



Uyghur Separatism Based on Imam Al-Ghazali's As-Syaukah Perspective

Emil Hikmawan; Surwandono

Department of International Relations, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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Abstract

This article aims to evaluate the political expression of Uyghur Muslims based in Xinjiang, China. The acts of separatism committed by Uyghur Muslims have caused serious problems, threatening China's national security and territorial unity. On the other hand, the separatism movement also threatens human security within the Uyghur Muslims themselves. In evaluating this political expression, the author will use Imam Al-Ghazali's As-Syaukah (power) perspective. This approach emphasizes the use and measurement of force to provide resistance to the Chinese regime as a form of upholding *amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar*. The article then uses qualitative research methods and data sources are obtained from books, journal articles, documents and relevant official statements. This article found that if Uyghur Muslims still use the offensive of separatism, it will get counterproductive results. This is due to the lack of power possessed by Uyghur Muslims in terms of human resources, international supports and military capacity to face the domination of the Chinese government. Therefore, the Uyghur Muslims' interest in liberating Xinjiang's sovereignty from China through separatism will be difficult to achieve.

Keywords: *Al-Ghazali; As-Syaukah; Separatism; Uyghur; China; Xinjiang*

Introduction

Basically, conflict is one of the phenomena in international relations that may be unavoidable. If there is a conflict, it is possible to manage it in such a way. The purpose of conflict management in the international world today is certainly inseparable from the existence of various ongoing threats to the existence of state and non-state actors in carrying out their activities. If the conflict cannot be managed properly, then the institutionalization of the conflict will be wider and more difficult to resolve.

According to Johan Galtung, it is important to determine the causes of conflict in an effort to find solutions (Webel & Galtung, 2007). So according to Galtung to find out how conflicts that occur in society are caused by differences in views (attitude), differences in views which are then followed by certain actions will be responded to by other groups as an invitation to conflict (behavior), another factor that causes conflict is the circulation of issues that cannot be explained widely in society will certainly create a space of contradiction so that it becomes wider, the greater potential for conflict.

One of the conflicts that has attracted international attention is the conflict between the Chinese government and the ethnic Uyghurs, the majority of whom are Muslims. The conflict that occurred in

China's domestic sphere caused political and security instability. Because the conflict is categorized as an intra-state conflict for the Chinese government can be a threat to the integrity and sovereignty of the country. Basically, the interests of the Uyghurs are the desire to separate themselves (separatism) from the Chinese government. Meanwhile, China does not want to give up the Xinjiang region because there is an abundance of natural resources. It can be seen that political tension, especially in Xinjiang, affects border countries that have the potential for geopolitical economic benefits. Therefore, the Chinese government, for example, made Xinjiang's border with Russia a potential project for developing oil and gas refineries (Israeli, 2010).

A later highlight was the 2009 Urumqi Riots, which was also one of the largest riots in China (Beauchamp-Mustafaga, 2019). This riot involved anarchic demonstrations between ethnic Han and Uyghurs. The death toll in these riots totalled 1700 people who were injured (Clarke, 2010). In fact, it can also be proven that since 1990 there have been various attacks aimed at the Chinese government by East Turkestan organizations labelled by it as terrorism organizations with the aim of establishing an Islamic state (Shichor, 1979). The claims made by the Chinese government certainly made the situation in the Xinjiang region even more heated. However, it is also difficult for the Chinese government to know exactly who mobilized the attack, but instead targeted it at ethnic Uyghurs. This is certainly something that is quite crucial considering the conflict that occurs involves the local population.

According to the Chinese government, if the Uyghurs are given independence to establish their state, they will be seen as a domestic threat. So that the Chinese government responds to this with repressive actions which will ultimately further worsen the situation and conditions, especially in the Xinjiang region itself. The Chinese government uses coercive efforts as a form of self-defence from the threat of separatist groups, and will not allow one region to escape. Then the Chinese government's harsh attitude towards the Uyghur Ethnicity because it is considered vulnerable to exposure to radicalism and is considered a terrorism group.

In broad lines, this conflict is institutionalized due to the development of a narrative that also links Islam with terrorism since the Global War on Terror movement in 2001. This of course also has implications for Islamic communities in various parts of the world, including the Uyghurs who are labelled as a terrorist movement (Roberts, 2018). The impact of this narrative also has an impact on the existence of Uyghurs, who are closely monitored by the Chinese government and even their movement is severely restricted. The complexity of the Uyghur problem has long been recognized by the international community. It is also important to know that there are controversial policies from the Chinese government through the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), especially in Xinjiang. The policies in question include increasing the security budget, recruiting police and implementing surveillance cameras (Cumming-Bruce, 2018). This policy is needed to overcome Uyghur separatist mobilization and as a form of overall security operations. Regardless, it is hoped that the Chinese government will not make Xinjiang's situation more tense and worrying as it relates to the activities of local communities inhabited by people apart from Uyghurs.

Early in the expansion, claims emerged that the Chinese government was considered to have committed genocide against Uyghurs, which was actualized by mass detention and surveillance (Flaherty, 2021). This action is certainly a mental burden for Uyghurs because it affects their mobility, especially in carrying out religious practices. However, the Chinese government rejected the allegations because they were just senseless accusation and had a motive to corner China (Davidson, 2021). Overall, it will lead to anti-China sentiment itself.

