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Course title:

East Asia: Powerhouse & Politics

Degree programme:

MSc. Contemporary Asian Studies

University of Amsterdam

Graduate School of Social Sciences

**The global and the regional:
the politics of integration in
China's autonomous areas**

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Assignment number Essay

Date of submission 29 January 2010

Page count 23

Word count 7,646

“While Japanese imperialism targeted East Asia societies, ideologically it sought to incorporate them through ideas of pan-Asian brotherhood. It is, I believe, less fruitful to view this ideology simply as a smokescreen than as a highly contradictory ideology of the [sic] new imperialism, in which domination and exploitation coexisted with development and modernization.” (Duara, 2009: 43).

“Is it possible to think of Manchukuo as the beginning of an imperialism that culminates with Hong Kong in the sterling area? Or Iraq?” (Duara, 2009: 58).

Introduction

Global circulation of ideologies, and regional practices associated with these ideologies – an outside-in approach – such is Duara's thesis on China's nation-formation. The two above-mentioned quotes summarise these ideas with reference to Manchukuo, the Japanese puppet-state in the first half of the 20th century, in what is now the northeast of China. Traditional scholarship, so the argument goes, judges Japanese imperialism in East Asia by the standard of earlier imperialist ideologies in Europe. The rhetoric of pan-Asianism and the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere functions as a smokescreen for what is essentially a traditional imperialism. But the East Asian context, and associated practices in Japan and East Asia following World War I, belie this simplistic explanation. A new, Japanese imperialism, which Duara coins the 'imperialism of free nations' (Duara, 2009: 40), was at the same time characterised by domination and exploitation as well as by development and modernisation. It can therefore only legitimately be explained by a combination of circulating global ideologies and regional practices.

Similarly, it is my contention that Marxist-Leninist ideology alone cannot explain the development of ethnic policy and practices in the People's Republic of China. Socialist attitudes towards 'nationality' and nationalism are typically regarded as forming the foundation of ethnic policy in the PRC. While I don't deny the relevance of Marxism-Leninism to the ideology of the Chinese Communist Party, the claim that such ideology alone has shaped the integration of ethnic minorities in the PRC is belied by discrepancies between such ideology and the contemporary situation. I contend that Beijing's claims to legitimate control over its autonomous regions are based not only Marxist ideology, but also on ideas and experiences native to China and East Asia. Scholarship on China's ethnic policy and Beijing's practices of integration in its autonomous areas are needlessly constrained by this narrow, Marxist view and policy analysis. The point I wish to make is that further precedents, such as the Chinese experience with Japanese imperialism, may provide better insights into claims to legitimacy in the autonomous regions of the PRC.

Following on from this point, claims of Chinese colonialism in its peripheral areas – such as Sautman's (2000) and Gladney's (1999) – are non-sensical if one's interpretation of colonialism is restricted to economic development. The discussion on whether to designate areas such as Xinjiang, Tibet and the Chinese south as internal colonies can only usefully be conducted if China's policy in its autonomous areas is considered in its entirety and on its own merits. It is here that the analogy to Japanese expansionism in the first half of the 20th century comes into its own. If Chinese policy is judged only on

economic grounds, then our argument becomes a smokescreen for our claims of internal colonialism (or for legitimate rule) with China as the imperial power. As is the case for Japanese expansionist policy in northeastern China, it will be shown that PRC control of its minority areas is characterised by both domination and exploitation as well as by development and modernisation. When we accept that Chinese domination over its autonomous areas is based on more than resource-extraction alone, then perhaps it becomes possible to think of Manchukuo as the beginning of an imperialism that culminates also in the autonomous regions of the PRC.

My analysis of national development and ethnic integration under the Chinese Communist Party is only the first step in the development of my ideas on ethnic relations in the PRC. Due to the brevity of this research I have had to restrict myself to certain times and places. Even though I consider autonomous governance in the PRC in general I will confine myself to ethnic integration in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in particular. It is with reference to the latter that I draw my literature and examples. Similarly, I'm primarily concerned with the period that started with Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening policies in 1979. Of course these restrictions come with certain caveats. I cannot claim to draw any conclusions about the Chinese approach towards its underdeveloped minority areas in general. The most I hope to achieve is to show that the example of Manchukuo provides a valuable precedent to extend our understanding of national development and ethnic integration in at least one part of China. I also cannot claim to be exhaustive, as I am admittedly weak on ethnic policy and practice under socialism in the former Soviet Union.

The structure of my argument is as follows. In the first section I consider the ideological foundations and the development of China's ethnic policy. Descriptions of national development become more detailed as we approach the 21st century. In the second section I introduce the literature on internal colonialism in the Chinese case, and I also look at Japanese imperialist practices in Manchukuo. The third and last section provides a critique on this literature on internal colonialism by looking at practices of national development and ethnic integration in Xinjiang. In the final analysis it will be shown that rhetoric and practice towards ethnic nationals in Xinjiang is much more ambivalent than most literature will have one believe. China's policy in its peripheral areas is not exclusively based on the exploitation of minority areas. Development and modernisation have met with varying degrees of success, but its too easy to be sceptical about Chinese intentions and consider it a mere smokescreen for resource extraction. In conclusion,

developmentalist models, such as Japanese imperialism in Manchukuo, provide a useful tool for analysis; regional practices usefully complement global ideologies to further examine the situation in contemporary China.

