

## Ethnic Composition of Xinjiang Population: Past and Present

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**ABSTRACT** This study was carried out to analyze the characteristics and specificity of the XUAR national composition formation during the modern and contemporary periods. The main thesis of the work is the proposition that the formation of the modern structure of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region population is extended in time and dependent on Beijing's policy towards national outskirts. The researchers consecutively showed stages in the formation of Xinjiang population highlighting five stages in the formation of modern ethnic composition. The main conclusion of the research is that a demographic explosion is expected in the XUAR in the coming years. A surge of the positive migration balance can occur only at the expense of the "infusion" of Han Chinese from the interior regions of China. In this way, China's central government is trying to bind "demographically" and strengthen its position in the western region, through Central Asia.

### INTRODUCTION

Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region is located in northwest China, in the very heart of Eurasia. This Chinese Province is one of the five autonomous regions of China and is home to the Uyghurs, one of the 56 ethnic minorities residing in the country. XUAR has only a nominal "autonomous" status and holds a strategic place in China's domestic as well as foreign policy maneuvers (Swati 2015). The area of the region is 1,664,900 sq. km, which is 1/6 of the entire territory of China. Xinjiang shares borders with 8 countries, namely, the Republic of Mongolia, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of India (Sheng 2005). The vast territory of Xinjiang is home to 55 of the 56 ethnic groups living in China. Achieving a stable socio-political stability in Xinjiang acquires special significance to Beijing in connection with the more obvious stake on natural resources of the Central Asian states in meeting the growing needs of China's oil and natural gas imports and energy security of the country as a whole (Bondarenko 2007).

From the perspective of the Regional Studies theory, the analysis of ethnic processes in Xinjiang allows to evaluate the center and the periphery. Ever since its conquest the Xinjiang region has been difficult to manage for the central government. The national factor was not the last in the list of difficulties that the central authorities have experienced on the outskirts of

China. The migration from the central regions to the western outskirts of the republic has become one of the ways to mitigate autarky for Beijing, which is peculiar to border regions.

The 2010 census (last official census in China) shows Xinjiang as having 21.82 million people while the 2000 census registered 18.46 million. The population is concentrated in two segments, the corridor on the northern foothills of the Tengri Tagh (Tian Shan) and the arcs of oases to the south of the Tengri Tagh. The Uyghurs are located in the south and the Kazaks are in the north. The Han are migrating in a steady stream into the central area and following paths of migration to the other urban centers (China Policy Institute Blogs 2016). Several factors have contributed to the change in ethnical structures of Xinjiang. These include several types of migrations, regional implementation of national population policy, changes in lifestyle, rural to urban movements, and changes in the economic situation (Toops 2000).

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the changes in the ethnic composition in the Chinese province of Xinjiang in the modern and contemporary period.

To achieve this goal it is proposed to solve such problems as:

- Classifying the population of Xinjiang in accordance with the principles, adopted for the division of the population in China itself.
- Examining the main stages of formation of the multinational population of Xinjiang.
- Identifying how the policy of "Great Western Development" affected the situation in

Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in the twentieth century.

- Showing how the ethnic situation in the region is capable of impacting domestic and foreign policy of the People's Republic of China.
- Examining how the ethnic situation in the region could affect the security of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The subject of this study is the ethnic composition of the population of Xinjiang. The object of the study is the changes in the environment of the Xinjiang's population in the modern and contemporary period.

The hypothesis of this research is the assumption that the model of Beijing's policy toward Xinjiang is based on the increasing of demographic pressure on ethnic minorities. This is one of the ways to suppress separatist tendencies. Along with this, significant investments in the economic development of the western territories enhance the international significance of the region, and on the other hand, strengthen its connection with the center.

The theme related with the analysis of the Xinjiang ethnic composition is a matter of discussion actively analyzed in scientific literature. Ethnic groups in Xinjiang are studied by Chinese scientists as well as representatives of the English-speaking Western countries, such as in a paper prepared in 2009 by G. Fuller and S. Frederick Starr, "Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland". In recent years, this issue is being actively considered by authors from Kazakhstan such as K. Syroezhkin, R. Izimov and A. Kaukenov. About a year ago, there was a published monograph by K. L. Syroezhkin, named "Xinjiang: The Big Question for China and Kazakhstan", containing the results of the latest research on Xinjiang, a region that for centuries has been and is the gateway of China to the Western world and which still remains its troubled "province".