The alleged violent practices committed by the Chinese government against Uyghurs related to the non-fulfilment of basic needs. Every individual should have rights or freedom from government intervention. Furthermore, a person is given the enjoyment of human rights because of their dignity as a human being itself rather than being given by positive law, especially against minority groups. Uyghur

Muslims have also suffered since 9/11 when the anti-government separatism movement in Xinjiang was accommodated by Osama bin Laden's terrorist network (Council on Foreign Relations, 2014).

The issue is used by the Chinese government as a form of propaganda so that the international public will consider Uyghur separatism as a terrorist movement. Besides, the framing effort by utilizing the events of 9/11 in America certainly influenced the perception of the international community, where every act of separatism is terrorism and threatens world peace. On the other hand, this is also considered an attempt by the Chinese government to cover up or divert the real facts relating to the suffering of Uyghurs in Xinjiang. It is undeniable that the situation and conditions after the 9/11 incident influenced international opinion that cornered Islam.

Tacking this concern, previous studies have been explored. According to Clarke, there has been a relationship formed between the Uyghurs and terrorism groups, especially in South Asia (Clarke, 2008). This confirms that the rebellion movement carried out by the Uyghurs against the Chinese government is a terrorism movement. In other words, terrorist groups in Turkey and Afghanistan have links with several rebel groups from the Uyghurs. Meanwhile, Liu and Peters asserted that the Chinese government's *Great Leap West* as economic policy has increased tensions in Xinjiang (Liu & Peters, 2017). According to ethnic Uyghurs, economic wealth only benefits ethnic Han people.

Then, according to Pradityo, there are differences in attitudes shown by the Indonesian government in responding to the Rohingya and Uyghur ethnic problems (Pradityo, 2020). In the context of the humanitarian crisis against the Rohingya Ethnicity, Indonesia was actively involved in resolving the difficulty through official meetings with Aung San Suu Kyi to discuss conflict resolution and humanitarian assistance. However, Indonesia's attitude tends not to be as active as what is done to the Rohingya Ethnicity. This is because Indonesia's interests tend to be more inclined to strengthen economic and trade relations with the Chinese government, especially in terms of investment.

Meanwhile, according to Kurniawan in relation to how the issue of the Uyghur Ethnic conflict is packaged into international news (Kurniawan et al., 2020). Western media in packaging news tends to use language that can always make emotions for its readers. Furthermore, according to Felicia, the conflictual relationship between the Chinese government and the Uyghurs affects the attitudes of other countries. This is evidenced by the change in Turkey's attitude towards China in relation to the oppression of ethnic Uyghurs (S., 2019). Turkey's attitude, which was initially condemned in its development, has changed due to domestic political factors, economic benefits, and international conditions.

The complexity of the Uyghur issue relates to state sovereignty and security (Pratama, 2013). This is evidenced by concerns over Uyghur separatists who are religiously and ethnically closer to the Central Asian region. This discourse is certainly a concern of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) constructing the problem of separatism and terrorism as a major threat to domestic security and stability of the Central Asian region. Besides, the Chinese government's disharmonized relationship with the Uyghurs is based on oppression with the most extreme form being dissent over terrorism (Tschantret, 2018). This research suggests that the Chinese government's suppression of the Uyghurs was initially successful in limiting the opportunistic use of terrorism. In contrast, Frutos argues that Uyghur violence and separatism can be understood as a form of desperate resistance and the rise of terrorism (Deng & Valle de Frutos, 2019). This argument emphasizes history and compares it with the claims of the Chinese government. So, this conflict places Xinjiang in the context of Chinese nationalism with the Uyghur independence movement. Meanwhile, according to Guo and Attané, the comparison and development of society between Han and Uyghur ethnicities in Xinjiang is also a dynamic for conflict management (Guo & Attané, 2019). For example, Uyghur labour income is still very low compared to Han ethnicity, which can even contribute to creating tensions between the two ethnicities.

Over the last view years, the Chinese government has painted a different picture of the condition of ethnic Uyghurs in Xinjiang. This is evidenced by some ethnic Uyghurs who are vulnerable to poverty

and most of them are also illiterate and even feared to get discrimination from ethnic Han (Hasmath, 2019). So on this basis, the Chinese government is fully required to control the Xinjiang region as a form of controlling residents in Xinjiang so that riots do not occur again. A similar opinion was also conveyed by McGrath and Matusith who asserted that Uyghur terrorists emerged as a violent movement due to the unfulfilled of their economic needs (McGrath & Matusitz, 2020). Based on previous studies, there has been no study of the evaluation of Uyghur political expression based on Imam Al-Ghazali's As-Syaukah (strength) approach.

Theoretical Framework

Intrinsically, Imam Al-Ghazali made a distinction regarding the “attempt to secede from the Islamic community” which is understood as an act of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* in the conception of As-Syaukah (power), with the act of “rebellion” against the legitimate government or regime (*bughat*) (Ahmad, 1975, p. 326). Thus, from the Islamic perspective itself, distinguishing between the two meanings is crucial (essential) because for the first category in this case *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* can be stated as obligations. Meanwhile, the second category, namely rebellion, is actually stated as an act that is “forbidden”. Even within certain limits, it will be considered an act of apostasy (*riddah*).