China and the XUAR

The People's Republic of China was founded on the 1st of October 1949 but the founding of the CCP goes back several years further to the early 1920^s. Inner Mongolia was the first area to receive autonomy status. Apart from regions (provinces), counties and cities can also be designated as autonomous areas (People's Daily Online, 1982). The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) was founded on the 1st of October 1955. Xinjiang is China's westernmost province and Ürümqi is its capital. It borders on Mongolia and Russia in the north, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the west, and Pakistan and India in the south. Xinjiang is by far the largest of China's provinces but houses only about 20 million people. The largest ethnic group is the Uyghur, who make up just under 50 per cent of its population (MacKerras, 1994: 253). The Uyghur speak their own language, a distant relative of Turkish, which is currently written in a modified Persian script. Uyghur culture similarly takes after its Turkic cousins in Central Asia and the Caucasus. After considerable in-migration since at least the beginning of the 20th century the Han are the second largest ethnic group, accounting for almost 40 per cent of the population. It's been argued that Beijing encourages Han migrants to settle in Xinjiang for reasons of cultural assimilation. Migration by Han settlers is therefore very controversial with minority nationals and outside observers. The rest of the population is made up of other ethnic minorities, several of which also have autonomous areas in Xinjiang, including the Hui, Kazakh, Mongol, Kyrgyz and Tajik. (Dillon, 2009a; 2009b ¹) National development and ethnic integration in the autonomous regions in general, and in XUAR in particular, is the topic of this part of the essay.

The republican era (~1949)

MacKerras provides one model with which we can analyse the development of China's policies with regards to its autonomous areas. In this model modernisation is explicitly linked with levels of ethnic integration as follows. Development is brought about by modernisation. In order for development to reach across all communities in a multi-ethnic society modernisation requires some form of integration. As a result, development leads to

¹ Dillon (2009b) part I provides a comprehensive, contemporary introduction to the XUAR. For geography see chapter 1 (idem: 3-7), for its history prior to 1949 see chapter 2 (idem: 8-22), for the ethnic make-up of Xinjiang and the Uyghur culture see chapter 3 (idem: 23-31) and also MacKerras (1994: 233-259).

pressure on autonomous areas to increase the integration among its communities. A lack of integration means that certain communities are left out of the modernising drive and remain, as it were, pre-modern or 'backward'. What sets one modernising drive apart from another is the way in which this integration is accomplished. MacKerras judges integration on a scale from pluralism on one end to assimilation on the other. Pluralism represent the situation in which individual communities maintain ultimate autonomy over the pace and direction of development, and over matters of communal, cultural, and linguistic integration. Assimilation represents the opposite situation, whereby complete assimilation of the minority community with the dominant one is imposed from above, and whereby the local community has little or no say with regards to the pace and direction of development. The middle ground is occupied by ideas of fusion or amalgamation. I will use MacKerras ideas of modernism and integration, pluralism and assimilation throughout my description of ethnic policy in the PRC. (MacKerras, 1994: 6-14 ²).

In China, the first calls for modernity were heard in the republican era, the restive period that ensued with the fall of the Qing dynasty. Two of these calls rose to prominence, that of the Kuomintang, which moved the Republic of China to Taiwan under the leadership of Chiang Kaishek, and that of the Chinese Communist Party, which was to found the PRC. Both parties consider their ideology to take root with the nationalism of Sun Yatsen. His was a anti-imperialist nationalism rallying against both the Qing court and foreign imperialism. The rhetoric of Sun's Republic of Five Nationalities – Mongols, Manchus, Tibetans, Muslim, and Han – founded in 1912, is regarded by some as a genuinely original, multi-ethnic nationalism, prior even to the foundation of the Soviet Union (Duara, 2009a: 4, 16). Yet the theory and policy of this early republic was heavily influenced by Japanese ideas on nationalism. In the final analysis Sun's ideology was extremely assimilative. Sun Yatsen held strong racist ideas of primordial ethnic blood ties. The Republic of Five Nationalities was naturally dominated by the superior Han nationality. There is a strong continuation between the ideologies of Sun Yatsen and those of Chiang Kaishek but ironically the first constitution of the Republic of China diverged enormously from the racist ideas expounded by Sun and Chiang. Indeed, the founding ideologies of the USSR strongly influenced the policies enshrined by the Republic of China. These

² Inherit to MacKerras' argument is the assumption that development is desirable and modernisation is necessarily imposed from the outside. MacKerras is therefore naturally inclined towards the 'Beijing' point of view in questions of cultural assimilation. This disposition is clear when MacKerras says that "what modernization took place among the minorities was mainly due either to foreigners or to the Han" (MacKerras, 1994: 106).

include such values as socialism, the 'liberation of China', equality and free-association between nationalities – defined by the Soviets as those communities identifiable by their locality, language, economy and culture as well as by the stage of development such communities found themselves in – and also the right of nationalities to self-determination. What is more, class struggle was not ethnic struggle. The working classes of the different ethnicities were united in their struggle against the oppressing classes. Yet policy and practice would prove to be as divergent as the ideals of the party and its leadership, and the Republic of China under Chiang Kaishek would remain one that is characterised by assimilative practices and ideas of Han dominance. (MacKerras, 1994: 53-64).

