Cultural Rights and Uyghur Nationalism

Robert Guang Tian[1]

Abstract:

Nation, nationalism, nation-state, and nationalist movements are complicated concepts to be clarified by the scholars who have established postmodernism theories. Various approaches, such as political rights, economic rights, and ethnic identity power, have been created to help understand nationalism and nationalist movements. Cultural rights are viewed as an important foundation for nationalism in postmodern times. The Uyghur nationalists should realize that their objectives need to be adjusted, given their limited resources and the current international situation. To fight for their cultural rights at this time is more reasonable and attainable for Uyghur nationalists than is summarily claiming independence. The Chinese central government should be more tolerable and flexible toward the Uyghur nationalists' seeking cultural rights. As long as both sides are willing to deal with nationalism through the medium of cultural rights, a win-win situation is certain to be realized.

Introduction

My interests in the Uyghur nation and the growing Uyghur nationalist movement come from personal and academic experiences. I noticed the social and economic development of northwest China, particularly the nationalist issue, when I was teenager in western China, where the Chinese Muslims are concentrated. I worked for some time in Xinjiang (my Uyghur friend refers to it as East Turkistan) in the 1980s; during that time I got some direct impressions through interactions with various folk. Escaping China in 1989, I saw the Uyghur nationalist movement heat up outside of China after the disintegration of the former Soviet Union. The nationalist issues within the movement are worth studying not only for my personal academic interest but particularly for the Uyghur nationalists, who are firmly pro-independence.

I observed the goal of the Uyghur nationalist movement to be independence, i.e., independence from China, whether as East Turkistan or Uyghuristan. My Uyghur friends feel that separating from China is the only way to deter the oppression by the Han nation. The underlying principal is national self-determination through either peaceful or violent means. So far, the movement's factions are unanimous in their goal of national independence; however, they differ on ways to get it and what an independent Uyghur state should be. Meanwhile, the movement has been stymied since September 11, 2001, as the Chinese government has been publicly and mercilessly repressing Uyghur nationalists in the name of anti-terrorism. The Uyghur need to gain international understanding, sympathy, and support for their nationalist movement in terms of current and future international situations.

Based on studying nationalist movements and the main theories of nationalism, I conclude that the essence of nationalism is the ideology that reflects the values and identity differences among nations, which in turn reflects political, social, economic, and cultural differences. Among these, cultural difference plays an important role as it is more easily identified and felt. How can a nation's cultural characteristics serve its political and economic objectives? A review of the literature suggests that previous studies mainly focused on the identity of national interests and national movements but few, if any, addressed the importance of cultural rights in national movements. On the basis of former studies on cultural rights and global marketing (Tian 2000), I focus on national cultural rights by using the Uyghur nationalist movement in Xinjiang, China, as an illustration. My premise is that a territorial border is no longer the unique standard by which to determine nationalism. National interests must include marginal political or non-political environments. The contents and manifestations of cultural rights in nationalist movements will be studied through detailing the impact of current cultural rights theory on traditional political nationalism based on self-determination. For practical reasons I discuss several critical issues in the Uyghur nationalist movement in light of cultural rights theory to further explore its impact on nationalist movements.

Cultural Nationalities and Political Nationalism

Cultural Nationalities

The definition of "nation" remains ambiguous and debatable. The different schools of thought on "nation" describe it in three ways. First, a nation is a

community composed of people who share a common cultural heritage. Second, due to historic discontinuity, a nation is a thing of pure construction (Anderson 1991). In this sense "nation" is the result of states competing for resources, space, and the expansion of rationality. This assumes the emergence of a nation in line with Western modernity, and as such is a typical Western definition (Gellner 1983; Giddens 1986, 1990). Finally, recognizing that "nation" results from modernity, the third school of thought stresses cultural connections with early communities. Without such cultural connection and historical identity there is no cohesion of nation (Smith 1986).

Most researchers prefer to convey "nation" in terms of a vast human background, emphasizing the concept of "cultural nation," which is regarded as the key to the birth, evolution, and mobilization of given nations. The primary national community is the tribal nation; its core is kinship. Common geography and kinships are essential to the nation unit. The primitive form of tribal nation is the clan, which is rarely seen at present except for some places in Africa (Morgan 1977). What delineates nations in the modern world is culture, including: 1) shared history, e.g., the identical or close historic procession, destiny, and connection based on long inter-exchange; 2) shared culture, e.g., common language, religion, value, psychology, and customs; and 3) shared names and national identity.

Therefore, "nation" originates from distinctions humans make in order to tell "selves" from "others." Although there are great differences among humans, such as race, kinship, class, and profession, the essence of difference is cultural. Nations pursue their right to develop in the same way they pursue political or religious rights; however, none of these are the essence of a nation. A national boundary might be defined by geography, political systems (modern state), kinship, religion, or language, but it is national culture that immediately distinguishes one nation from another. A.D. Smith holds that a typical nation should have such features: common name as a social community; common long-lived tract; the common heritage, legend, and popular culture; and common economic and pervasive rights and duties prescribed by law and applied to all (Smith 1991: 43; Beetham 1984: 217).

Political Nationalism – National Self-determination

Using the essence of cultural community, the concept of nation is distinguished from the political concept of state. However, empirically the concept of

nation is designated by political ideas and activities. It is mixed up with the ideology of various sorts of nationalisms or nationalist movements aiming for independence and a state that is highly politicalized.

Thus, nationalism contains the following basics:

- The world is divided into nations. Individuals have special passions for and duties to their own nation. Their loyalties to and loves for their own nation exceed those for other nations.
- Judging the history of and present situation between nations demands addressing the relationships between nations in the interests of a nation's own interests. When dealing with relationships between nations, national interest is the unique standard. National interest consists of visible economic and political interests and invisible interests such as cultural interests.
- The highest aim of nationalism is the survival and power of the nation, rather than being an independent national state. The founding of an independent state is just part of pursing the highest aim of nationalism. However, because of the present world system, in which the sovereign state is the most active and powerful element, people tend to think that building an independent state is the inevitable way to ensure its survival and greater development. Iin the 20th century this belief developed into a kind of worship of the "sovereign state" in international politics. Even some scholars take national independence as the highest aim of nationalism.