Excepting, according to Imam Al-Ghazali, the conception of As-syaukah can be interpreted as a form of measuring the strength of a group of believers (Islam) to uphold truth and justice in the face of a regime that has proven to be unjust and denies Islamic law. Indeed, the unjust government was once rumoured by the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W to “become a phenomenon” in the Islamic group or community after the collapse of the prophetic government (*khilafah 'ala minhaj an-nubuwwah*) (Tanjung, 2018).

In a sense, if the effort to implement *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* in the form of confrontation is supported by all the adequate forces to overcome the “power of the state” in a short time. Then the activity of *amar ma'ruf* in the form of confrontation with the unjust forces must be immediately declared and implemented in such a way. However, if in the “trying of a fall” there is no confidence that the unjust regime or ruler will be overpowered in a short period of time, then confrontation activities are not the main preference.

Another consuming matter to note entirely, when is the time limit for tolerance? In Imam Al-Ghazali's idea, the time limit of tolerance is “almost similar” to the time limit of a contract between *darul ahdi*. The meaning of *darul ahdi* is a region that is bound by a contract with *darul Islam* for peaceful co-existence, which is 10 years. If the politics of confrontation is carried out for more than 10 years, it is feared that it will cause far more harm for pride, so such politics of confrontation must be avoided.

In general, Imam Al-Ghazali's ideas do not rule out the possibility of revolution against leaders who are considered unjust. So cautiously, Al-Ghazali considered the people to choose one of two options: (Ahmad, 1975, p. 325).

A. *'azal*, in the sense of the people exercising their right to sack the Head of State or bring down the government, if they are capable enough (*syaukah*) to restore security.

B. *'uzlah*, are the people refrain being from non-cooperation with the Head of State or government, if they are not capable enough.

Bearing those in mind to considered, Al-Ghazali deliberately used the word “*syaukah*” as a condition of popular resistance, not the word “*weapon*” because the word means more “*influence*” or “*ability*” which does not require bloodshed. However, if the situation and circumstances of resistance are such that the growth of blood is unavoidable, then it should be sought as little casualties as possible, and the immediate reassurance of security.

Methodology

To provide the way out of problems, the author uses qualitative research methods. Sources of data are obtained by literature study, namely searching for news that contains Uyghur political expression in the form of documents, statements from officials and press releases. In analyzing the data, the author uses several stages in answering the difficulty. Thus, this research focuses on the choice of Uyghur practice as a reaction to Chinese government policies that have an impact on the emergence of a sense of dissatisfaction from the Uyghurs. Furthermore, in analyzing, the author prepares data findings or information to be processed (Creswell, 2003). After obtaining valid information, the author will read the entire information and record important ideas, namely the implementation of China's policies towards ethnic Uyghurs. Next, the author will categorize (coding) the data findings based on the impacts of the policy and its relevance to Uyghur separatism choices. Finally, I will provide interpretation as the result of the analysis.

Finding and Discussion

The Dynamics of Conflict Relations between the Chinese Government and Uyghurs

Determined from the historical aspect, the Uyghur conflict with the Chinese government has occurred decades ago. This is evidenced by the conquest of the region in this case Xinjiang led by the Uzbek warlord, Yakub Beg against the Qing Dynasty from China which was finally conquered in 1874 (CNN Indonesia, 2018). Then in 1933 there was also a rebellion against the Chinese government which resulted in the Islamic Republic of East Turkestan, but only lasted for 1 year (Dou & Cunningham, 2021). This means that the power struggle factor to get the Xinjiang region have been underway for a long time.

The occasion of the conflict between the Uyghurs and the Han Ethnicity are due to political discrimination, economic inequality, and acts of separatism (Gunawan et al., 2020). To find an answer to this concern, the Chinese government tends to be harsh by using a fairly aggressive approach, such as military force, to maintain the sovereignty of the country from Uyghur separatist groups. Furthermore, the issue of unending conflict in Xinjiang is further exacerbated by differences in identity both in terms of religion and language between ethnic Uyghurs and the Han majority group. Another important factor is China's liberation of religion and language, which fueled the unrest in Xinjiang (Dwyer, 2005). Thus, the conflict between the Uyghurs and the Han could not be contained and developed into a separatism movement by the Uyghurs against the Chinese government.

The fluctuation in Xinjiang's internal conflict eventually developed into a movement of separatism to terrorism. Along with the conflict situation is exacerbated by the One China Policy and the existence of a communist system that is still run by the Chinese government until now (Karisma, 2017). These concern caused the Chinese government centralized and the heterogeneity factor is also difficult to accept. For this reason, the military policy used by the Chinese government has made ethnic Uyghurs increasingly marginalized, giving rise to the terrorism tendency.