At the time of the Jiangxi Soviet (1931~) CCP policy was influenced not only by its Marxist cousin in the Soviet Union, but also by the ideologies of the Republic of China. As with the ROC, CCP values started out extremely liberal and accepting of ideas of ethnic autonomy and self-determination of nationalities. In a repetition of developments under Chiang Kaishek, the CCP would gradually come to withdraw such policies and instead hold firm to the sovereign borders of China as they were drawn at the time of the foundation of the PRC. The People's Republic similarly saw periods of severe pressure to assimilate within its autonomous areas. Ideas of national development and integration among the CCP leadership were shaped by experiences from the Long March, at which time the party often 'bought' popular support among populations of the nationality areas they visited in exchange for promises of autonomy and self-determination later on.

CCP experiences with minorities were generally positive, class struggle was superimposed on what little racial animosity there was. This was also true for the period in which the CCP was ruled from its base in Yan'an, in an area with large ethnic Hui and Mongol populations. Relaxed attitudes among the various nationalities and support for ethnic self-determination among the party leadership is evident in the founding of the Inner Mongolia Mongol Autonomous Region in 1947, prior even to the establishment of the CCP. At the time of the United Front, during which the Kuomintang and the CCP were united in their efforts at undermining the Japanese, the CCP enjoyed enormous support among minority nationals in Manchukuo, especially the Koreans. This support has continued throughout much of the 20th century, and the northeast remains one of the greatest success stories of PRC ethnic policy. At the time of the founding of the People's Republic CCP ideology was characterised by Marxist, pluralist ideas of equality among nationalities and some support for autonomy and self-determination in the autonomous regions. However, since the days of the Jiangxi Soviet the right to secession had already been withdrawn from the party

statutes. Autonomy for minority nationals was to be encouraged but not at the cost of China's sovereignty. (MacKerras, 1994: 72-77).

High tide of socialism (1949-1979)

This pluralistic outlook found continuation after the establishment of the People's Republic and throughout the first decade of the 'high tide of socialism'³. After the establishment of the PRC the communist party set out to identify the various nationalities within state boundaries. Favourable attitudes towards ethnic nationalities resulted in the proliferation of claims of ethnic identity. The CCP has to creatively apply Stalin's definition of ethnic identity as some claims didn't fit in the ethnic mould of identifiable localities, languages, economies, cultures and stages of development. An example is provided by the Hui, whose claim to ethnicity is based rather on a shared religious identity. Gladney (1991) has shown that Hui communities around China have wildly different internal cohesion. Other examples include tribes in the south of China that claim to incorporate various ethnicities under one minority label. Claims of the various Turkic minorities of Xinjiang are also problematic as they are based on the rather haphazard boundaries drawn between communities in the Soviet Union. Problems with the identification of ethnicities in the PRC persists to this day.

The state eventually identified 55 different ethnic minorities, which makes for 56 ethnicities when the Han ethnicity is included in this list. Popularity of 'ethnic status' in the first decade after the establishment of the PRC can be attributed to favourable policies enshrined in the first constitution of the People's Republic of China. This constitution, which dates from 1954, included such values as autonomy for and equality between nationalities, and recognised the right of economies in areas with large ethnic populations to develop at their own pace. Though great importance was attached to national unity and the sovereignty of China, at the same time the constitution was conscious of the danger of 'great national chauvinism' – effectively great Han chauvinism – the recognition of Han superiority and dominance over ethnic nationalities. Local nationalism or minorities chauvinism was to be curbed only insofar as it extended itself to claims of secession. At various times Beijing's rhetoric has attached greater importance to the dangers of great Han chauvinism on one hand, and local nationalities chauvinism on the other, mirroring changes in policy that stress pluralism over assimilation and vice versa. I will identify three such periods.

³ Strictly speaking, 'High tide of socialism' (社会主义高潮) refers only to the period after 1954 that was characterised by fervent support for Maoist reform in the countryside (Dillon, 2009a: 31). I use it here to refer to the period from the establishment of the PRC to the reform and opening policies of 1979.

From 1949 until the middle of the 1950^s autonomous regions were spared the socialist reform and class struggle that washed over the rest of China. This included the co-optation of local, religious and political elites as well as the postponement of land reform policies. Class struggle was to take place within the various ethnic communities and only insofar the local economies had reached an appropriate stage in socialist development. Beijing was not advocating open class struggle in its ethnically heterogeneous regions, quite unlike the rest of China at the time. Reform took place by peaceful negotiation between the CCP, traditional political shareholders and the landed elite in the minority areas. Minority cadres drawn from this gentry class were provided with training at the central institute for nationalities, which became the cadre breeding ground for minority nationals. The prerogative of the Han was to provide cultural and economic assistance. In Xinjiang, especially in the culturally more distinctive south, this meant that large land endowments remained attached to the more important mosques and rich merchant families. Whereas in many parts of China's core land was appropriated by the state and socialist communes were established in the countryside, autonomous areas remained largely aloof of the socialist revolution until shortly before the Great Leap Forward.