Therefore, we can sum up in this way: Nationalism is a kind of ideology and an activity conducted by a nation unit aiming to build an independent state.

Almost all scholars stress the ideology, social movement, and political appeal of the term "nationalism" based on elements such as national compassion, national consciousness, and national identity. The core of nationalism is the political process that aims to achieve homogeneity among certain groups of people by way of appealing to the national right to attain the "state identity" of "nation." There are different stages: national identification, consciousness of right, national goals, national mobilization, and realization of rights. The priority is to found an independent national state. We call this kind of nationalism "self-determination nationalism," the essence of which is the founding of a national state through the right of self-determination.

"Self-determination nationalism" recognizes and promotes the right to self-determination of every nation. It pursues national independence, consolidates national pride and self-confidence, and helps mobilize the masses to fight and sacrifice to realize its political aims. It also preserves unique national cultural traditions and enriches the resources and lives of a nation. It supplies some legitimacy for its political reign by stressing and respecting its national identity and tradition. Thus we should say it supplies some legitimate basis for political governance.

However, this political nationalism can be dangerous. Unreasonable nationalism accounts for value relativeness that opposes cultural varieties or universal civilization. This intolerance for cultures and ethnics paves the way for political autarchy and dictatorship. Some nationalists go so far as to claim the absolute sovereignty of the nation state while excluding individual autonomy to the point of suppressing or even depriving the individual of rights, eventually resulting in absolutism with no checks or balances. To the nationalists who revere self-determination, the critical survival unit is the nation or race. All other things, especially the individual, are of no importance in the context of national interests. This type of nationalism evinces the concentration of power and resources and promotes relativeness against universal value. It does not necessarily induce despotism, but it is easily used by despots.

The Practice of Nationalism

Modern nationalist theory formed during the Age of Enlightenment in 18th-century France. Its critical characteristic was to replace kingship with human rights, replace the legitimacy of kingship with reason, and combine nationalist compassion with individual self-determination, or the civilian's choice of government. Thus, human rights were emphasized, and the nation-state was a democratic one in which the equal basic rights of every individual would be protected. In North America not only a constitutional state – the United States of America – was created, in which people enjoyed ever more freedom, but also a totally new nation based on the common beliefs of Enlightenment ideology instead of common kinship.

There are differences between 18th-century nationalism and nationalism in early Great Britain. In 18th-century nationalism human rights, rather than individual rights, were emphasized. "Human rights" contains two aspects that serve as the basis of

preliminary "national self-determination": 1) social individual rights; 2) group rights, e.g., national or state rights. Group rights brings up two dilemmas, the request to recover territory, and the ethnic separation movement. While deeply believing in individual freedom (the equality and liberty inborn in each person) Jean-Jacques Rousseau thought that a freedom based on individual rights was not viable. A new authority, a national regime based on public will, needed to be established to restore social justice and order. Putting collectivism and nationalism at the top while preserving individualist rights was a new concept he contributed to nationalism.

This new nationalism is somewhat ambiguous in content compared with the former West European nationalism, the contents of which are very definite. The new nationalism emphasized nationalism itself instead of concrete goals such as individual freedom. The typical subscriber to it is Germany. Germans replaced the concept of the civilian, which was based on democracy and reason, with the new, ambiguous concept of "countryman," which in practice instigated unreasonable sentiments. After the reshaping, the new concept of nationalism abandoned to a large degree – if not totally – the Western European nationalism that cherished universalism and individualism, and embraced instead the greatest national interests.

Thus nationalism developed. It germinated in the Renaissance, grew up in the religious reform movement, and matured in the French Revolution, which spread it to the whole world. However, the teachings derived from Napoleon and his army outside West Europe no longer respected individualism, but was a cult to collectivism. National freedom was a far higher priority than individual freedom. Lord Acton sent the earliest warning in 1882 in a paper which exposed the fundamental conflict between individual freedom and nationalism. Nationalism transformed "nation" into the final goal of the state, instead of individual freedom. Just as Acton said, whenever a single aim is set up as the state's top aim, this state will become an absolutism. Freedom requires restraint of pubic authority (Acton 1955).

Dual Ways of Nationalism

For nationalists, it is imperative to clarify what they really want, what their target is. Externally, the goal of nationalism is for national self-determination to achieve political independence. It is justified to

pursue political sovereignty because only in a sovereign state can a nation enjoy freedom. In fact, the nation-state is both the end and the means for nationalists. However, both national interests and individual interests should be pursued. The participants in nationalist movements fight for the whole nationalist interest and for their own personal interests, as well.

Studying pioneering nationalists such as Herder and Mazzini, Feliks Gross concludes that nationalism started from two critical principles, worldism and individualism. Nationalism was born with the core and dynamic of individual rights. Individualism justified nationalists to fight against external oppression and for national cohesion. Individualism determines the governance of the nation-state in which the state safeguards the rights of the individual. Hence nationalism should identify, in a large sense, with liberalism. Fundamentally, nationalism is democratic and liberal. Yael Tamir regards liberalism and nationalism as being in harmony. We should rather call liberalism nationalism. Enlightenment theories and the French Revolution not only accelerated the birth of nationalism but also that of various democracies. In turn, the nation-state shows tolerance. However, ironically, two opposite nationalisms developed because of different surroundings, one liberal and one non-liberal.

While liberal nationalism supports national self-determination, it strongly emphasizes the rule of law, democracy, human rights, and citizenship. It advocates equal rights among all nationalities, and it carries the heritage of the philosophy of Enlightenment. Non-liberal nationalism, however, tends to support racial despotism. While liberal nationalism holds individualism as its priority, non-liberal nationalism emphasizes the nation-state. Externally, liberal nationalism puts individual rights above state rights and argues for people's control over government, while non-liberal nationalism argues for the individual's submission to the nation-state. In such institutions individual and groups serve only as an inferior means to some supernatural state; the civil society makes no sense in the context of a powerful state. Only in national self-determination do the two nationalisms share a common proposition.

