263. M.E. Sharpe Inc.
- Toops, Stanley. 2016b. "Reflections on China's Belt and Road Initiative." *Area Development and Policy*.
- Tsung, Linda. 2014a. *Language Power and Hierarchy: Multilingual Education in China*: Bloomsbury.
- Tsung, Linda. 2014b. "Trilingual Education and School Practice in Xinjiang." In *Minority Education in China*, edited by James Leibold and Yangbin Chen, 161-186. Hong Kong University Press.
- Tu, Ji Zhen. 2016. "Energy and natural resources in Xinjiang." In *Xinjiang — China's Northwest Frontier*, edited by K. Warikoo, 22-28. Routledge.
- Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2017. Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu accompanied President Erdoğan during his visit to People's Republic of China, 12-15 May 2017.
- Tyson, Ann Scott. 2019. Xinjiang: Beijing's chilling attempt to erase and replace Uyghur identity. *The Christian Science Monitor*.
- Uchqundilemma. 2012. "Chin Yurektin Chin Suzler (From a Sincere Heart, Sincere Words)." <https://youtu.be/zOtgzmlT3MA>.
- UNESCO. 2005. Informal Information Meeting on the preparation of reports on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (1960).
- UNESCO. 2016. Policy Paper 24: If you don't understand, how can you learn? *Global Education Monitoring Report*.
- UNESCO. 2018. China: Country profile. In *Observatory on the Right to Education*.
- United Nations. 1945. Charter of the United Nations.
- United Nations. 2007. Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

- United Nations. 2014. Concluding observations on the second periodic report of China, including Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China. edited by Social and Cultural Rights Committee on Economic.
- United Nations. 2018. Concluding observations on the combined fourteenth to seventeenth periodic reports of China (including Hong Kong, China and Macao, China) edited by Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.
- United Nations General Assembly. 1948. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- United Nations General Assembly. 1966a. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- United Nations General Assembly. 1966b. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- United Nations General Assembly. 1989. Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Uyghur Aid. 2018. When My Tongue Landed Me in Trouble.
- Uyghur Human Rights Project. 2010. China intensifies its official push to eliminate the Uyghur language from instruction.
- Uyghur Human Rights Project. 2013. Sacred Right Defiled: China's Iron-Fisted Repression of Uyghur Religious Freedom.
- Uyghur Human Rights Project. 2014. Trapped in a Virtual Cage: Chinese State Repression of Uyghurs Online.
- Uyghur Human Rights Project. 2015. Uyghur Voices on Education: China's Assimilative 'Bilingual Education' Policy in East Turkestan.
- Uyghur Human Rights Project. 2017a. Discrimination, Mistreatment and Coercion: Severe Labor Rights Abuses Faced by Uyghurs in China and East Turkestan.
- Uyghur Human Rights Project. 2017b. Simulated Autonomy: Uyghur Underrepresentation in Political Office.
- Uyghur Human Rights Project. 2018a. The Bingtuan: China's Paramilitary Colonizing Force in East Turkestan.
- Uyghur Human Rights Project. 2018b. The Mass Internment of Uyghurs: "We want to be respected as humans. Is it too much to ask?"
- Uyghur Maarip Uyushmisi. 2012. "Perzentingizni chushinemsiz Gulen." <https://youtu.be/4Xa9isecr8Q>.
- Uyushma. 2013. "Abduweli ayup (Gulen) ning léksiyisi: Perzentlirimizdin perqimiz néme." <https://youtu.be/LFrIPHp-9Z4>.
- Valdés, G. 2000. "The teaching of heritage languages: an introduction for Slavic-teaching professionals." In *The learning and teaching of Slavic languages and cultures*, edited by Olga Kagan and Benjamin Rifkin, 375-403.
- Vanderklippe, Nathan. 2018a. 'Everyone was silent, endlessly mute': Former Chinese re-education instructor speaks out. *The Globe and Mail*.
- Vanderklippe, Nathan. 2018b. Exporting persecution: Uyghur diaspora haunted by anxiety, guilt as family held in Chinese camps. *The Globe and Mail*.
- Vanderklippe, Nathan. 2018c. Inside China's campaign against the Uyghurs. *The Globe and Mail*.
- Wang, Hanlu. 2010. 290,000 Xinjiang kindergartens students receive bilingual education. *People's Daily Online*.