If the pendulum was on the side of pluralism in the first decade after the establishment of the PRC, and communist rhetoric stressed the dangers of great Han chauvinism, it swung fast in the opposite direction near the end of the 1950^s. These changes were precipitated by a change in social and economic policy and were strengthened by ethnic unrest in minority areas as relations began to deteriorate. The radical leftist programme of the Great Leap Forward stressed common class interest between ethnic nationalities over class struggle within ethnic nationalities. If the first decade allowed nationalities to develop and reform at their own pace, from 1958 onwards all nationalities were thrown head first into the revolution. Ethnicity was ignored and class affinities took precedence over ethnic identities. Pluralistic practices were replaced by ideas of assimilation and CCP rhetoric stressed the dangers of local nationalities chauvinism. Minority nationalism mustn't be wrongly appropriated by local elites in order to perpetuate the suppressions of the working classes in autonomous areas. This new ultra-leftist ideology took shape immediately in the form of land reform and the establishment of communes across the People's Republic and including the autonomous areas. Assimilative policy resulted in greater ethnic antagonism. Unrest broke out in Tibet and violence and resistance against reform was a regular occurrence in Xinjiang. The constitution adopted in 1975 was a huge step back for the autonomy and self-determination of autonomous areas. The second constitution

maintained the promise of autonomous status for predominantly minority areas, but this regional autonomy was strongly downgraded as no measures were put in place to ensure it. From the Great Leap Forward and throughout the Cultural Revolution “the idea that the various nationalities should follow their own culture became a casualty of [the] madness” (MacKerras, 1994: 153).

Ethnic relations in the reform era (1979~)

With the death of Mao Zedong the Cultural Revolution came to end and the madness that had enveloped all of China slowly died out. The rise of Deng Xiaoping and a new direction in economic policy foreshadowed changes in the relationship between the Han and China’s ethnic nationalities. The pendulum took another swing in the opposite direction. This change in policy is commonly referred to as the era of reform and opening. This was almost immediately noticeable in the adoption of a new constitution in 1982. Many of the measures that ensured a level of autonomy in the autonomous areas were reintroduced in the 1982 constitution. The 1980s also saw the introduction of the Law on Regional Autonomy that further solidified the legal basis for regional autonomy (Sautman, 1999: 288-290). A new, pluralistic outlook and a renewed emphasis on the dangers of great Han chauvinism allowed minorities to express their national identities afresh. These opportunities were seized upon almost immediately; the early 1980s saw enormous proliferation of national identity across China’s autonomous areas and in the XUAR. This proliferation of identities was enabled by a change in ideology within CCP ranks. Among the communist leadership the realisation had started to grow that ethnicity, contrary to class affinity, was founded in primordially existing identities. Unlike class identity, ethnic identity couldn’t simply be erased by means of a socialist revolution. Ethnicity was here to stay for a long time yet. Instead of trying to erase ethnic identity by means of assimilation, ethnic nationalisms were to be encouraged for the good of the nation. As the first generation of communist leadership was replaced by the second generation under Deng Xiaoping, so the pendulum swung around and China had a thoroughly pluralistic outlook (MacKerras, 1994: 153-159).

This new pluralism quickly saw the return of unrest that was typical of the early years of the radical leftist programme. Ethnic tension and small scale riots broke out across southern Xinjiang and culminated in the Baren riots of 1990. Following these riots the authorities put in place measures for keeping a check on Islamic activities and the religious leadership in Xinjiang. The government invested in poverty alleviation in the area around Kasghar and tried to increase levels of ethnic integration by encouraging the migration of

Han settlers to minority areas. In 1992 the Kasghar government announced it was prepared settle up to 100,000 Han migrants displaced by the Three Gorges Dam project. This announcement resulted in an international outcry over fears of cultural assimilation. Yet ethnic unrest continued to spread throughout the 1990s and included rioting and violence in Khotan, Aksu and Ghulja. This spate of violence culminated in the violent suppression of demonstrations in Ghulja by the government in 1997. (Dillon, 2009b: 51-76).

The year prior to these riots the government had set out on a 'strike hard' campaign to bring an end to violence in Xinjiang. The strike hard campaign identified the 'three evil forces' of Uyghur separatism, Islamic radicalism and terrorism as the driving forces behind the continuation of ethnic violence by criminal elements⁴. Islamic institutions and schools were identified as hotbeds for these elements. Under the guise of the strike hard campaign the government set out to re-educate ethnic nationals with a particular focus on the religious leadership. Nationalist sentiments and sympathy for the Uyghur cause among party cadres in local and provincial governments were similarly targeted. Xinjiang saw a number of purges of cadres from the government and the party. This resulted in an increased shortage of government officials proficient in the language of the local population. Renewed emphasis on the importance of learning Uyghur for Han government official has met with only limited success. Throughout the strike hard campaign there was a drive for the arrest, conviction and incarceration of criminal elements suspected of the three evil forces. Occasionally this included the public trial of such criminals. It is one such public trial that led to people taking to the streets in Ghulja and culminating in the violent crackdown on February the 6th 1997 (Dillon, 2009b: 84-109).