Then the Uyghur Moslem dynamics brought by communist ideology and its implications for humanitarian problems. So, there are various humanitarian violations committed by the Chinese government against ethnic Uyghurs. The worst form of violation, detention and compulsory marriage between Chinese tribes and ethnic Uyghurs (Dewi et al., 2020). This phenomenon explains that humanitarian violations have occurred which leads to the category of human rights violations. Although included in human rights violations, the international community seems unable to do anything. This is because this problem for the Chinese government is a domestic political problem. The reasoning any kind of action that has been categorized as a violation of humanity, even a violation of human rights, should not only be condemned by the international community but also acted upon.

Moreover, repressive practices against Uyghurs are considered to potentially violate the *hifzul irdh* (preservation of honor) of each individual. The protection of human honor is one of the goals of

universal egalitarianism. For this reason, riots and rebellion between people will only turn out in harm and acquired deprive each other as human being. This is certainly experiencing self with the rules of uhsul fiqh, that is, “*avoiding damage / loss takes precedence over efforts to bring profit or goodness*” (Ibrahim, 2019). This conception should be used in looking at the relationship between the Uyghur conflict that never ends. Because all forms of activities that are considered to trigger conflict or friction in the community can tear the unity of the nation. In any case of the factors that triggered this conflict, both parties should normalize their relationship.

The dynamics of strictness against the Uyghurs include two justifications: ethnic separatism and Uyghur religious rhetoric (Davis, 2008). In the meaning of these two justifications is that there is a desire from ethnic Uyghurs to separate themselves from China through violence on the grounds of cultural defense. However, some Uyghurs want to integrate into the Chinese system. Regardless, the Chinese government has rejected claims from various parties that it has discriminated in the context of implementing human rights against ethnic Uyghurs (Sorogan, 2021). Then the Chinese government sees the Xinjiang region as having the potential to give rise to movements that can threaten national sovereignty based on historical facts. So as an autonomous region, China needs to maintain its territorial integrity from various threats of separatism and rebellion. For this reason, the Chinese government is obliged to intervene to create political stability and security in the area. Therefore, it is important to resolve ethnic-based conflicts in an area as much as possible by using a soft approach as a form of the state's obligation to fulfil and accommodate the interests of its people.

Evaluation of Uyghur Political Expression: Imam Al-Ghazali's As-Syaukah (power) Perspective

A. The Impact of Violence

The continues resistance of insurgence to be carried out by ethnic Uyghur will increasingly cause misery to each part. While the interests that have been aspired by Uyghur to be independent of China cannot be achieved. At the end, the rebellious behavior that has been carried out by Uyghur does not provide concrete evidence, those activities can accommodate its interests. So, the result obtained is harm that can threaten the lives and sustainability of the entire population in Xinjiang itself.

There are several Uyghurs incursions terror into China to set their freedom, include:

- October 2013: An attack by the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) in Tiananmen Square, Beijing that killed five people (Kaiman, 2013).
- February 2014: Stabbing-related attack at Kunming Railway Station that killed 30 people (Wertime & Lu, 2014).
- April 2014: Stabbing and bomb-related attack at Urumqi South Railway Station that killed 3 people and injured 79 (Blanchard, 2014).
- May 2014: The incident of two cars crashing into a market and attackers throwing explosives that killed 31 people in Urumqi (BBC, 2014).
- September 2014: Bomb blasts (including suicide bombers) and clashes left 50 dead and 50 injured (Levin, 2014).
- During 1997-2014 the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) frequently planned and carried out terrorist attacks that claimed the lives of 1000 civilians (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2021).

B. The Insignificant International Support

The Uyghur ethnic concern has received international awareness from both Islamic countries. However, in its development, it seems reluctant and withdraws support for the conflict. For example, Indonesia, as one of the largest democracies and the majority of its population is diverse Muslims, has indeed criticized the Chinese government to stop repressive actions against ethnic Uyghurs, especially Muslims in Xinjiang. However, in reality, Indonesia considers that Uyghur separatism is a domestic

problem. Just like the Aceh issue, the international community views it as an Indonesian domestic difficulty. Besides, the Uyghur issue cannot be aligned with the massacre and expulsion of ethnic Rohingya in Rakhine State, Myanmar. Moreover, in Xinjiang, there was no expulsion of ethnic Uyghurs accompanied by mass killings.

On the other hand, Indonesia seem does not want to get involved in the Uyghur problem is influenced by the close relationship between the two countries in economic cooperation and investment. Apart from China, currently has a global economic power that builds partnerships with various countries. Because of China as a raising state, especially the economy, can influence the international political order (Rakhmat et al., 2021). In its development until now, most of the responses given by Islamic countries and international institutions are megaphone diplomacy. Although there are various reactions and responses above, the Uyghurs still do not have enough power to fight the Chinese government. In fact, the Uyghur issue seems to have finally disappeared. In addition, there is also no strong resolution issued by the United Nations to urge the Chinese government to grant independence to ethnic Uyghurs in Xinjiang.

