The Central Chinese Government and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region

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Abstract

The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) is a province representative of the Uighurs – an ethnic minority group composing the majority of the Muslim population. Chinese policies of Han immigration into Xinjiang, birth-control of the Uighurs, and the export of natural resources from the XUAR have resulted in the erosion of Uighur ‘autonomy’, the emergence of ethno-nationalism, and Uighur separatism.

The majority of ‘preferential’ policies for protecting minority rights in China are not applied in Xinjiang. Han immigrants in Xinjiang have caused Uighurs to engage in competition with them over resources, jobs, education, and natural resources. Socio-economic disparities exist between the Han and the Uighurs. Uighur representation is nonexistent at the Chinese party level; party leaders in Xinjiang are predominantly Han. There has been a severe crackdown on Uighur separatism in recent years.

Policies contradictory to the preservation of Uighur autonomy have resulted in a growing Uighur ‘identity’ that opposes the Chinese state and disrespect for Uighur customs by the Han. Minority-state relations could be improved through an approach that addresses the economic, political, and cultural dimensions of the conflict.