The strike hard Campaign didn't signify a change in the rhetoric of integration, but it was accompanied by a realisation that the only way to keep secession at bay was if all nationalities shared in the development and modernisation of the Chinese economy. Yet China's peripheral areas, in which most of the autonomous areas are located, have always been economically underdeveloped compared to the Chinese core. Access to markets and industrialisation is distinctly more problematic in the west than it is in the industrial heartland of China. So Beijing set out on an ambitious drive to bring economic prosperity to its peripheral areas, called the western development programme. This project entailed

⁴ In English translations of government publications 'separatism' is consistently referred to as 'splittism'. Similarly, the Chinese government consistently refers to ethnic violence as criminal acts and charges its perpetrators for criminal activities.

the opening up of markets for products from the interior and the transfer of large amounts of resources to the economies of western China. Resources allocated to the westernmost provinces include large amounts of credit and direct investment in infrastructure as well as the relocation of heavy industry towards the Chinese interior. Xinjiang was designated as an incubator for the chemical and petrochemical industries. More controversial perhaps is the transfer of skilled personnel to the interior; on the face of it a continuation of heavy Han migration to nationality areas. In Xinjiang, cross-border trade with the Central Asian states has also increased the amount of direct investment in the area. (Dillon, 2009a: 199-213). Significantly, the amount of money invested in Xinjiang far exceeds profits gained by the central government (Sautman, 2000: 257), leading to fears of increased dependency on the centre and a loss of autonomy.

Even though the strike hard campaign has periodically been revived in different parts of the province, and the western development programme has gained some traction in the first decade of the 20th century, ethnic violence has occasionally resurfaced in Xinjiang. Such unrest is usually swiftly suppressed by the government and is typically blamed on criminal activity and the three evil forces. So also in the latest spate of ethnic violence which enveloped Ürümqi in the first week of July 2009. Violence was particularly widespread on the 5th and the 7th of July. These dates have gone down in popular history as ‘qī wǔ’ (七五) and ‘qī qī’ (七七), even though the government only recognises the former. This is significant as events on qī qī may indicate changing popular sentiment and ethnic antagonism in Xinjiang. On the 7th of July, Han Chinese took to the street in protest over Uyghur violence perpetrated against the Han population earlier that week. The government officially recognises 198 victims of the violence on the 5th, mostly Han nationals, but recognises none on the 7th. Yet there is anecdotal evidence, some of which I’ve received directly from hospital employees in Ürümqi, that the wards were flooded on the 7th of July as well. According to these accounts, victims of demonstrations on the 7th belong mostly to the Uyghur nationality. Estimates run from anything between 198 victims in government accounts of events to 2,000 victims by some Uyghur accounts. The subsequent communication blackout and the amendment of the Xinjiang Public Security Law (Xinhua, 2010) may indicate a shift towards more assimilative policies. It seems that events in July of last year have gone a long way in raising support among the local Han population for hardliners in the party ranks and the “ethnicisation of discontent” in Xinjiang (Thum, 2009).

National development and integration

What tools are at our disposal to explain the relationship between Beijing and its national subjects in the autonomous regions? What models shed light on the changes in integrative policies, 'the swinging of the pendulum' as it were, and the perceived failure of integration following the pluralism of the reform and opening era? Several authors have used models of internal colonialism for China's engagement with its peripheral areas, so also in the case of Xinjiang. These authors have variously drawn from models of internal colonialism to conclude that Xinjiang is an example of an internal Chinese colony (Gladney, 1994; 1999), and that it isn't (Sautman, 2000). I will argue that internal colonialism cannot in itself sufficiently explain the state's control over the XUAR. I will instead be looking at another model, specifically the model of the developmentalist state in Manchukuo and the imperialism of free nations. I believe that Japanese rhetoric of pan-Asian solidarity, and its contradictory implementation among Japan's imperial subjects, provides a better explanation for social and economic dynamics in the XUAR. At the same time imperialism of free nations maintains predictions about relations between the imperial power and its subjects as suggested by internal colonialism.

Lenin was the first to suggest ideas of internal colonialism, and it was later discussed with reference to different areas by Gramsci. Internal colonialism as I will use it here was put forward by Michael Hechter in his consideration of national development in the 'Celtic fringe' of Scotland, Ireland and Wales in Great Britain (Hechter, 1975; 1976). This is also the internal colonialism referred to by both Sautman and Gladney, who I will come back to later. Hechter identifies the following salient aspects in the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised in situations of internal colonisation:

1. a commercial, trading and credit monopoly by the centre;
2. commerce is predominantly carried out by recruits from the core;
3. an economic dependency on external markets due to complementary development with the core, usually resting on a single commodity;
4. the movement of peripheral labour brought about by forces outside the periphery and due in the main to variations in the price of a single commodity;
5. economic dependence reinforced through juridical, political and military measures;
6. general lack of service within the colony;

7. national discrimination on the basis of language, religion or other aspects of the culture.

Taken from Williams, cited in Sautman (2000: 253). The same criteria can also be found in Hechter (1976: 30-31).