Benjamin Constant noted that the pursuit of freedom might encourage the violation of freedom and cults of collective authority beyond the individual. A peoples' sovereignty might become the people's disaster. The key is to line up the boundary of power.

The people's sovereignty should not justify unlimited government founded through legal procedures. It is argued that the boundary of power is the individual's rights and independence. Majority approval shall not legalize any behavior; some behavior shall never be legalized (Fontana and Constant 1988).

It is clear that the critical difference between these two nationalisms lies in the pursuit of "individual freedom" and "national freedom." Hayek said that "national freedom" comes from the application of original freedom, i.e., individual freedom, on a nation. However, a free people do not necessarily mean a people of free men. Collective freedom is not a necessity of individual freedom (Hayek 1960). When a nation struggles for the freedom to control its destiny, the term "national freedom" emerges. In this case, the concept of freedom is applied to the group instead of the individual. The pro-individualist would usually support nationalist freedom enthusiastically; however, nationalist freedom does not necessarily lead to individual freedom. If nationalism is pursued within the context of the submission of individual freedom, it will take individual rights as a threat to, or a betrayal of, national freedom. Without respecting individual rights and freedom, sovereignty is false; sovereignty and freedom based on the state rather than individualism are doomed to bankruptcy.

National Cultural Rights and Culture-nationalism

Cultural Rights – A New Highlight

Culture, in terms of "national culture," means the general culture that includes beliefs, norms, systems, traditional institutions, and social languages. Arts, literature, and music are a part of culture, but in a narrow sense, and play less important parts in general culture (Speering, 1996). There are features for cultures. First, culture is immaterial. It includes living styles, beliefs, attitudes, preferences, philosophies, etc., and is reflected in various ways in politics, economics, and society. Second, culture stresses the common identity of groups. There are regional and global cultures; however, most critical is national culture. Third, culture is of both nationality and universality.

As a distinguishing living style, national culture is the basis of national identity. Cultural intuition with a view to collective personalities and various behaviors creates a "we-group" that distinguishes itself from other groups. National identity includes the recognition of national common beliefs. Personal

identity depends on group identity, which means the continuing consciousness passed from generation to generation. Some groups share memories of legacies and personnel. Individuals attend cultural activities of social groups to gain personal experience. Group identity gives a group the sense of being belonged to. The identity of an individual within a group or national culture requires mastery of the core values in that culture, including language, religion, social and family traditions, and national history. In this sense the cultural core value is the identity of the nation.

In Herald and Berlin's opinion, an individual belongs to certain groups, the most practical of which is nation (Berlin 1981: 11). There is no abstract individual at all. Group identity and national identity, e.g., belonging to a community, are as basic a need for human beings as are the needs for food, sex, and contact. Without belonging to a nation or a regional community, there is no creativity (Berlin 1976: 145). Tamir even argues that communal affiliation is one of the essential humanities (Tamir 1993).

The requirement for belonging determines the value of national spirit (volksgeist), which is the core of national spirit. National spirit, in turn, determines national culture. National equality and autonomy depend on the identification and enjoyment of national culture. The key here lies in national cultural self-determination. All cultures are equal in value and respect. Communities grow spontaneously. They are different but equal. Each is irreplaceable to the whole human society (Berlin 1975: 175; 1998: 245).

Belonging is one of our choices, but not the only one. Freedom makes it possible for us to choose. While pursuing affiliations we should balance it carefully with individual freedom in order to avoid affecting individual freedom. Although we acknowledge shared features such as common region, religion, tradition, norms, customs, and language, these features cannot replace an individual's personality. When not applied to individuals, the term "identity" is inhuman. It is an ideological abstract of collectivism that is enforced by some inborn creativity and other non-inheritable factors, i.e., geological or social pressure. It abrogates an individual's freedom of what and how to choose if cultural identity is forced on him or her. Hence, the right of free choice should be another aspect of national cultural rights.

National cultural rights negate cultural protectionism or cultural relativeness in lieu of romanticism, which adheres to the superiority of local cultural institutions and opposes reason. It denies the universality of formal reason and formal justice and relies on local culture to realize innovation. Academic arguments rely on the uniqueness of a national cultural community supported by ethnicity, cultural anthropology, and national mythology, and claim that every society has its national features that cannot and should not be demolished. In the view of cultural protectionism, there exist no universal human norms.

No culture remains unchangeable. None lasts forever, especially those modern and vivid ones. The national cultural right is by no means antithetical to cultural development in line with modernity. In modern society, while there is less and less specialty or locality and some traditional institutions are disappearing, there are more chances than ever for further development. Extremist protectionism reveals a kind of slack and unhistorical understanding of culture. Only those nations that care for the destiny of national civilizations and hold confidence in them can be peaceful. Confidence comes from two parallel cultural processes: 1) the abundant absorption of all creative elements from all other civilizations; and 2) to study comprehensively and innovate creatively its own national civilization. Serious self-criticism and self-enrichment are necessary. To a given nation these processes mean the rise of national reasonability to control its destiny and meet its challenges. To the whole world it means interactions that are critical to its further development. To sum up, national cultural rights underline national cultural development rights.

Therefore, national cultural rights argue not only for the combination of uniqueness and universality, but also for the unification of group values and individual freedom. It is a combination of individual rights and national collective rights, and embraces self-determination and independence under certain conditions. It focuses more upon what base it relies and on what kind of independence and self-determination it cherishes.