However, the issue of how ethnic processes in Xinjiang affect the situation both inside China and in countries bordering Xinjiang is still controversial.

The aim of the paper is a comprehensive analysis of the ethnic composition of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in the twentieth century.

The achievement of this goal is proposed to solve such problems as:

- Classifying the population of XUAR in accordance with the principles adopted for the division of the population in China itself.

- Examining the main stages of formation of the multinational population of Xinjiang.
- Identifying how the policy of "Great Western Development" has affected the situation in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in the twentieth century.
- Showing how the ethnic situation in the region is capable of impacting domestic and foreign policy of the PRC.

The methodological basis of the study is the concept, the idea, the scientific approaches advanced in recent years by historians, anthropologists, demographers and political analysts with respect of the analysis of ethnic processes in China in general and in particular, Xinjiang.

## METHODOLOGY

The research data for this study is the wide range of works dedicated to issues such as ethnic processes in Xinjiang, the national policy of China, ethnic conflict in Xinjiang, as well as the analysis of the impact of economic processes in Chinese western provinces on domestic and foreign policy of China. During last years, this issue is being actively considered by authors from Kazakhstan such as K. Syroezhkin, R. Izimov and A. Kaukenov. In 2014 the monograph "Xinjiang: The Big Question for China and Kazakhstan" was published by K. Syroezhkin, containing the results of the latest research on Xinjiang from Central Asian Region, the region that existed for centuries and is the gateway of China to the Western world and which still remains its troubled "province".

It is worth mentioning that the majority of researchers writing in Russian investigate the ethnic composition of the Xinjiang people in close connection with the Uyghur issue. At present, the Chinese policy in Central Asia aimed at the joint solution of "three evils" (terrorism, separatism, extremism) problem is actively studied as well. Analyzed issues in this study are also actively debated in the English-speaking expert space. Researches by such authors as the Yuchao Zhu, Dongyan Blachford, Stanley Toops, Jihyeon Jeong and AmiEe Ertürk were published in recent years. The specificity of these studies is that Xinjiang ethnic issues are discussed in the context of the analysis of the center and periphery interaction. Researchers are actively debating ethnic disparities. The assumption of this

paper suggests that China's economic policy in Xinjiang is a way to solve these imbalances.

The methodology of this study is based on the combination of general and specific research methods. To implement the goals and objectives, the authors used methods such as comparison, analysis, synthesis, chronological and diachronic approaches.

Analysis and synthesis, as basic methods of humanitarian studies, are important here for identifying trends in the formation of the multinational population of Xinjiang and determining the development prospects of the ethnic situation.

The chronological and diachronic approach are important in order to identify the stages of formation of the Xinjiang population in modern and contemporary period, and to show specific features of the multinational population of Xinjiang, its differences from other provinces of China. Furthermore, the predictor-prognostic method was used. This method is important in order to forecast how the ethnic composition of Xinjiang will change in short and medium terms. The methodology of the study also included the collection and study of data, analysis of the general scientific and specialized works in the Russian and English languages.

## OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

China is a multinational state. Officially, there are four categories of the population by ethnicity and nationality in China: Han Chinese, ethnic minorities, Huaqiao and foreigners.

The Hans are people of Chinese origin who are citizens of China (including China and the Republic of China in Taiwan). National minorities are Chinese citizens of non-Chinese origin. These two population groups are considered to be the Chinese in China, although outside the country, the Chinese usually referred as Chinese regardless of their nationality and place of residence. Huaqiao are people of Chinese nationality who are not citizens of China, but who are permanently residing outside the People's Republic of China and Taiwan. Foreigners are all those who do not possess nationality of China (including the nationality of the Republic of China on Taiwan) and do not belong to the people of Chinese origin (that is, to the Han and Huaqiao).

Modern China territory was mainly formed in the XVIII century as a result of the military campaigns of the Manchu Qing dynasty (which ruled China in 1644-1912), which by force or pressure

integrated many lands of Central Asia populated by the then present national minorities within China. In the Qing era, China lost the Han-populated Hong Kong and Taiwan, as they were historically parts of the Middle Kingdom alienated respectively by Britain and Japan in the XIX century. In the middle of the XVI century, Han populated Macao, which was also historically part of China passed to Portugal.