It is important to stress that Hechter doesn't use these criteria as an indication of the level of integration between the 'internally' colonised and the coloniser. These criteria merely described the socio-economic interactions that take place between colonised and coloniser. However, these interactions sow the seeds for the development of a cultural division of labour, which in turn fosters group identification along ethnic lines. To the extent that this cultural division of labour widens the gap between the coloniser and the colonised, the internal colonialism model predicts increased ethnic antagonism in areas under such colonial control. In Hechter's model of national development in the periphery integration takes place not within these criteria, but rather along three different axes of integration that stand between the communities on either side of this division. These three axes are that of cultural integration, economic and social integration, and political integration. (Hechter, 1997: 17-22⁵). By using different variables in the application of this model of internal colonialism, Gladney and Sautman come to diametrically opposed conclusions for the status of Xinjiang as an internal colony.

Sautman engages with the seven criteria indicative of internal colonies and favourable to the development of a cultural division of labour. Indeed, Sautman (2000: 260-262) doesn't deny the existence of such a division but rather attributes it to historical factors common to all areas with a legacy of domination under Chinese rule. These areas include all minority areas. However, at least since the era of opening and reform, and perhaps even prior to that, Xinjiang has not sufficient met the criteria identified by Hechter to conclude that it suffers from internal colonialism by Beijing. Sautman uses economic data to effectively negate the criteria set forth by Hechter. Commerce, trading and credit are not (anymore) monopolised by the state. Ethnic nationalities in the XUAR have a proportionate share in such activities relative to the size of their populations. Even if one considers trade in terms of volume, then the bulk of trade is carried out not by the central government but by provincial and local level state enterprises, with the notable exception of oil (Sautman, 2000: 253-55). The second criterion, a reliance on core recruits, is similarly compromised. Xinjiang's economy is not based on a single commodity and exports vary from cotton and

⁵ It is perhaps interesting to point out that, contrary to MacKerras' relationship between modernisation and integration, Hechter's internal colonialism doesn't lead one to necessarily see modernisation as desirable.

foodstuffs to oil and minerals. None of these industries, again with the exception of the oil industry, is monopolised by Han enterprises⁶. In case of movement in peripheral labour, the fifth criterion, the opposite appears to be true. Instead of a brain drain away from the periphery, Xinjiang seems to attract large numbers of skilled labourers from the Chinese core. The sixth criterion is a general lack of services, which is certainly not the case in the XUAR given the heavy investment it has seen in infrastructure. The seventh criterion is one that Sautman, finally, is willing to concede by admitting that “Xinjiang officials have not taken sufficient action to curb non-public employment discrimination and use public employment hiring criteria that malignly impact minorities” (Sautman, 2000: 259). This he attributes to Han chauvinist attitudes. Apart from some glaring contradictions – such as his statement that ethnic nationals are proportionately represented in all sectors of industry while at the same time Xinjiang attracts a large share of its skilled labour force from outside the province – I believe that Sautman is correct in his conclusions that, according to these criteria, Xinjiang can not rightfully be considered an internal colony. (Sautman, 2000: 253-262).

How then does Gladney reach the opposite conclusion? Indicators of economic domination in Hechter’s model of internal colonialism don’t take centre stage in Gladney’s application of the model to Xinjiang. These criteria may have played a role in the creation of a cultural division of labour, but the perpetuation of this division in the era of reform and opening is accomplished through other means (Gladney, 1994; 1999). The axes along which integration and national development take place, especially the cultural one, are the focus of Gladney’s analysis. The PRC government is responsible for the widening of the gap between ethnic communities along the axis of cultural integration by a process referred to as ethnogenesis. The construction of the Uyghur identity – and other national identities – the ethnogenesis thereof, has legitimated a “derivative discourse of power in China” (Gladney, 1994: 255); it has created the contours by which one can identify another as belonging to one’s own community or to another community. That these categories are in fact constructed and imposed from above is evident by the effort in the early years of the PRC to identify national identities. Once these identities had been established, either based on primordial categories or based on newly invented ones, they were reinforced by anthropological studies and affirmative action in the autonomous areas alike. Affirmative action – preferential access to state resources for ethnic nationals and autonomous

⁶ The Xinjiang economy does seem to me to be disproportionately reliant on the export of a variety of primary or raw materials for processing. Little processing takes place inside Xinjiang.

governments – as a policy of ethnogenesis turns Sautman’s argument upside down. According to Gladney this ethnogenesis still takes place today, perhaps even more so since it is not anymore restricted the imposition of categories by the government but has become commonplace. Examples of such popular ethnogenesis, or what has been called internal orientalism (Schein, cited in Gladney, 1999: 50), are the commodification of ethnic culture, of promoting ethnic song and dance, and a booming tourism industry in many autonomous areas, including also Xinjiang. In the final analysis, Gladney concludes that the XUAR is a legitimate example of internal colonialism as it conforms to predictions about the levels of integration in Hechter’s model.