Culture-right Nationalism

National culture is closely connected to nationalism. Elements of nationalism, such as national identity, national mobilization, national interests, and political pursuits are all based on national culture. C.J. Hayes wrote that "nationalism is a cultural phenomenon" (Hayes 1928: 78). Nationalism itself is not necessarily a threat to democracy. In fact, national identity in the cultural

sense is a necessary precondition to democracy (although not a sufficient condition). Modern democracy requires some mass identity that the cultural nation can afford. Appealing to emotional loyalty, the cultural nation is the most special and smallest community that covers all ages, sexes, and classes. When he holds that nation is culture, Tamir also concludes that nationalism is cultural rights (Tamir 1993).

Nationalism in the sense of cultural rights is not cultural nationalism as it is understood. In *The Idea of Nationalism,* H. Kohn regards "cultural nationalism" as a reactionary ideology and movement to Western nationalism. Western nationalism is rational and political, while Eastern nationalism is cultural and mysterious. This reaction to Western rational culture is the weapon of a backward society to compensate for its psychological inferiority and humility when facing the more technologically advanced Western civilization (Kohn 1946: 18-20, 329-331). E. Gellner further argues that cultural nationalism is the creation of intellectuals in backward societies. It blocks the advance and modernity of nations. A. D. Smith said that cultural nationalism is the style of an obdurate society. It is the most conservative and anti-freedom kind of nationalism (Snyder 1954: 118-120).

On the contrary, cultural-right nationalism holds the disconnection between nationalism and traditional national self-determination. Just as Feliks Gross separates ethnicity from politics, the liberal way to resolve this knot is to separate nation-state from nation-culture. This is a totally new road toward liberalism (Gross 1998). Gross cites Branislav Malinowski: "cultural autonomous rights must be endowed to all nations, races and minority groups. Political rights shall by no means be connected with ethnicity, which will bring about the explosion of nationalist danger." After all, nationalists fight for nation, instead of state, for all group interests that might be realized through the state machine. Indeed, the state is the protective shell of the nation, but it is not exclusive. More accurately, the eventual aim of nationalism is to gain cultural independence and cultural development, often through national self-determination and the nation-state. Hence the culture-right nationalism acknowledges in one respect that the nationalist issue will not be resolved automatically with the growth of globalization; in another respect it tries to afford liberalist guidance in pursuing nationalistic interests. It is mainly cultural, open, and liberal nationalism.

Furthermore, this culture-right nationalism takes the national culture as an ends rather than a means. Accordingly, it takes political pursuit as means to national culture. Now that "nation" is primarily a cultural phenomenon, the care for national destiny focuses on developing its culture peacefully, independently, and prosperously. All political and economical pursuits serve this ultimate end. Although some regional cultures are still subject to traditional religions, for example, Islam and Buddhism, their political choices must be changed. Culture-right nationalism shall transcend the concern toward national destiny to some secular culture and modern political institutions and eventually to a modern social ethnic system and "religion substitute."[2]

Culture-right nationalism affirms the necessity and significance of group values by particularly emphasizing their necessity to individual identity. National identity in culture-right nationalism stresses that individualism is rooted in groups. The most influential identity to individuals is national culture. The critical point here is that now that the national culture is an important part of individual identity, it deserves to be respected. A national culture deserves more respect when it promotes individual freedom and free will, free choice, and independent criticism. It deserves even more respect when it cultivates a social system in which individual rights are well-protected. Individual determination is the most precious right. National self-determination is precious only if it promotes individual self-determination.

Essentially, culture-right nationalism stresses independent rationality, consciousness, and the spirits of individuals in a nation. While it cultivates national ideology it does not ignore human values. It emphasizes harmony between national collectivism and individualism. It links national self-determination with individual self-determination, external self-determination, and internal self-determination. Thus culture-right nationalism supports national self-determination under certain preconditions. First, national self-determination must be based on individual self-determination. Second, legal, peaceful, and rational methods must be used to gain national self-determination. Under these preconditions culture-right nationalism allows liberalism and nationalism to coexist. While it upholds the idea of preserving the uniqueness of nations it can also avoid the dangers of both the extremist political nationalism that over-emphasizes national self-determination and cultural nationalism that advocates cultural relativeness.

Political Structure of Culture-right Nationalism

The political idealism of culture-right nationalism is one of a society composed of free and equal individuals. For the majority, their freedom and equality are realized in their own national culture. The tragedy is that for others, nation-state freedom and belonging do not merge due to the rigidity of their political institutions. Founding a nation-state does not of itself bring about individual freedom and rights. Whether they agree or not, nations must coexist with other nations within one political community, especially in the context of accelerating globalization. Hence, culture-right nationalism cannot pursue the nation-state as its only way of achieving national self-determination.

The culturally homogeneous nation is closely connected with independence. This serves as the theoretical base for national self-determination. Whether the political institution is in accordance with cultural rights or not, it depends on if and how political institutions ensure their cultural independence and rights. This is critically important for minority nationalities. Presently, the influential multicultural ideology based on liberalism might give more answers to this question. Is federalism a possible solution to the coexistence of nationalities? (Kymlicka 1995) The culture-right nationalism pursues such a state: the state is a union of individuals; rights and duties rely on individuals rather than on collectives; cultural variety and diversity are conditional. It is separated in the process of founding a state; it pursues uniqueness within the context of universal rights; while it emphasizes the protection of national culture, it relies more on cultural innovation; it is a synchronization of cultural reshaping and political development.

Cultural rights are associated with national political scope based on the struggle for universal rights. On one hand, cultural rights demand a liberal democracy to make vast identifications and state devotions. On the other hand, it demands a mechanism to protect cultural diversity, political freedom, and coexistence between ethnic groups. Two values are crucial: individual freedom and equality, and national belonging. Furthermore, this institution demands more than those universal, basic, and core values; it demands shared procedures and game rules. It is not enforced; it is by the agreement of the majority of citizens.

One of the influential ideas used to protect the national cultural right is cultural autonomy, suggested by early social democrats Otto Bauer and Karl Renner. Cultural autonomy is not a narrow concept limited by geography or language; it requires the protection of freedom and, for individual and collective ethnic groups, cultural rights. An authorized national cultural committee should be set up on the basis of individual choice in order to administer cultural affairs. Besides that, an ethnic culture congress should also be set up to protect ethnic and cultural institutions. "The Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life" was proclaimed in September 1999 by OSCE in Sweden. The suggestive principles focus on the balance between effective state administration and minority identification.