Before the conquest of West China by Qing troops in the middle of the XVIII century there was a powerful Dzhungar Khanate in its northern part, the territory where the Oirat tribes lived. The southern part (East Turkestan) was mainly inhabited by Uygurs, and some Kyrgyz nomadic tribes lived in the northwestern part. By the mid-50s of the XVIII century, Qing troops seized the area. In 1760, Xinjiang became China's Imperial vicegerency, all the power here was concentrated in the hands of the Manchu military officials. Qing government moved some Manchu and Mongol tribes here for the settlement of the devastated territory of Dzungaria. They were divided into approximately equal outman parts, called "Sumun", as some of them did not have their own military organization.

The tribes were settled as follows: Sibo, Solons and Daur, as well as two groupseelyut's sumuns were settled in Ili territory, Tarbagatay and in other areas. Chahars were settled in the northern part of Xinjiang (Inner Mongolia), Chahar's Sumun were also resettled in Ili areas and Tarbagatay (Syrtlanov 1913).

During the settlement of all of these tribes the Qing government did not allocate the entire tribe to a single territory, but tried to settle them at a considerable distance from each other, dividing into sumun groups or individual sumun mixed with sumuns of other tribes. In this way the Qing government created barriers to their integration, which ultimately made it easier to suppress discontent of these tribes. However, certain benefits were provided to these tribes. All of them, agricultural and pastoralist tribes were completely exempted from any taxes. As a result, in the former territory of the Jungar Khanate the total number of inhabitants including the Qing army was about 100 thousand people, or about one-tenth of its former population (Moiseev 2003).

However, the number of settlers did not solve the problem of settlement of the northern part of Xinjiang, and the Qing government began to re-

settle other representatives of the agricultural people there.

The Uighurs, called "Taranchi" were moved from East Turkestan in North Xinjiang. They constituted the major part of agricultural population of Ili region. To control the Uighur settlers a local government unit headed by Hakim-Bek was created. Citizens who arrived from China itself began to establish settlements of Chinese colonists. These settlements were of three types: military settlements of Chinese troops (Bin-tun), and settlements, where the Chinese were exiled to Xinjiang for crimes of tilling the land (Fan-tun). Such settlements were relatively few, and they were mostly located in the border areas with China. The third category was civil settlements of colonists, both Chinese and Dungan. The largest number of these settlements was situated in the eastern part of Xinjiang along the northern sole of Tien Shan spur.

Kazakhs and Kyrgyz people began to return to their old nomadic camps after the defeat of the Oirat Khanate. This migration was especially massive in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the struggle of the Uighurs and Dungans against the Qing rule in Xinjiang began, that struggle ended with the formation of new domains created by the rebels in the region.

After the re-conquest of Xinjiang in 1878, the Qing government was forced to admit much of the area located near the border with Russia owned by Kazakhs and Kyrgyz.

The Kirghiz were divisible into two kinds, namely, OtuzOgul and Ichkilik, they were nomads in the northwestern part of East Turkestan, in the foothills of the Tien Shan and Pamir. Accordingly, the area of residence of Kazakhs were divided into three groups:

1. Ili group, which consisted of Atban and Kyzai tribes. Nomadic camps of these tribes were in the Ili region, river valleys of Ili, Tekes and Kunges.
2. Tarbagatai group. It consisted of Kerey, Naiman and Uaktribes. These tribes migrated through the vast space of the southern slope of the Tarbagatay ridge, river valleys of Saura, Dzhair and Barlyk.
3. Altai group consisted of Kerey and Naimantribes. Their encampments occupied small areas, and they had to rent Mongolian grassland (Kurmanbaev et al. 1982).

Thus, by the 80<sup>th</sup> of the XIX century the ethnic composition of the population close to the modern one was formed in Xinjiang.

The Qing Dynasty completed the annexation of Xinjiang in 1759 and the demand for freedom was first documented in 1865 by Yakub Beg, a local leader. The Uighurs enjoyed a brief period of statehood in 1931-1934, declaring the East Turkestan Republic, extending from the Tian Shah mountains to the Kunlun mountains (Swati 2015).

In Chinese historiography, the people of Xinjiang are regarded as "KuagoMinzu", trans-state (divided nation) people or "KuatszinMinzu" cross-border nations (peoples living on both sides of the border). The category of "coming-leaving people" who conducted seasonal economic activity on both sides of the border was recognized in the Qing Empire. Therefore, the history of the neighboring regions was studied within the framework of the overall Chinese history.