What we are left with is the absence of indicators that allow us to see Xinjiang as a Chinese internal colony (Sautman) and at the same time we have the predicted results in the form low levels of cultural integration in particular (Gladney) ⁷. Is there another model that uses a different set of indicators to predict the same outcomes? I argue that we may fruitfully turn to Duara’s imperialism of free nations for just such a model. Japan’s imperialism of free nations, as explicated in an essay on Japanese imperialism in Manchukuo (Duara, 2009: 40-59), is founded on a highly contradictory ideology. This ideology draws inspiration from contemporary socialist values to make it developmental and modernising, as well as from pre-modern ideas about East Asian society, which makes this ideology domineering and exploitative as well. Japanese imperialism was further ridden by contradiction because it pretended to be both anti-imperialist, agitating against foreign influence in the greater East Asian sphere, while at the same time imposing a Confucian order on the regions under Japanese control. This resulted in the imposition of hierarchical Confucian relationships between the territories within the ‘Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere’, with Taiwan, the Chinese concessions, Korea and Manchukuo as the younger brothers in this relationship. While the economy of these peripheral territories were both modernised and developed they were very much put to the service of the imperial core. Duara takes a few premises as indicative of developmental-exploitative relations within the imperialism of free nations:

1. ultimate control over dependencies through military subordination;
2. legally sovereign ‘nation-states’;

⁷ I haven’t actually considered the other two variables. Whereas there may be some levels of economic and social integration a good case is to be made for the lack of political integration. Even if minority nationals are proportionally represented in the autonomous government of Xinjiang, the subordination of this government to the regional branch of the CCP means that minority nationals are not very influential in decision making at the regional level (Dillon, 2009a: 137).

3. anti-colonial ideologies;
4. cultural and ideological similarities;
5. economic investment even while the territory is exploited for its raw materials;
6. modernisation of institutions and identities.

Taken from Duara (2009: 41).

The economic situation in the peripheral areas is described by Duara as one of ‘strategic autarky. In Manchuria, “pan-Asianism was expressed in a strategy not of assimilation and homogenisation, but of independence and alliance” (Duara, 2009: 49). The puppet-regime in Manchukuo legitimised itself by means of the kingly way, where the government alleged to represent the syncretic traditions of traditional societies, as well as by a ‘concord of nationalities’ in the colony. The Japanese aimed to foster the cooperation of those nationalities by a policy of cultural rule, which sought the co-optation of the colonial subjects in political and economic matters (Duara, 2009: 57). It remains to be seen whether this represented a genuine rather than a forced cooperation. The consideration of relationships within Manchukuo is outside the scope of this essay though⁸. In the next section I will turn to contemporary Xinjiang to see if imperialism of free nations can shed light on the relations in the Chinese autonomous areas.

Xinjiang and the imperialism of free nations

Is Duara’s model for Japanese imperialism in Manchukuo – the imperialism of free nations – an appropriate one to describe the contemporary situation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region? In parallel with Sautman’s and Gladney’s application of internal colonialism I will first consider the indicators for the imperialism of free nations put forward by Duara. I will then look at the resulting or expected dynamics in the relationship between the government at the core and its subjects in the periphery. Duara divulges preciously little about his expectations for ethnic dynamics under imperialism of free nations, but Caprio (2009) may extend a helping hand in this regard.

Let me consider the fifth and sixth indicators for imperialism of free nations first. Sautman argues that Xinjiang isn’t an internal colony because, contrary to expectations, it is not the core that benefits from the extraction of raw materials and mineral wealth. Sautman argues instead that Xinjiang has a negative rate of extraction; more money is transferred from the

⁸ Caprio (2009) provides an analysis of relationship between coloniser and colonised in Korea under Japanese rule. His account may well shed light on the situation in Manchukuo and in China’s autonomous areas as well. I will come back to Caprio a little later.

central government into Xinjiang than vice versa – both as a percentage-share of profits taken on the refinement and sale of raw material as well as through economic and infrastructural investment (Sautman, 2000: 257). This situation is just what one would expect under circumstances of imperialism of free nation, where the core invests in the economy of the periphery even as raw materials are extracted for processing elsewhere. This argument extends across the sixth indicator as well. Many of these investments in the economy and infrastructure have entered the fast-lane since the western development programme got underway in the late 1990^s. Institutions were modernised in order to open up new markets for goods from Xinjiang, which has included the flourishing of border trade between Xinjiang and the Central Asian republics. Ethnic identities proliferated even in the late 1980^s, and with the booming of a tourism industry in minority areas Gladney has argued for the popular ethnogenesis or minority identities.

At the same time the central government is still in ultimate control of its dependencies, Duara's first indicator. There remains a heavy military presence in Xinjiang ostensibly for border control. More invidious perhaps is the Bingtuan – the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps – which maintains a demilitarised 'standing army' of several million inside Xinjiang. Another common argument, which takes us neatly into Duara's second indicator, is the irrelevance of governments in the autonomous areas of China. Even though such governments in theory enjoy great amounts of autonomy set forth in the 1982 constitution and the Law on Regional Autonomy, such power is rendered useless by the subordination of the regional government to the regional branch of the CCP. Members of ethnic nationalities enjoy a proportionate representation in the regional government but the CCP remains predominantly Han ⁹. As has been shown earlier, anti-colonial ideologies did play a role in the establishment of the People's Republic of China and its autonomous regions, even though this anti-imperialist rhetoric may have lost some of its relevance. The fourth and last indicator – cultural and ideological similarities – is one that I cannot account for. This may be a factor in the south and northeast of China, but the history of Xinjiang and innate suspicion of socialism among the Uyghur make this indicator unsustainable in the case of the XUAR.