On the multi-nationality state, Felix Gross put forward his citizen-state theory built on the de-politicalization of nation and civil society. Ethnic identity and ethnic-belonging consciousness constitute the basic cultural sphere that is the core of societal cohesion. They shall be protected internally and externally. In this case regional or local self-governance shall be adopted in terms of fully respecting diversity and variety. While protecting national cultural rights, it also balances unity and variety. Here it requires another identity that is closely connected with the common state, the citizenship. All members of ethnic groups are members of the state, whose power is limited and checked by law. A consolidated citizenship is the reflection of the political culture, the universal beliefs and values resulting from the norms and customs in handling ethnic affairs. State power stops at the religion and ethnic identity of citizens, as those are regarded as personal privacies that cannot be violated. This citizen-state is accountable to international organizations and international law. At the same time, self-determination shall be limited, because unlimited and irresponsible national self-determination would disintegrate the political community. Further, Gross said, citizenship is a basic institution of modern democracy, a fundamental political institution for a multi-nationality state. The citizen-state creates a new identity, one separate from ethnic-belonging consciousness and ethnicity. It is a shell for cultural diversities, a new kind of political relation much more vast than ethnic or regional relationship. The idea of the citizen-state supplies a new way to separate ethnic identity from political identity, a new way to transfer kinship identity to political-regional identity (Gross 1998).

Cultural Rights and the Uyghur Nationalism Movement

Xinjiang Issue and the Uyghur National Movement

Xinjiang, or the Xinjiang Autonomous Region of China, founded in 1955, has 1.6 million kilometers with a majority population of Uyghur Muslims. According to the Chinese census, the 8.34 million Uyghurs comprise 43.3 percent of the population (Lisheng 2003: 5). Almost all of these are Sunnis. There are other Muslims: Kazaks, Kyrgyz, Tatars, and Uzbeks (who are Turkic, like the Uyghurs). The Tajik are White Muslims. There are Chinese Hui Muslim, also. The non-Muslim groups include the growing Han population as well as Mongolians and Tibetans.

In 1759 the Qianlong emperor of the Qing dynasty conquered the Xinjiang area and set up a military regime. In 1863 the Turks in Xinjiang and central Asia overthrew the Qing reign in Xinjiang and founded an independent Islamic state. In 1876 General Zuo Zongtang re-conquered Xinjiang, which was a Chinese province by 1884. In the early 20th century Xinjiang became the core of the Chinese-Russian conspiracy. With the Japanese invasion, the Uyghurs in Xinjiang claimed an independent "East Turkistan" in 1944 under the full support of the Soviet Union. In 1950 the Chinese Communists smashed the independence with the approval of the Russians; Xinjiang again became part of China.

Since the early 1960s, Beijing has encouraged Han immigrants to settle in Xinjiang to ensure its dominance. The Han population grew from 290,000 in 1949 to 8.28 million today, i.e., from less than 7 percent of the population to 43 percent.[3] Since the 1950s, despite the Chinese government's oppression, Uyghur national resistance movements, peaceful or violent, have never ceased. With the Soviet Union's collapse and the emergence of newly independent Turkic national states near Xinjiang, Uyghur national awareness has awakened again. The Uyghur or East Turkistan movement, mobilized by fierce separatism, has been developing fast and attracting more and more international attention.

The appeal of Uyghur nationalism can be divided into roughly two parts: 1) true political autonomy and cultural protection through true democracy; and 2) separatism. With the encouragement and help of oversea Uyghur nationalists, the separatists hold the same aim as the autonomists, but insist on total political separation from China. Some separatists insist on peaceful separation, while others believe in violence. Some are non-religious separatists pursuing independence; some follow Islamic fundamentalism (Fuller and Starr 2003).

For Uyghur nationalists, the growth of the Uyghur separatist movement stems from two sources. First, there are huge national cultural differences. Among all the populous minorities, the Uyghur is one of the most distinct. Historically, Uyghur identity has no connection to the Chinese dynasties. China lost its control over this area during the critical period of the 8th to the 18th centuries when the Uyghur nation was formed. In contrast with the Mongolians and Manchurians, the Uyghur have never ruled China and are thus less involved in Chinese culture. They are Muslims and speak Turkish. The oases in Xinjiang are regarded as an extension of Turkey. Among all the Turkic-Islamic nations in central Asia, the Uyghur nation is unique. The Uyghur take Xinjiang as their motherland and see the Chinese as intruders. They cannot identify themselves as a member of the Chinese family, nor endure Chinese rule in their motherland, nor can they identify themselves as part of a unified Chinese nation. One example is religion. According to an unexposed report conducted by Xinjiang Social Science Academy, more than 95 percent of Uyghurs identified themselves as Muslims and attended religious activities eagerly, whether in urban or rural areas, including some communist members. In some areas in Xinjiang, the shrike is more powerful than communist officials. Some even control local elections and administration. Religiously, Uyghurs rejected both the de-religion of Han culture and communist unreligion. The so-called cultural mixture is hardly the truth. Even more, with the policy of religious oppression conducted by Chinese government, the national barrier is growing and the gap is broadening.