C. China's Internal Government Capacity

As mentioned above, the conception of As-Syaukah is related to strength or ability as a carrying capacity for countries and groups in achieving their interests. Therefore, this is important to be examined further to find out how much power is owned. For this reason, it is influential to look at the strength of each part, in this case the Chinese government and Uyghur combatants, which will then be compared. In the context of the internal capabilities of the Chinese government, it can certainly be observed through economic, military and comprehensive partnerships with other countries or groups. When viewed from an economic aspect, China is currently seen as one of the countries with the world's largest economy. This is evidenced by a report from China's National Bureau of Statistics which states that China's GDP growth in 2021 reached US\$ 18 trillion, an increase of 8.1% compared to the previous year (Daye & Xuanmin, 2022).

Other than this achievement made China occupy the second position as the country with the largest economy in the world, which according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) contributed 16.9% of the world economy (Dihni, 2022). Despite the uncertain global economic conditions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The economic recovery trend of China can also be one scheme to developing countries in particular could build a comprehensive partnership with China. In other ways, China's economic growth is seen as a competitor in the international, especially with the United States, is becoming more attractive and this can be used as a momentum for China to become a superpower.

Furthermore, talking about China's military power can be examined through the following budgetary aspects:

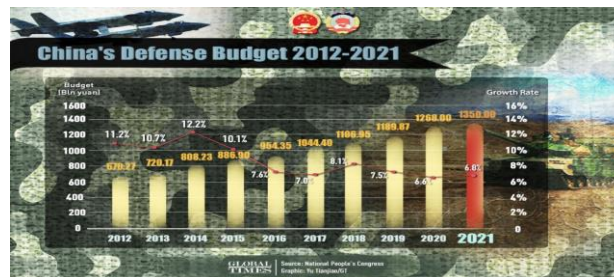


Figure I. China's Defense Budget 2012-2021

Source: National People's Congress (Global Times, 2021).

The military expenditure is one way to find out how strong a country's military is. Every country that spends a huge defense budget will certainly have a variety of sophisticated defense equipment to reinforce the military. Based on the statistics above, the Chinese government has disbursed a defense or military budget in 2021 reaching 1,350 Billion Yuan or around 209.2 billion. China's increased defense

spending is inseparable from modernization efforts. The dividends in military modernization are driven by China's weak ability to prevent foreign intervention. This change has facilitated China playing a greater role in regional and international security.

Another factor that drives China's military spending is its massive economic income. This is certainly related to each other, given China's strategy to counter the influence of the United States. Furthermore, according to Global Firepower, which is based on a statistics website that tracks information on defense, assesses the Chinese military with a Power Index of 0.0511 and is in third place behind the United States (0.0453) and Russia (0.0501) (Global Firepower, 2022). The parameters used in providing the analysis are seen from various dimensions, such as military strength, finance, logistics, and geography.

China's active military personnel number 2,035,000 (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2022). Meanwhile, based on data from The Military Balance 2022 that China has 5,250 units of tanks, 35,000 armored vehicles, 1,734 artillery, 4,120 artillery and 3,160 rocket projectors. In the air, China has 1,200 combat aircraft, 912 helicopters and 281 combat helicopters. Then the Chinese Navy has 2 aircraft carriers, 79 submarines, 49 guard ships, 70 small warships and 41 destroyers (Arfiansyah, 2022).

In anticipating the Uyghur separatism movement, China does use force (strengthen), which includes the military involvement (People's Liberation Army), paramilitary forces (People's Armed Police) equipped with automatic weapons according to Chinese military standards and civilian security forces (police) (Fadlurrohman & Fithriana, 2020). China implements a four-layer weapon including military forces, the Army, and Air Force, paramilitary police, paramilitary groups and the Han people who forcibly immigrated to Xinjiang (Wayne, 2007). So, this security strategy implemented by China using large-scale military force in Xinjiang on the one hand creates fear and confidence in the people in Xinjiang. On the other hand, this strategy should be used as a form of prevention and eradication of the ETIM separatist movement.

China's diplomatic authorized the Central Asian region with the mechanism of the Shanghai Cooperation Organizations (SCO). Basically, the SCO is a regional-based international organization with China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as founding and developing countries to combat terrorism, extremism, and separatism (Xue & Makengo, 2021). Meanwhile, China is still facing Uyghur separatism in Xinjiang. So, it requires extra handling and requires help from other parties to maintain stability in the region, especially from neighboring countries to secure their borders and crack down on other similar extremist groups who have sympathy for Uyghurs. For this reason, China needs a joint commitment from Central Asian member states, so that the existence of the SCO is expected to be able to fight these terrorist groups.

Achieving China's security affairs in the Central Asian requires a strategy to gain a strong influence. These efforts can be seen from the cooperative relationship with Kazakhstan to build oil and gas pipelines, as well as to meet China's energy needs. Then China also provides loans and investments to help improve the economy and build infrastructure. For example, China provided 30 billion dollars in aid to Kazakhstan, invested 5 billion dollars in an offshore oil project in Kashgan and also invested 15 billion dollars in Uzbekistan for the uranium and oil and gas sectors (Lillis, 2013).

The trade of China among Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan reached 61 billion dollars in 2014 (Breitmaier, 2016). All these efforts have become important assets for China to instill its influence in Central Asia so that member states in this region do not depend on outside forces. It is therefore certainly in China's regional interest to prevent an escalation of violence in the Uyghur autonomous region of Xinjiang. Uyghur's separatists have been strongly opposed to China's policies and have relied on militant groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan for protection.