In 1944-1949 China became weaker due to its involvement in its civil war. It was six years after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, under Chairman Mao Tsetung, that the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region was created, with ethnic Uighur Muslims comprising the majority (Swati 2015).

In the first nationwide census held in 1953, more than 400 ethnic groups were registered to be officially recognized, and the combined population of ethnic minorities was 35.32 million (Ertürk 2016). In 1953, the ethnic composition was Uyghur seventy-five percent, Kazakh ten percent, Han six percent, and others nine percent. More Han and Hui came from Gansu. The 1982 census showed that the Uyghur accounted for a smaller share of the population down to forty-five percent, the Kazakh decreased to seven percent, while the Han increased to forty percent (Toops 2000).

Modern Xinjiang is an autonomous region where the Uighurs is the majority ethnic group. Xinjiang ethnic minorities, such as Kazakhs, Hui (Dungan), Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Cibo and Mongols are compactly settled on the territory of 5 districts, 6 autonomous prefectures and 43 ethnic communities (Official Home Page of the PRC Embassy in USA 2016). Among them, more than 21 million residents of Xinjiang, about forty-six percent are the Uighurs, Han thirty-nine percent, Kazakhs seven percent, and the remaining 44 ethnic groups comprised eight percent of the population. Most of the Uighurs and Kazakhs are Muslims. In the capital of Xinjiang Urumqi, majority of the population (73%) is Han Chinese, while

the number of Uighurs is about 12.3 percent of the total population (Zheng 2009). However, in spite of such ethnic diversity, many ethnic groups in the region are represented insignificantly and make up only a small part of the total number.

Chinese ethnographers identified several stages in the ethical situation changes of the region (Sheng 2012). The first phase covers the period between 1949-1961, the second from 1962-1963, the third is 1964-1980, the fourth is 1981-1989, and the fifth is 1990-1993. Each of these stages has its own typical features, exerting a specific effect not only on the ethno-social processes, but also on the peculiarities of its ethnic and socio-economic development.

The first stage was characterized by the growth of the population in the region mainly due to the positive migration balance. In the first decades of the Communist rule, Han migrants to Xinjiang were motivated by political ideals and developmental discourses. Economic profit was not the focus of this early migration. In 1949, Xinjiang's Han population represented about six percent (291,000) of the population 4,333,400. The Turkic-speaking farmers and populations of oasis referred to today as Uyghur then made up about seventy-five percent (3,291,100) of Xinjiang's population. The remainder was comprised of Kazakhs, Dungan/Hui, Kyrgyz, Mongols, Russians and others (Joniak-Lüthi 2013).

Within 12 years, the population here almost doubled, with 1,877 thousand from 2,677 thousand or 67.84 percent of the population growth accounted by a positive migration balance. The social structure of migrants was quite specific. The first category was represented by military units of the People's Liberation Army involved in the liberation of Xinjiang (193 thousand people), as well as the workers and employees of Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (hereinafter - XPCC) formed in 1953 (175 thousand people).

The second category is represented by youth, sent "for the development of the border lands". In 1958, the CPC Central Committee made a decision on the planned relocation to Xinjiang of two million young people from Jiangsu, Hubei, Hunan and Anhui. In fact, 255,700 youths and taking into account their family members, 302,500 people were relocated during this period.

The third category comprised the so-called "free workers". According to the Migration Ser-

vice, their number during the period from 1958-1961 amounted to 861,400, but only 200-250 thousand of them settled in Xinjiang for permanent residence (Shan and Chen 2009).

Finally, the last category was people who resettled in Xinjiang "in an orderly manner". This category was represented by graduates of educational institutions, cadres, technicians, unmarried women, intellectuals, convicted in the period of "the struggle with the Left" criminal elements, sent for re-education, and so on. It is necessary to clarify their number, but a simple arithmetic shows that they were more than a million people.

The second stage was characterized by a sharp reduction in the flow of migrants to Xinjiang and even negative net migration. In two years, due to the positive migration balance the population of the region increased by only 69 thousand, while 1,964,600 left Xinjiang in 1962. Such a significant reduction in the flow of migrants is explained by several factors. Firstly, a significant deterioration in the socioeconomic situation in the PRC and the excesses in the implementation of national policies led to an increase in the stream of refugees. In 1962, more than 60 thousand Uighurs, Kazakhs and Dungan crossed the border with the Soviet Union and stayed there for permanent residence.