Second, Chinese rulers (Manchurian, KMT, communist) have long used Xinjiang as a buffer area occupied by alien nations to block Western enemies. China's attitude toward Xinjiang swings between marginalization and Hanization (isolation and assimilation). Both reflect the growing discredit and fear of minorities. The principal policy is to maintain control over Xinjiang. Economic development and national mixtures are nothing but tools to serve this policy. From the mid-18th to the end of the 19th century, the Manchurians tried to isolate Xinjiang from the Chinese inland. When isolation failed and resulted in separation, policy swung to assimilation in order to eliminate or at least control the exploding

separatist movement. In one respect, assimilation was meant to reduce the Uyghur national features. In another respect, it meant regional assimilation through immigration from inland China to mix and isolate the nations. Chinese government is highly involved in immigration in order to change the population structure and maintain stability in this area. Ironically, segregation and conflicts grow even more serious in Xinjiang. The Han immigrants gather in certain areas in cities, while in rural areas there is little nationality interchange except for some markets. The Production and Construction Militia are totally Han independent units. Immigration brings environmental problems as well. With the increase in immigrants, the population per kilometer in oases has grown to 260, stressing an already weak environment. Forests are fading; grasslands become deserts; lakes are shrinking; deserts are expanding. Immigrants compete for fortunes and resources with local Uyghurs, causing more nationality problems.

Third, using an ambiguous definition of terrorism, the Chinese government takes advantage of chances to violate human rights in name of striking at "violent terrorism." The government does not distinguish between peaceful demonstrations and violent terrorism, nor between organized terrorism and the accidental violence that results from religious, social, or cultural issues.

The features of the Uyghur nationalist movement are: 1) that pro-separation forces are growing so fast that a worried Beijing adopts more brutal oppression. Conflicts might develop into a vicious cycle in the future; 2) religious force has a growing influence in Uyghur national movement. Religion is easily used to support the Uyghur national movement, especially for minority Muslims in a non-Muslim majority, which makes the situation far more complex and explosive; 3) geopolitics and international politics show ever more influence over the Uyghur national movement. The Uyghur have long been connected to and influenced by world powers in history. With the interaction of great powers and changes to the political map in central Asia, the Xinjiang issue could easily transcend into an international clash; 4) the destiny of the Uyghur national movement is highly uncertain and is influenced by Chinese development. China has been growing fast and changing comprehensively. The uncertain future of China holds the key to the destiny of an Uyghur nation.

National Separation

The Chinese, the Uyghur nationalists, and the world community should be aware that if the impending threat to Uyghur cultural survival is not neutralized, the Xinjiang issue will continue to exist. The coexistence of political community and cultural nation depends on the accurate contents of the national cultural autonomy as regulated by Chinese political institutions. It also depends on what political resources the Uyghur have to ensure cultural autonomy and cultural independence.

For the Uyghur nationalists, one choice is to break away from the current regime and found a culturally homogeneous political unit. This would push the separatist movement higher to split this multi-nationality region from China. However, it seems that this choice is impractical and too costly to bear.

The creation of a new nation-state is a disavowal of the former regime and will unavoidably involve violence and conflicts. China would by no means accept an attempt to destroy its sovereignty and national interests. It is impossible to separate from China peacefully. Unless immense changes occur in the world structure and inside China concurrently, e.g., the total disintegration of the current Chinese regime, extreme separatism will surely lead to violence and war. This is also a disaster for Uyghur nationalism. "If the war creates nation, it destroys nation too" (Holsti 1991: 324). The international community cannot supply any definite support to Uyghur separatism in the foreseeable future. While the international community acknowledges and supports self-determination, it, too, will maintain the international order and stability in order to avoid international conflicts resulting from pro-separation nationalist movements. The sovereignty principle is universally recognized. The majority prefers to sustain sovereignty over self-determination, unless the weak minority endures unbearable injustices that cannot be resolved through peaceful means, or self-determination is not too costly. Finally, self-determination is a national subject, instead of one of all people. Uyghur separatism must consider other nations' interests in multi-nationality Xinjiang. Separatism is too complicated and too difficult to resolve.

National separation may also not be the best choice for the Uyghur nation itself. There are inborn flaws in the self-determination theory. When separation through self-determination becomes the

sole end of nationalists, they must make all the members believe that it is the only way to end the sorrows and injustices derived from oppressions by the major nationality in a state. Here, the nationalists must provide guidance to their utopia, that is, a nation-state without oppression or torture through separation. As argued before, the cultural nation and political state cannot be identified with each other. The former stresses culture while the later emphasizes politics and law. If we identify nation with state, the nationalists would certainly require all members of a state to have the same language, culture, religion, and even the same ethnic makeup, as well as the same political-legal characteristics. This ideology will surely induce extremist nationalism and even racial cleansing.

For Uyghur nationalists, internal self-determination should be assured at the same time external self-determination is achieved. However, separation from China will not automatically ensure the liberal democracy necessary to protect the uniqueness of national culture and individual rights. When cultural differences evolve into a political game, emotional and irrational elements operate. When separation becomes the unique target, there is no room for compromise, and fierce political and military conflicts are inevitable. Under such occasion the nationalists would mobilize their people with weapons such as emotion, beliefs, and slogans instead of rationality. This is the cultural, mysterious trap that Hans Kohn described. Here, nationalism justified itself by ancient legacy and future utopia. It creates a utopian state closely connected with past instead of present reality. It strives to realize its utopia at some time in the future (Kohn 1946: 18-20). Such nationalism is an authoritarian regime, closed and backward. It fights against universality with uniqueness. During this process individual rights and value would be ignored or abandoned because they do not fit with the holy course. At the same time the development of the nation would be looked down upon in pursuing a nation-state.

The Prospect of Uyghur Nationalism – An Answer of Culture-right Nationalism

The Xinjiang issue, with its core of Uyghur nationalism, should be resolved peacefully with cooperation between China and the Uyghur nation. This depends on effective protection for the Uyghur and other national minorities in Xinjiang. It also depends on a political structure that realizes the minority's cultural rights. In turn, a liberal democracy

based on universal values such as limited state power, individual freedom and rights, and civil society instead of cultural national identity should be established. China must put forward political reforms to fit the new situation. The Uyghur must give up the "one nation, one state" ideology and violence. While seeking to protect and develop national rights, they should realize the difference between national identity and political identity and try to gain national interests via cultural rights. They should seek for international surveillance of the Chinese government to effectively protect the national culture, minority autonomy, and human rights while acknowledging Chinese sovereignty.