- Wang, Jian. 2016. "Review of the Pressing Research Issues on West of China's Ethnic Minority Education." In *Educational Development in Western China: Towards Quality and Equity*, edited by John Chi-Kin Lee, Zeyuan Yu, Xianhan Huang and Edmond Hau-Fai Law, 21-35. Rotterdam: SensePublishers.
- Wang, Maya. 2018. "Eradicating Ideological Viruses": China's Campaign of Repression Against Xinjiang's Muslims.
- Wang, Yuxiang, and JoAnn Phillion. 2009. "Minority Language Policy and Practice in China: The Need for Multicultural Education." 2009 11 (1).
- Wang, Zhenben, Wei Liang, Aimaite Abula, and Yong Zhang, eds. 2001. *Xinjiang Minority Minzu Bilingual Education and Research*. Beijing: Minzu Publishing House.
- Wei, L. 1994. *Three Generations, Two Languages, One Family*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Welch, Anthony R., and Rui Yang. 2011. "A Pearl on the Silk Road?" In *The Internationalization of East Asian Higher Education: Globalization's Impact*, edited by John D. Palmer, Amy Roberts, Young Ha Cho and Gregory S. Ching, 63-89. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.
- Westcott, Ben, and Yong Xiong. 2018. China legalizes Xinjiang 're-education camps' after denying they exist. *CNN*.
- Wikipedia contributors. 2018. "Abduweli Ayup." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, Last Modified 22 May. 2018, accessed 2 Nov. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abduweli_Ayup.
- Wingfield-Hayes, Rupert. 2002. Language blow for China's Muslims.
- Wong, Edward. 2014. To Quell Unrest, Beijing Moves to Scatter Uighurs Across China. *New York Times*.
- World Uyghur Congress. 2014. Movement for Uyghur Mother Language Based Education.
- World Uyghur Congress. 2016. Uyghur Political Prisoners.
- Xinhua. 2003. Volunteer Teachers in West China Grateful to Enriched Life Practice.
- Xinhua. 2009. 16,000 more bilingual teachers trained for elementary schools.
- Xinhua. 2014. China's Xi orders 'crushing blow' to terrorism. *China Daily*.
- Xinhua. 2015a. More students in Xinjiang receive bilingual education. *Global Times*.
- Xinhua. 2015b. Xinjiang short of bilingual school teachers. *Global Times*.
- Xinhua. 2017a. "Belt and Road" incorporated into CPC Constitution.
- Xinhua. 2017b. Over 20,000 Xinjiang graduates return home. *Xinhua Net*.
- Xinhua. 2017c. Special class for 13,000 from Xinjiang. *Shanghai Daily*.
- Xinhua. 2017d. Xinjiang to strengthen preschool bilingual education. *China Daily*.
- Xinjiang Provincial Bureau of Statistics. 2012. Tabulation on the 2010 Population Census of Xinjiang province. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Bureau of Statistics. 2006. Statistical yearbook of Xinjiang. Beijing: China Statistical Press.
- Yang, Xiaoping, Min Li, and Shan Wang. 2016. "Challenges and Insights of Early Childhood Education in West China." In *Educational Development in Western China: Towards Quality and Equity*, edited by John Chi-Kin Lee, Zeyuan Yu, Xianhan Huang and Edmond Hau-Fai Law, 277-300. Rotterdam: SensePublishers.

- Yi, Lin. 2016. "A Failure in 'Designed Citizenship': A Case Study in a Minority-Han Merger School in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region." *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 17 (1):22-43.
- Yin, Peter. 2014. Xinjiang Receives Fund to Improve Bilingual Teaching. *Women of China*.
- Zenz, Adrian. 2017. Problematic Privilege in Xinjiang. *The Diplomat*.
- Zenz, Adrian. 2018a. New Evidence for China's Political Re-Education Campaign in Xinjiang. *China Brief*.
- Zenz, Adrian. 2018b. "Thoroughly Reforming them Toward a Healthy Heart Attitude: China's Political Re-Education Campaign in Xinjiang." *Central Asian Survey*:1-27.
- Zenz, Adrian, and James Leibold. 2017a. Chen Quanguo: The Strongman Behind Beijing's Securitization Strategy in Tibet and Xinjiang. *China Brief*.
- Zenz, Adrian, and James Leibold. 2017b. Xinjiang's Rapidly Evolving Security State. *China Brief*.
- Zhang, Haiting. 2012. "The Laws on the Ethnic Minority Autonomous Regions in China: Legal Norms and Practices." *Loyola University Chicago International Law Review* 9 (2).
- Zhang, Qi, and Ting Yang. 2018. "Reflections on the medium of instruction for ethnic minorities in Xinjiang: the case of bilingual schools in Urumqi." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*:1-22.
- Zhang, Yaqing. 2010. 浙江援疆五年内将培训 5000 余名少数民族 “双语” 教师 (Zhejiang Aid Xinjiang will train more than 5,000 "bilingual" teachers of ethnic minorities in five years). *Tianshan Network*.
- Zhang, Zhiyi. 1966. *The Party and the National Question in China*. Translated by George Mosely: The MIT Press.
- Zhao, Suisheng. 2004. *A Nation-state by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism*: Stanford University Press.
- Zhao, Yusha. 2018. Xinjiang to build more preschools for mandarin fluency. *Global Times*.
- Zhou, Minglang. 2003. *Multilingualism in China: The Politics of Writing Reforms for Minority Languages 1949-2002*.
- Zhou, Minglang. 2004. "Minority Language Policy in China: Equality in Theory and Inequality in Practice " In *Language Policy in the People's Republic of China: Theory and Practice since 1949*, edited by Minglang Zhou, 71-95. Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Zhu, Guobin. 2014. "The Right to Minority Language Instruction in Schools: Negotiating Competing Claims in Multinational China." *Human Rights Quarterly* 36 (4):691-721.



The Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) was founded by the Uyghur American Association (UAA) in 2004 with a supporting grant from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). UHRP's mission is to promote human rights and democracy for the Uyghur people. In 2016, UHRP became an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.

UHRP works to raise the profile of the Uyghur people by:

Researching, writing and publishing commentary and reports in English and Chinese covering a broad range human rights issues involving civil and political rights, through to social cultural and economic rights; preparing briefings – either written or in person – for journalists, academics, diplomats and legislators on the human rights situation faced by the Uyghur people.

The Uyghur Human Rights Project
Tel: (202) 478-1920 Fax: (202) 478-1910
www.uhrp.org info@uhrp.org
@UyghurProject @UHRP_Chinese