The Kazakh Population in Xinjiang in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can only be roughly estimated. According to the first available dates of census (first half of 40 years), there were 438,500 (11% of total population of province) including 384,400 (over 50%) in trans-border zone (Ablazey 2016)

Secondly, this period of the PRC history falls on the so-called "reconciliation" period, when it seemed that the Chinese leadership came back to common sense and she had overcome the economic and political voluntarism. Qualified specialists sent to Xinjiang "in an orderly manner" were in demand at the enterprises within the country, and this led to their departure from the region. However, as the further development of the PRC has shown, this period was quite short, and the hopes for returning to the normal economic development was limited (Shan et al. 2009).

In 17 years of the third stage, Xinjiang's population increased by 5,390.6 thousand people, including 1,499 thousand people, or 27.8 percent at the expense of external migration. Socially, newcomers were presented in several categories,

that is, young people from Shanghai, Beijing, Tianjin, Wuhan, Jiangsu and Zhejiang, they joined the XPCC divisions, demobilized soldiers and unmarried women, intended to solve the problems of family and marriage, “free workers” in search of a better life, and “special immigrants” sent to the region for re-education.

A characteristic feature of the fourth stage is a negative migration balance. During this period 871 thousand people left and only 625.3 thousand came to the region. The reason for this was the change in the domestic policy of the Chinese leadership. China began her economic and political transformation, which was associated with the respective social expectations. Xinjiang youth trying not to be in the position of the generation that missed its chance quickly moved to the regions of the country where these changes were actually being implemented. This affected the long-term socioeconomic development of the region, because, as a rule, the best specialists left.

*The fifth stage*, for obvious reasons, Chinese scholars limited to 1990-1993, but it actually lasted all the decade of 90s and it was characterized by a relatively stable dynamics of migration processes. There was no dramatic increase in both the influx of migrants and departure from the region. Population growth in Xinjiang occurs naturally and is mainly due to the increase in the proportion of non-Han ethnic groups. This once again is due to political and economic reasons. With regard to the political ones, first of all, it is necessary to note a certain degree of liberalization in national and religious policies, promoting the principles of the new economic policy in all regions of the PRC, and granting autonomy to independently established economic contacts with foreign countries. As for economic reasons, it is the expansion of self-realization, the beginning economic recovery in Xinjiang, benefits and preferential policies implemented by the Centre in respect of national regions of the PRC, the new opportunities offered by the policy of “open doors” (Kozhirova 2008).

The ethnic autonomous areas occupy more than sixty percent of China and most of the external borders are precisely there. This fact is especially important for China, given the characteristics and nature of migration, as well as the specificity of the natural population growth among the Turkic-speaking peoples.

As before, at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century the most important methods of the Chinese leadership designed to prevent the secession of Xinjiang became (along with economic construction in Xinjiang) military and violent suppression of its natives’ opposition demonstrations and the Han colonization. However, some changes have taken place in the use of these methods.

Firstly, political campaigns have now become more moderate than in the 50-70 of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when they followed one after another, were large in scope and number of participants and usually descent down the non-Han dissenters.

Secondly, in the 80-90s of the XX century, there was a much higher degree of coordination between the military and forced suppression of centrifugal tendencies and Han colonization. Moreover, the role of the latter method has grown in comparison with the first. Requirements for the qualitative composition of the Han settlers in the territory of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region rose significantly.

In the 50-70s of the XX, century police, security services and the army were mainly engaged in military suppression of the centrifugal force manifestations (Han settlers had to settle in Xinjiang), in the 80-90s of the XX century, military activities of security agencies moved by the wayside due to the ongoing modernization and liberalization of the PRC. This attenuation was supposed to be compensated for willingness of immigrants from the Mainland, if necessary, to effectively help the army and police to suppress the possible attempts to weaken the Chinese authorities in Xinjiang.

So, if earlier, the Chinese authorities were often not particularly great, attention was paid to the level of education and military training of the Han settlers in the 80s and especially in 90s of the XX century, the authorities of Xinjiang trying to consolidate the Han Chinese, who are familiar with local conditions, well prepared physically and militarily, committed to the existing regime in the PRC and the idea of preserving the unity of China.