China must realize that separatism is a crisis of state identity resulting from the current regime's illegitimacy. Legitimacy of a given political system is related to the perception and beliefs of its members. The members think it to be proper and believe in the system's structure and institution. They acknowledge the political regime in certain limited areas. The state must keep itself in line with social values and norms to maintain its legitimacy, because the society instead of the state has the final say. It is the same with nations. If a nation regards the state as unfit for its national interests and values, the state legitimacy perishes.

Easton divides political systems into three levels: political community, political institutions, and the authority (Easton 1965). Political legitimacy can be analyzed on these levels. The support to political community is often called state identity. State identity crisis is the top legitimacy crisis. Political institution and authority crises are less dangerous. Separatism is a state identity crisis, as group or national interests could not be realized unless an independent state community is formed to safeguard them.

The essence of diversified democracy is to put the state identity on the basis of universal cultural and political identity that transcends nation or group identity. Problems exist in the current Chinese political arrangement which keep it from being associated with the general state identity. It is not only reflected in the conflicts between nationalities but also in areas where the Han comprise the majority, e.g., Taiwan and Hong Kong. To realize political independence in the view of "de-Chinesization," Taiwan tries exhaustively and in some cases ridiculously to form its own culture specific from the common culture matrix. This reveals that the essence of China's identity lies not in the external ethnic identity crisis but in the internal political system. Ironically, in Hong Kong and

Taiwan, where people pursue political independence and autonomy, Chinese traditional culture is better preserved than in the communist mainland. Therefore, the state identity crisis reflected in separatism shall not be resolved through compulsory assimilation.

China should be aware of the immense nationalist powers. Without hope to achieve nationalist interests peacefully, the nationalist separatism movement will not cease under merciless pressure; instead, it will become the absolute value shared by most of a given minority, encouraging them to sacrifice for the holy cause. Force and oppression are not the proper policies to resolve the Xinjiang issue in the long run. It is also dangerous to encourage Han immigration in order to control Xinjiang. History shows that this policy brings only more segregation and conflict. The Uyghurs will certainly resist for fear of being marginalized. Another West Bank or a new Palestine may appear in Xinjiang if this policy is not revised.

Sovereignty is also not a safe shell for China to resist external pressure on the nationality issue. There are some essential values such as individual rights, constitutionality, and limited government that are shared by the international society. China cannot escape from these duties, which various international agreements regulate and which a sovereign state should obey. If China continues to exploit advantages through political dominance of the major nationality in order to force the minorities to accept the majority's core values, the minority has the right to launch political movements to resist the threats. Even if China grows more powerful, even if China relies on majority nationalism to oppress the minorities, it cannot find a stable base for its political legitimacy. The only long-lasting legitimacy comes from freedom, equality, human rights, and the rule of law.

The problem cannot be resolved if these institutions only exist literally. The measurement of progress lies not on political explanations, but in individual destiny. The relationship between the state and the individual is the touchstone for political systems. Literally protecting the rights of language and customs of minorities while denouncing free speech, free association, free publishing, and free expression will give no true state identity to groups or nationalities. Individual rights integrates freedom of thought, speech, language, religion, etc. Without freedom of speech or expression, there is no reason for using one's mother language; it is impossible to support minority folks and arts without supporting thought and religion (Gross 1998).

While it is difficult for China to resolve these problems, policies can be developed. First, the state's conduct might be adjusted to fit the requirements of various nationalities and cultural groups. Easton calls this "peculiar support," e.g., export directly from a given political system to win support from its groups or nations. "One country, two systems" is a typical example of "peculiar support" for the former colonies of Taiwan and Hong Kong. The state must ensure minority rights, including political participation in state and local government: 1) to ensure that minority groups enjoy the right to express their interests in the central government level; 2) to ensure minority right of election without discrimination; 3) to ensure the transparency and participation of minorities in regional and local political structure and decision-making processes; and 4) to set up consultant and negotiation institutions to maintain fluent channels between the government and minority groups. The Uyghurs must be granted rights in education, natural resources, rigid immigration, and non-controlled birth. These measures will protect minorities' cultural rights in political structures and will lead to mechanisms and procedures to resolve the conflicts peacefully.

Second, the state system should be reformed to synchronize various cultures and promote their identity. This is what Easton called "universal support." The key to prohibit separatism is to strengthen the state-community identity for all nationalities. This means that the state's value system is in accord with nationality so that national interests are well protected. For a multi-nationality state, this means a value system shared by all nationalities. To achieve this, a comprehensive culture must be formed that is accepted by all nationalities. It is based on reason and universal humanity in order to build an open, diversified, and advancing society to enhance general freedom and individual rights. It promotes the diversities of different cultures and leaves a great deal of political room for the further development of cultures. These rights shall not be violated: individuals choose their ways of life; individuals or groups enjoy the rights of free thought, to stick to their own chosen culture, religion, and philosophy, and to assemble freely and hold their own value system and behavior standards. These rights are particularly important in China to protect group and national cultures. Unless it ignites crimes or hurts others, speech shall be free.

For Uyghur nationalists, it is important to be aware that national independence is, if not absolutely impossible at present, too expensive and harmful to

the fundamental interests of their nation. They also should be aware of the potential danger. The founding of a nation-state is not necessarily a shortcut to ensure rights and prosperity.

Compromise is unsatisfactory to many Uyghur nationalists who hope to reach their idealized goal. However, compromise is an important method by which to stimulate democracy and peace. Culture-right nationalism requires that national self-determination be based on individual self-determination gained by legal, peaceful, and rational measures. Thus it could serve as the basis for the Uyghur nation to negotiate a deal with China. Uyghur nationalists should support and cooperate with the pro-democracy movement, even if they cannot get support for separatism in return. At the same time, the Uyghur nationalists should use every opportunity to peacefully appeal for their cultural rights, demand national autonomy, and share in Chinese modernity. In this way cultural-nationalism will surely win international sympathy and support; the core value of cultural-nationalism agrees with universal norms such as protecting diversities and individualism. In turn, on the basis of cultural rights, the Uyghur nation should promote "cultural development" and "political development" in order to realize a new national and state identity.