In addition, it is important to look at the impact of Xinjiang's secessionist actions as one of the world's most imprisoned countries. This is evidenced by more than 10,000 Uyghurs who have been sentenced to prison by the Chinese government on terrorism charges in Konasheher, Southern Xinjiang (Wu & Kang, 2022). The Chinese government has also brutalized the Uyghurs as part of its war on terrorism. From this perspective, China has relied on a system of long-term detention to keep the Uyghurs under control by using the law as a weapon of repression. In fact, most of these arrests have been arbitrary and unlawful. This suggests that only people who share a common identity with the Uyghurs are targeted. In any case, the Chinese government's restricted access in Xinjiang indicates that the actual number of detained Uyghurs is higher.



Figure II. Rate of Imprisonment (Xinjiang, US, China)
Source: (Wu & Kang, 2022)

Based on the data above, the prison rate in the Konasheher region is greater than U.S. and China can be understood. However, Imbalance in legal systems, calculation methods and insufficient data make comparison in imprisonment rates between countries difficult and imprecise. The data above has shown that the imprisonment rate in particular in Konasheher is ten times higher than the United States.

In relation to imprisonment China is known to have surged with Uyghurs and Kazazks facing re-education camps. In fact, Xinjiang's courts have arrested a total of 230,000 people to prison in 2017-2018 (Buckley, 2019). There are implies more cases than previous years. This momentum is also related to the violent attacks against the Chinese government since 2014. Xinjiang actually accounts for less than 2% of China's population, but 21% of arrests in 2017 came from Xinjiang and is considered a steep rise (Buckley, 2019). These arrests therefore serve as a warning to the Chinese that they had better be loyal and obedient to their country. However, the internment of ethnic Uyghurs by Chinese authorities is supposed to have overridden their protections and tends to impose punishments under the pretext of combating unrest and turning the Muslim minority into state loyalists.

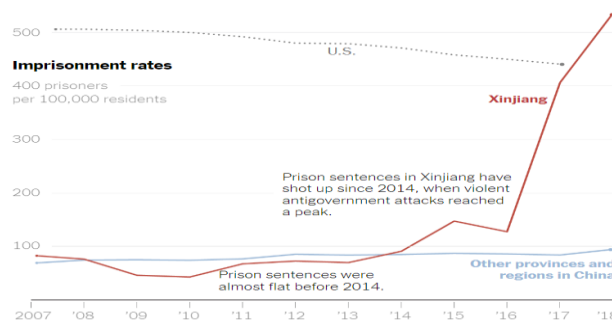


Figure III. Imprisonment Rates of Xinjiang

Source: Xinjiang Yearbook, Xinjiang High People’s Procuratorate, Xinjiang High People’s Court, Statistic Bureau of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China Law Yearbook, China Statistical Yearbook, National Bureau of Statistics, Bureau of Justice Statistics (U.S) (Buckley, 2019).

1.1 D. The Internal Capacity of Uyghur Combatants

The spread of Uyghur combatants, known as the Turkestan Islamic Party, is currently operating in Afghanistan and Syria (Mullins, 2020). According to the Syrian Ambassador to China, Imad Moustapha, the number of Uyghur combatants or fighters is estimated at 5,000 (Blanchard, 2017). The Uyghur combatants joined militant groups in Syria. This indicates that the motivation for Uyghur combatants to train and fight with Islamic militants in Syria is in the hope of using their experience to challenge Beijing's rule in Xinjiang. Furthermore, Uyghur fighters in Syria received military material such as physical training, firing weapons and tactical movements.



Figure IV. Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) members in Syria
Source: (O’connor, 2021)

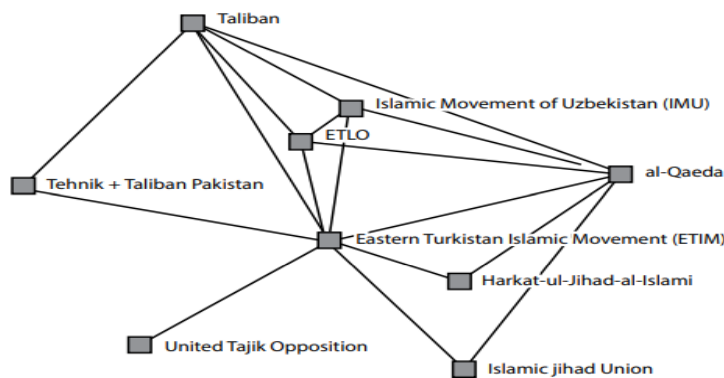


Figure V. Relationships between regional terrorist organizations
Source: (Potter, 2013)

Besides, according to the Washington-based think tank New America reported in 2016 that 114 people came from Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) (RFA, 2019). Furthermore, a report from the UN Security Council confirmed that there are 1500-3000 ETIM or TIP members in Idlib, Syria, and hundreds in Afghanistan (United Nations Security Council, 2021). The uncertainty of Uyghur combatants in Syria, The authorities say that their presence in the country shows that members of the

ethnic minority are vulnerable to extremism and legitimizes the use of re-education camps, which are considered effective to protect China from terrorism.