Earlier the Chinese authorities did not particularly pay great attention to the level of education and military training of the Han settlers. In the 80s and especially in 90s of the XX century, the Xinjiang authorities tried to consolidate the Han Chinese who were familiar with local conditions, well prepared physically and militarily, committed to the existing regime in the PRC and the

idea of preserving the unity of China. Generally, preference was given to retired soldiers and officers of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), especially if they have served in Xinjiang. The Chinese authorities tried to settle them (as well as other Han Chinese who arrived from the Mainland) in the areas immediately adjacent to the border with Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, and encouraged the indigenous population of Xinjiang to relocate from a border area into the internal area of Xinjiang (sometimes simultaneously). In this way, an attempt was made to exclude the possibility of providing foreign aid through Central Asia and Kazakhstan to supporters of independence in Xinjiang.

In the early 1990s, Beijing decided to stimulate the economic growth of Xinjiang by creation of special economic zones, subsidizing for local cotton farmers and the re-organization of the tax system. In August 1991, the Xinjiang government began drafting the Tarim Basin project to agricultural production. During this period, Beijing invested in the infrastructure of the region, road construction, which improved communication between Xinjiang and other parts of China (Syroezhkin 2014).

The importance of China's western regions for the country is determined by the large area, which is about forty percent of its territory, huge reserves of mineral resources, convenient geographical position and important defense value for China.

Incomplete modernization processes of Xinjiang economy and its involvement in an emerging unified economic organization were the main reasons of survivability of centrifugal attitudes in the region.

Manchu dynasty policy negatively affected the state of the Xinjiang economy, the authorities of the Republic of China were unable to provide a progressive economic development of the province, in the XVIII century, the territories of Xinjiang (which is divided into South Xinjiang, with historical name, Dzungaria and North Xinjiang, a historic name, Kashgar) were forcibly incorporated into the Qing Empire, Manchu and Chinese officials were often treated with indignity, the political, economic and cultural needs of the indigenous population of this remote region were neglected, and anti-Chinese riots of non-Han population were suppressed here by force. All these appendage circumstances became the reasons for Xinjiang's unwillingness to be a part of China.

Foreign powers have meddled incessantly in the affairs of the province up to the creation of the PRC. A particularly important activity showed Russia (the Soviet Union since 1922), the United Kingdom and Japan.

Russia and the Soviet Union did not want the province secession from China but at the same time sought to preserve the ability to effectively influence the situation in Xinjiang.

Agrarian reform, intensive economic development of Xinjiang, the Han colonization and violent suppression of tendencies towards achieving of independence by this region, these were the main methods the Chinese authorities designed to firmly reserve the XUAR for China.

The economic development of Xinjiang also contributed to the decline of the social base of supporters of separation of the National District from China. As a result, a large-scale industrial complex based mainly on the petrochemical, light and textile industry began to take shape in Xinjiang. Important steps have been taken along the path of agricultural modernization of Xinjiang.

All these factors led to the consolidation of Xinjiang's economy into a single economic complex of the PRC, and now a substantial part of its population is interested in preserving the unity of China. The latter is especially true for those who are engaged in the modern sectors of the economy.

However, there are also other factors that contribute to the maintenance of persistent centrifugal sentiments of many non-Han representatives of its population in Xinjiang. These include the presence in Xinjiang of a large number of small and medium-sized enterprises of local industry, the interests of the workers (mostly not Han) of these enterprises do not require the preservation of the territorial integrity of China, the whole backward agriculture, the unilateral nature of Xinjiang industry, Han colonization of the autonomous region, and military-administrative methods of eliminating everything that is not in the interests of Beijing.

The most resistant centrifugal sentiments are in southern Xinjiang, where there is a higher proportion of local industrial enterprises and the Hans are lesser in number than in the northern part of Xinjiang. The impact of the recent past, when Kashgaria was the main focus of the anti-Chinese resistance in Xinjiang also contributes to this.

The role of China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in the regional context has also changed. Today it is not only the foreign trade, transport and logistics hub of Central Asia, but it has turned into the "industrial workshop", and in the near future, will also become the financial center of the region. The concept of "Economic Belt on the Silk Road" in the implementation of which Xinjiang is seen as "an outpost of China's penetration to the West" makes this certain. If so, whether one likes it or not, the processes that take place in the western regions of China, and especially in the Chinese Xinjiang will have a permanent impact on the Central Asian states, not only in terms of economic or trade expansion or demographic pressure (Official page of Council of Foreign Relation 2016).