What made Japanese attempts at integration so contradictory is that it deployed Confucian intellectual and civilisational goals in its imperial enterprise. This resulted in hierarchical relationship along ethnic lines. We see the same take place in Xinjiang as well. The

⁹ A notable exception is the Yanbian Korean autonomous prefecture and its branch of the CCP, where ethnic Koreans are overrepresented (MacKerras, 1994: 146).

Chinese state ostensibly preaches equality between nationalities and puts affirmative action in place while at the same time it practices ethnogenesis, with low levels of integration as a result. That hierarchical Confucian values lie at the root of this division is shown by numerous examples in the history of the PRC. It's been argued before that the prerogative of the Han shortly after the establishment of the PRC was to provide economic and cultural assistance to its lesser developed co-nationals. Heberer similarly identifies such Confucian values at the heart of relationships between ethnic nationals and the Han nationality since at least the era of reform and opening. He predicts conflict as a result (Heberer, 2000). It seems that such traditional, Confucian relationships between ethnicities were less pronounced at times of radical leftist reform but little is known about ethnic relationships throughout the Cultural Revolution. In any case, when hard and fast socialism didn't work the PRC was quick to revert to pluralistic policies in the 11th CCP congress and adopted the 1982 constitution. Confucian values seem to have survived the swing of the pendulum and resurfaced after a period of strong assimilative pressure.

Caprio shows that this was also the case in Korea under Japanese imperialism. Regardless of enormous assimilative pressure the cultural division of labour remained in place throughout the period of Japanese domination; integration never took place to the satisfaction of either the coloniser or the colonised. To be sure, there was a considerable pro-Japanese community, but even they warned the Japanese colonial administration that, unless rhetoric was backed up by serious attempts at closing the cultural divide, national development – the development of a national consciousness – would remain problematic. In Caprio's terms, its Korean subjects demanded horizontal integration – integration across the cultural, economic and political spectrum – within Japanese society (Caprio, 2009: 200). But the Japanese coloniser was only prepared to vertically integrate the Korean territories into the Japanese empire. In Manchukuo cultural rule provided a legitimation for the Japanese puppet-state, ostensibly promising horizontal integration for the colonised within the administration of the puppet-state. But in practice this integration was a vertical one. This rings true in Xinjiang as well. Chinese rhetoric of a harmonious society is reminiscent of the cultural rule, ostensibly promoting horizontal integration within Chinese society for China's ethnic minorities. Affirmative action may have gone some way in realising this integration but in a large number of cases low levels of integration perpetuate. Confucian values and vertical integration still dominate Chinese practices in its autonomous areas.

Conclusions

It has been shown that Chinese attempts at the integration of its ethnic minorities has never been a one-dimensional endeavour. MacKerras' model for the range of integrative policies along a scale from pluralism to assimilation is helpful in this regard. The PRC started out with promising, liberal and pluralistic attitudes towards its minority nationals, just short of allowing these populations to secede. From the Great Leap Forward on and throughout the Cultural Revolution these policies became much more assimilative as the revolution was in full swing, disregarding ethnic lines within the nation. Following the era of reform and opening, China returned to its pluralistic outlook but several of its autonomous areas, including Xinjiang, have remained restive ever since. Some have tried to explain the restiveness with reference to internal colonialism. While this model accurately predicts the contemporary relations between the Han and its minority nationals in Xinjiang, its economic indicators have led others to deny claims of internal colonialism. I believe a model of imperialism of free nations to be more conducive in this regard. A contradictory ideology of development and modernisation goes hand in hand with the imposition of hierarchical relations between ethnicities, reaching back to traditional, Confucian modes of thinking. While ostensibly promoting equality and economic development, minority national remain second-class citizens by means of such vertical integration.

Whenever the Tibetan cause and more recently Xinjiang are raised in public in the west, we often hear people cry foul over alleged Chinese attempts at cultural hegemony and assimilation of minority cultures. But pluralistic policy in the last 30 years has been a far cry from the pressures to assimilate in the 20 years prior to that. One could even argue that minority identities are more sharply defined now than they have ever been as a result of the popularisation and commodification of minority cultures. This commodification seems to have reached supporters of minority causes in the west as well. While this renewed attempt at ethnogenesis has helped put Chinese nationalities on the international agenda, it has not furthered the integration of ethnic minorities in Chinese society. On the contrary, these sharp identities seem to prevent the full, horizontal integration of ethnic minorities. I have argued that it remains to be seen if the pendulum of integration is slowly swinging in the opposite direction once more, and if China will once again take more to assimilation than pluralism. Since the latest spate of violence, Han support for pluralistic policy and affirmative action seems to be waning fast. Time will tell if this is more than just a temporary development. But with China starting to pull its weight around internationally, taking a more defiant attitude to foreign intervention, it may once again feel that it is in a

position to make demands from its internal nationalities while ignoring accusations of cultural assimilation.

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