ETIM is motivated by the Al-Qaeda and ISIS movements whose bases are in the Middle East because there are digital traces that show the ability to shoot and own AK47, M-16 weapons and explosives and small missiles (Fadlurrohman & Fithriana, 2020). Other combat weapons include Kalashnikov rifles and pistols.



Figure VI. Weapons of Uyghur militants confiscated by the Chinese government
Source: (Reuters, 2019)

Then the defeat of the Syrian rebellion against the Bassar Al-Assad regime or the collapse of ISIS turn to difficulty for Uyghur, they have left Syria and returned to their exile in Turkey (RFA, 2019). In other words, Uyghurs left Syria because the group they joined would not sponsor an insurgency in China. Even if Uyghurs have weapons, they do not know how to use them because China excludes Uyghurs from any kind of military training.

The Chinese government has also asked the Taliban to sever ties with the *East Turkestan Islamic Movement* (ETIM) based on China's concerns about Afghan ETIM combatants who are collaborating with and receiving training from the Taliban (Wee & Xiao, 2021). Later, ETIM changed its name to the *Turkistan Islamic Party* (TIP). The name change aims to mobilize all Turks in the world to confederate against China to emancipates Xinjiang. For this reason, it was the Taliban's association with Uyghur combatants and the China approach to Taliban because Taliban's still relatively in good term towards China.

The presence of a hundred combatants of ETIM who are still actively training and promoting terrorism in Badakhshan and surrounding areas. Through this area is used as a corridor for the fluctuation of combatants between Syria and Afghanistan to strengthen its combat power. It is important to recognize that ETIM in Badakhshan is funded by extortion and kidnapping and has links with international terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaeda, ISIL/ISIS, Jama'at Ansarullah and Jama'at al-Tawhid Wa'al-Jihad (United Nations Security Council, 2021).

A complex that support Uyghurs is the *Uyghur American Association* (UAA) which is an affiliate of the Washington DC-based World Uyghur Congress. As has been explained, the World Congress is a right-wing, anti-communist and ultra-nationalist network of Uyghur separatists in exile whose interest is to establish an "East Turkestan" in Xinjiang. In fact, the World Uyghur Congress has developed a deep term with the Washington regime and receives extensive funding and training from the US government.

Meanwhile, the *National Endowment for Democracy* (NED) has become a US-based center of increasing international prominence of the Uyghur separatist movement. This is evidenced by the fact that from 2004 to 2020, NED states that it has provided \$8,758,300 including funding for the UUA (Singh, 2021). This indicates that they became institutional funders of Uyghur advocacy and human rights

organizations and campaigned against China's policies in Xinjiang. These factors have led to the rapid spread of radical ideas in Xinjiang, with terrorists entering Xinjiang after fighting on the battlefields of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria (FMPRC, 2021).

United States law claims for anyone to provide funding or support to Al-Qaeda, ISIS or any other terrorist organization is an illegal. In fact, the US government directly or indirectly provides funds, weapons, and intelligence support to terrorist networks through countries in the Middle East (FMPRC, 2021). In the expansion, The ETIM can be identified as a major component of the terrorist network led by Osama bin Laden while receiving financial support from the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The ETIM has established particular battalions in Afghanistan operated by Al-Qaeda, the Taliban and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. With this, ETIM is believed to be growing and becoming an important part of the Al-Qaeda and Taliban alliance, especially in the confine area between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

There are challenges faced by Uyghur combatants: separatist groups are too rare and barely coordinated and dispersed to conduct organized campaigns, Uyghur violence is particularly low-tech, mostly using knives and homemade explosives, resistance to Chinese government control is largely passive. Separatism will succeed in Xinjiang when the control in the central region loosens due to the weakening of Chinese authority, and is therefore unlikely to happen in the near future. Although Uyghur separatist groups and Islamic radicalism are more vocal and visible, they are becoming weaker, not stronger. This is based on internal friction and also on the realization that foreign governments, including Islamic ones, will not support separatism in China. Actually, as China's economic, political and military role in the contemporary international world order grows.

The Uyghur combatants are funded by the Abu Ahmed Foundation (AAF) humanitarian fund that connects Uyghur, Central Asian and Southeast Asian terrorist groups. In addition, this institution also connects with Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) which is affiliated with Al-Qaeda (Soliev, 2020). The mechanism used by AAF is propaganda through social media related to Al-Qaeda and invites it. This implies that this humanitarian fund supports the establishment of a Khilafah. Then raising support is also carried out to deny all forms of oppression that occur in Syria, Palestine, Xinjiang and Myanmar.

As for the fundraising carried out in mosques and the streets, it is certainly a way for the AAF to obtain funds for terrorist groups (Soliev, 2020). The organization convinced the public by promoting the propaganda of the volunteers in Syria. This activity indicates that fundraising with humanitarian motives is still relevant because it is one of the easiest methods to get money and manipulate human emotions, even though the narrative used seems exaggerated. Thus, the flow of AAF funds is used to facilitate Uyghur and Central Asian jihadists. Regardless, the Abu Ahmed Foundation has been put on the list of suspected terrorists and also the relevance has been blocked. This argument favours a system of financial transactions monitored by the state.