The study revealed that the process of forming the multinational population of Xinjiang is historically a very long process that began during the period of the Qing Empire.

As Stanley Toops and Agnieszka Joniak-Lüthi note, Xinjiang was not predominantly Han almost until the founding of the People's Republic. The current ethnic composition of Xinjiang was formed after the Chinese authorities declared the land settlement policy for the northwest territories.

Xinjiang is China's borderland and a strategically important region, both in terms of economy and security. The authors agree with Jihyeon Jeong, Constantine Syroezhkin and Adil Kaukenova that there is a tendency for an increase in Han population in Xinjiang. Along with the natural demographic processes among the non-Han minorities, this fact has an impact not only on the situation in China, but also affects Central Asia.

There is a hypothesis in academic circles of Russian speaking experts about the prospects of increasing demographic pressure on the countries of Central Asia, from Xinjiang and the emergence of the illegal migration problem.

In the next 10-20 years, a new population explosion is expected in Xinjiang. According to the calculations of Xinjiang demographers, Xinjiang's population will increase up to 24.1-30.1 million, and according to the overstated forecast, up to 33.5-40.6 million by 2030. In other words, the total population of Xinjiang is approaching the lower projected threshold. All forecasts predict a sharp jump in the positive migration balance, which can occur exclusively due to "infusion" of Han Chinese from the inner regions of

China. Thus, the central Chinese government is trying to "demographically" bind and strengthen its position in the western region, through which it is possible to successfully promote their interests in Central Asia.

## CONCLUSION

According to the official terminology, there are four categories of the population by ethnicity and nationality living on the territory of the People's Republic of China, namely, Han Chinese, ethnic minorities, Huaqiao and foreigners. Xinjiang Province is the home to 55 to 56 major ethnic groups of China. Uyghurs is the main ethnic group of the province. Such ethnic groups as the Kazakhs, Hui (the Dungans), Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Cibo and Mongols also reside in the territory of the province.

The main stages of the formation of the Xinjiang population were identified as the result of the study. The process of the formation of the region's population is chronologically very extensive: it began in the late Qing period and ended in the early 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Beijing's Great Western Development Strategy had a major influence on the ethnic processes in Xinjiang. All measures including the agrarian reform, economic development projects, and active relocation of Han Chinese are intended to link the region to China most inseparably. In general, one must admit that Beijing has succeeded. Today an industrial complex based on petrochemical, light and textile industries is created in Xinjiang. Agriculture has been seriously modernized. Thus, the Central Government creates awareness of the importance of preserving the unity through the active involvement of the economy of Xinjiang in China's economy. This helped reduce the social base of supporters of Xinjiang independence. But it turned out impossible to completely eradicate centrifugal tendencies. Along with the industrial giants a large number of small enterprises exist in Xinjiang, and the interests of the employees of these structures do not require preservation of territorial integrity of China.

Southern Xinjiang still remains a zone with a high level of centrifugal tendencies. This is explained by the fact that the number of large industrial enterprises is much less there. One also needs to remember that Kashgar was an important hotbed of anti-Chinese resistance.

In recent years, the international role of Xinjiang has changed significantly. Foreign trade, transport and logistics development of the province is very important for Central Asia. Xinjiang has become a real “industrial workshop”, not only for Kazakhstan, but also for all the countries of “Central Asian Five”. In the future, the role of Xinjiang for Central Asia will increase, because China is actively pursuing today a policy of “Economic Belt on the Silk Road”, and Xinjiang is viewed as the penetration zone to the West. All the processes that take place in the western regions of China will have respectively an impact on the Central Asian states and on the Republic of Kazakhstan in particular, and these are not only economic or commercial expansion processes, but also increasing migration and the growing demographic pressure.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The policy of the PRC on the “development of western lands” is designed to ‘bind’ Xinjiang to Beijing, and the ethnic component of the process is also important, since in this situation ethnic minorities become recipients of the central government policy.
2. It is necessary to seriously monitor the situation in the XUAR in connection with the actualization of the threat of radical Islam and increasing threat of terrorism, and there is a possibility of penetration of terrorist groups on the territory of Central Asian countries.
3. There is a possibility of increasing demographic pressure on Central Asia in the case that predictions about the active growth of the population in the XUAR come true.

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