Culture-right nationalism consists of special national rights and national cultural developing rights in terms of national identity. This requires nationalism to take individual rights as its core value and individual liberation as its end. Collective rights shall not displace individual rights. Hence, the Uyghur nationalists meet not only the task of protecting their traditional culture but also developing it, which is much more crucial. The uniqueness of Uyghur national culture should not only be dug out and preserved, but also be promoted to a higher level of cultural identity.

Development needs a standard by which to measure its progress, and this standard can only grow from universal rights. In Europe and North America, nationalism goes together with changing social, economic, and political realities. It takes rationality and general humanism as its theoretical base, relates itself closely to democracy, liberalism, and constitutionality, and aims at individual liberation. However, in Eastern countries, nationalism emphasizes cultural specialty and opposes openness. The protection of culture characteristics, including religion, language, and living norms, should be in accord with cultural innovations such as pursuing

universal cultural rights in order to realize political, economic, and cultural self-determination. Culture protection is not identified with cultural conservatism or cultural relativeness. Cultural nationalism takes individualism as its root to achieve a new association of new individuals. Its core is to refresh the national common idea. The common dominant ideal determines, in a large sense, the features of the given nationalism. Rational, liberal nationalism argues for free constitutionality and against authoritarianism or pluralism. A rational nation is the result of a rational mass, and a rational mass comes from education, which leads to independent criticism and judgment of various contradictory arguments.

Language and writing are important bearers of culture. They reflect the cultural contents of a given nation and are symbols of historic continuity and cultural independence. Language is not culture, but it can convey values and thoughts. It should be noted that overemphasizing national education specialties would damage modern education.[4] The Uyghur nationalists should work to expand Uyghur culture by absorbing modern civilization in order to educate modern Uyghur elites. Modern history shows that colonial education incites the awakening of nationalism, and the intellectuals who had a modern education are the pioneers and nuclei of nationalist movements.

On the issue of state identity, the Uyghur nation faces a transition from tradition to modernity. "Modernity" refers to the cultural phenomenon connected with modernization. It resembles the new appearance of the former authoritarian structure and the birth of the modern state. In pre-modern countries religion assumes the functions of morality, economy, politics, and education. A mysterious legitimacy supports social morality and political beliefs. Modern countries are totally different from pre-modern countries in social, cultural, and legal terms. Modernity destroys the legitimacy of power and authority in traditional society and creates diversities in religion, values, political parties, and interest groups. Self-government limits conflicts between social members displaced by the former absolutism. Rationality displaces mythology; self-restraint replaces supernatural constraints; historic relativeness displaces absolute theology. The legitimacy of the state comes from the permission of the people instead of the gods. Individualism, natural rights, equality before the law, and power are distributed between central and local governments under the direction of federalism.

Uyghur nationalists should realize that individual rights are more basic, absolute, and non-volatile than state power. Pursuit of an independent state should promote, not violate, individualism. In any case, there should be no illusion of an omnipotent state during the struggle for national independence. It is dangerous to think that an independent state can resolve every problem. It is imperative to keep an eye on the state's power, not only to prevent it from doing harm but also to aid its doing good as well (Nozick 1978).

For Uyghur nationalists, another important task is to cultivate an independent, diversified, and powerful civil society. If misery comes only from external oppression, then extremist political ideals might work. However, internal elements such as cultural tradition, social structure, and lifestyle also retard development.

In sum, culture-nationalism pursues a state that does not take common ancestors or origins as its base, nor does it look to national cultural traditions and inner resources for its legitimacy. It discriminates between state identity and national identity. It upholds a new identity, a new devotion to an integer that unifies various races and cultures, an integer that is identified with and loved by all, or at least a majority – a devotion beyond races and ethnics. This common identity will exceed narrow racial or religious identities. It is independent from ethnic belongings, religion, culture, and race. It is a concept, a sort of system connected to every individual right and freedom. This higher identity is based on universal and essential values shared by all nations. These values consolidate the foundation of liberal democratic states.

The International Community

Minority political and cultural rights are basic human rights that all states are legally obliged to protect. These rights are listed in the United Nations Charter and other important international treaties such as "The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights" and "The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights." The "Preamble of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities," adopted by the UN Assembly on December 12, 1992, is one of the most popular documents currently protecting minority rights. The Declaration grants minorities "the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion and to use their own language in private and in

public" as well as "the right to establish and maintain their own associations." States are to protect and promote the rights of minorities "to exercise their rights, individually as well as in community with other members of their group, without discrimination." This gives a legal basis for the international community to survey human rights and civil rights issues in a sovereign state. China has signed these documents and thus can be checked by the international community. In turn, the international community is responsible for reviewing China's human rights affairs.

The Xinjiang issue is closely connected with political freedom and civil rights throughout China. The Chinese government should not be allowed to justify its violation of human rights with the excuse of fighting terrorism, the definition of which should be in line with international norms and standards. The Chinese government is currently prosecuting minority dissidents mercilessly in the name of anti-terrorism. The international community must condemn the unreasonable penalties placed on peaceful dissidents by Beijing. Beijing should not abridge the right of expression if the separatists demonstrate peacefully.

The international community should also monitor the Chinese government's achievement of autonomous rights and other freedoms such as religion, culture, and languages listed on its constitution. The Chinese government should adopt necessary policies to restrain immigration in Xinjiang and protect the economic and resource interests of local minorities.

Notes

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2. Further readings include: A. D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in Global Era,* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1995; Y. Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* , Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993; J. Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism,* London: Allen and Unwin, 1987; and J. Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism,* London: Fontana, 1994.

3. These data are from Uyghur American Association (UAA) and Lisheng, op.cit., p. 5.

4. According to Porter, the immense catholic readings and French education harms severely the economic position for the French descendants in North America. N. F. Wiley, The ethnic mobility trap and stratification theory, *Social Problems,* 15(2):147-159. 1967.

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