The important point is that the barrier's financial transaction system for Uyghur separatist groups is supervised by *China Anti-Money Laundering Monitoring and Analysis Centre (CAMLMAC)*. One such case identified suspicious transactions. The findings were based on a *Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT)* initiated by the *Financial Intelligent Unit (FIU)* where a credit transaction of multiple cash deposits at ATMs in the Chinese region specifically related to ETIM operates (FATF, 2019). Another case in 2017 can be scrutinized through an investigation to ETIMS funds were sent courier across the border by Beijing authorities totalling RMB 282,000 (FATF, 2019). The cases illustrate the monitoring of fund transfers through sophisticated electronic surveillance.

Moreover, the findings show that attention to the *Tindak Pidana Pendanaan Terorisme (TPPT)* generated from foreign terrorist fighters in China is fully needed. Then according to the National Risk Assessment (NRA), the terrorist funds source certainly comes from the support of personal and corporate sponsors, the sale of personal assets, the receipt of gifts from relatives and friends, business profits, "Zakat" from religious believers and illegal activities, such as robbery (FATF, 2019). However, the

information is highly confidential and can only be obtained by authorities belonging to the National Leading Group for Countering Terrorism, which was established by the Chinese government and plays a leading role in countering terrorism, especially terrorism financing and the *Anti-Money Laundering Joint Ministerial Conference* (AMLJMC). This is China's strategy to reduce terrorism transfers and risks through preventing and disrupting terrorist transfers and activities.

In the comparison of the internal capacity of the Chinese government and Uyghur militants, there is an imbalance. The Chinese government is stronger in the context of a larger number of military forces, military training and defense equipment used more sophisticated than the number of combatants and Uyghur militants both inside and outside Xinjiang. Although Uyghurs also receive military training from their affiliates in the Middle East. Meanwhile, the economic income obtained by China through GDP is increasing from year to year, which will certainly be used as a funder for military spending as well. Meanwhile, Uyghur combatants use financing from terrorist in the Middle East, such as Al-Qaeda, Taliban and ISIS as well as support from zakat and the sale of personal assets will be used up over time.

In addition, funding transfers and direct delivery to support terrorist activities is channeled through two events above. However, this can be anticipated by the Chinese government through tools to detect suspected violations in terms of transactions. In this case, the financial transaction system is monitored by the state (digitalized), which will certainly lead to a significant decrease in funds and foreign aid that is increasingly difficult to take down, including support from ISIS which has collapsed. Furthermore, the particular conditions experienced by Uyghur Muslims for being forcibly detained without charged and arbitrarily treated by the Chinese authorities, who were eventually put into prisons and concentration camps from 2014 to the present.

There is a possibility that the initiation of concentration camps as a medium-level repressive measure, but if it continues, it will lead to genocide efforts which are certainly not desired by any group including ethnic Uyghurs. Then the concentration camps will certainly cause mental and psychological harm that will threaten the lives and existence of ethnic Uyghurs. Besides, the absence of international support to Uyghur independence from the China, especially from Muslim countries who consider the Uyghur issue to be a Chinese domestic affair and tied to pragmatic interests, especially economic benefits.

Muslim countries also support China's policies for the Uyghurs and avoid intervening because it would be destructive co-operation. In other words, the strong diplomatic clout of the Chinese government and its standing in the international community make the country a force to be reckoned with, as China's prosperity trend is very favorable. Based on the power comparison above, it can be assumed, if the expression of jihad as a form of amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar conducted by Uyghur Muslims continuously and packaged in such a way, it will lead to China's repressive actions which are increasingly immeasurable, as well as causing mafsadah (vandalism). In the way Xinjiang is already powerless, so the expression of violence needs to be evaluated and unaccommodating if done continuously. Thus, the Uyghurs' concerns and efforts to liberate Xinjiang's sovereignty from the Chinese government need to be put on hold and start building good relations.

Conclusion and Suggestion

On the whole things, the conflict involving the Chinese government and ethnic Uyghurs was triggered by discrimination and oppression politic, economic, cultural and so on. The oppression they felt during this time triggered the Uyghur separatism movement that made China turbulent. The Chinese government also responded with repressive resistance, such as the deployment of military forces and policies implemented. So that violence between the Uyghur government and ethnic Uyghurs is increasingly inevitable.

Aside from the concern, ethnic Uyghurs should redefine the offensive separatism, which is an activity of political defiance (political intention). Because if calculated in terms of the resources owned by Uyghur combatants are limited and the lack of international support compared to the strength of the Chinese government ranging from military power, the economy as a funding support. The limited power that the Uyghurs have against the Chinese government, they should consider other solutions, in this case following the rules set in the Xinjiang autonomous region. Moreover, the urge to build a path of reconciliation is still open and worth trying to resolve the conflict between the Chinese government and ethnic Uyghurs. As a sovereign state, China certainly cannot just let go of its territory to insurgents. In addition, the Uyghur position, which is placed in powerless diplomacy, must be embraced by the Chinese government to gain mutual trust. Although the opportunity for dialogue/negotiation is difficult, at least this is the first step to reduce the escalation of conflict between the two parties.

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