



# The Rice Papers

Volume 7 • 2022



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# The Rice Papers

## A Student Journal of Asian Studies

Volume 7 • 2022

Brigham Young University  
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## Preface

The purpose of *The Rice Papers* is to bring attention to current events or historical ideas in the Asian province of the world. We hope the readers will come away with more knowledge about Asian topics from the history, politics, and international affairs explored in the paper.

We are grateful to our authors and all the time and research they have put into their works. We appreciate their willingness to share it with the Brigham Young University community. Additional thank you goes to our editorial staff who worked on this volume of *The Rice Papers*.

Confucius in his Analects is quoted to have said, “Isn’t it a pleasure to study and practice what you have learned? Isn’t it also great when friends visit from distant places?” May we all learn from distant places and to study and practice what we have learned from our friends there to create a better world.

—*The Rice Papers* staff



# What in Chinese Culture and Political Philosophy Makes It Difficult to Share Power at the Top?

*Natalie Lyman Shields*

天高皇帝远, *Tiān gāo, huángdì yuǎn*, is an ancient Chinese proverb that translates to “Heaven is high and the emperor is far away.” Starting anciently in the Shang Dynasty, China typically had an emperor who ruled over his subjects, yet in a far away manner: “For two thousand years China had an emperor figure who was state power and spiritual authority rolled into one” (Wild Swans, 261–262). The most notable emperor was the first blazing Emperor Qin Shi Huang who unified the land around 247 B.C. Many emperors followed, claiming the Mandate of Heaven, until the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty in 1911. War and revolution followed. To this day, China is still run by a central figurehead. For the majority of China’s history, the power has been held by a central figure, surrounded by a small elite governing group, and not much has changed even with the fall of the dynasties. What in Chinese culture and political philosophy makes it difficult to share power at the top?

Throughout China’s long history, Confucianism has played a major role in Chinese culture and political philosophy due to the hierarchical relationships it established. The Five Confucian Relationships include the role of ruler to subject, the ideology that the ruler watches over his people keeping their best interests at heart. “Those who held the throne considered themselves to be representatives of the entire society, not merely constituents within” (Brothwick, 324). This political ideology has embedded itself into the political relationship between the ruling class and the ruled, namely that there are some who are to rule and some who are to be

ruled. This makes it difficult to share power outside of the small elite group at the top:

“There are certain disadvantages to a Confucianism system that grants so much responsibility to so few people, as in the case of China, where governmental authority was granted to a supreme leader, his ministers, and an elite group of bureaucrats. This relatively small body was expected to serve a great number of people impartially. At the same time, the elites’ Confucian tradition required them to give total loyalty to their family and clan, creating a fundamental and insoluble contradiction—one that has underlaid charges of corruption and nepotism against power holders from China’s distant past down to the present day” (Brothwick, 324).

Those in power had the ability to manipulate the Confucian system for centuries to stay in power; it is hard to give up absolute power. For the ruling power of China today, it is easier for the Communist Party to maintain sole control and expect the loyalty Confucius taught should be given to the ruling party.

Confucian values taught class distinctions through relationships, giving the impression there were some more superior than others. This Chinese political ideology allowed society to maintain peace throughout the dynasties. Confucius once said, “A country would be well-governed when all the parties performed their parts aright in these relationships” (Sivananda). He also strongly stressed that a government only maintained order when “there [was] Tao... [established. That happened] only when fathers were fathers, when sons were sons, when Rulers were Rulers and when ministers were ministers” (Sivananda). Each member of society knew their place, and order was maintained if each remained in that place. Even after the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty, Confucian values remained strong; for example, during the rule of Dr. Sun, a young girl named Yu Fang said: “I asked my teacher, since I, in accordance with Chinese tradition, always turned to teachers for authority” (Wild Swans, 258). Confucian relationships had been taught for millennia and are still in effect to this day. It is difficult for the Chinese government to break Chinese political philosophy away from anything other than the Confucian relationship of ruler to subject.

Confucian relationships also cause discord culturally between the equality of men and women, keeping the cultural norm of governing the people mostly the domain of men. In a Confucian world, women had no rights and “Confucian values [degraded] the status of women, especially in rural areas” (Bentley, 671). Even with a beloved leader who believed in women’s equality like Mao Zedong, who said, “Women hold up half the sky,” (Mao), rarely does one see a woman involved in the politics of China

today. While modernization has given women more say in the economy, the Confucian hierarchy hardly allows it.

The hierarchy that Confucianism created gave the Chinese rulers their legitimacy:

“Asia Pacific societies share with the West the sense that unmanaged political power is dangerous, but unlike Westerners they do not conceive of their political development as derivative from some early, more primitive state. Rather, they see themselves as having had to always maintain a precarious balance between stability and chaos. Nor do they view political power and authority as being inherently dangerous, except when authorities have discredited themselves through incompetence or ruthlessness. This general acceptance of authority derives from deep-rooted notions of what is appropriate and obligatory behavior on the part of those who legitimately exercise power” (Friedberg, 323–324).

The authority given to officials by Confucianism gave unprecedented legitimate power to the top ruling class of the country; for thousands of years, power was held at the top without much opposition from the lower classes. It was the higher power’s job to maintain order.

As observed by author Jung Chang about Chinese hierarchy, “The country had always had a dictatorship which operated by keeping the public ignorant and thus obedient” (Wild Swans, 212). There was always someone at the top of the hierarchy to rule since the first dynasties. To suddenly switch to a democracy without one central figurehead would be to abandon the Chinese culture of ruling the people. “Society looked upon the supreme ruler as the ideal of proper conduct. His exemplary behavior and moral authority were expected to bring benefits to everyone, and beneath him each individual accepted his or her place in a carefully ordered hierarchy” (Borthwick, 324). Having a supreme leader became part of Chinese culture, which explains why a central figure is historically important to the Chinese government today, and why it is hard to break away from such a figurehead.

“The Chinese started with the idea that all power should emanate from above, from the center, from a single supreme ruler... the Chinese have consistently made their top leaders into larger-than-life figures. Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, Mao Zedong, and Deng Xiaoping are names that dominate the history of modern China....The Chinese conviction that all power should reside in the central authority... has been one of the most powerful factors in shaping Chinese history” (Borthwick, 324).

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These 'larger than life figures' dominated history due to the ideology of the Mandate of Heaven.

"The 'Mandate of Heaven'... [is how] every successful and legitimate ruler was said to be endowed. Governance soon came to be viewed in secular terms as Confucianism grew dominant and authority was imbued with concepts of ethics and order" (Borthwick, 324). The philosophy that heaven had smiled down on a sole individual to rule would be another political philosophy that would make it difficult to share power at the top. Qin Shi Huang, Mao Zedong, and other Chinese leaders have taken upon themselves the claim to the mantle of the Mandate of Heaven, believing only they as an individual can rightly lead the Chinese people to success. "The concept of the Mandate of Heaven remains not entirely irrelevant even today: 'change of mandate' is the literal Chinese-language translation for [revolution]" which rebels of the 1911 overthrow of the Qing claimed (Holcombe, 34–35).

Perhaps it is not just the Confucian hierarchy of relationships in Chinese culture and political philosophy that make it difficult to share power at the top. Throughout Chinese history power has changed from one set of hands to another. China was first unified under a strong central figure known as Qin Shi Huang, the Emperor of Qin. Dynasties followed with countless emperors. The 1911 revolution ended the dynasty era and changed the country from an imperial court with the head of state as the emperor, into a very brief democracy. This democracy still had a centralized figure as the head of state though: Sun Yat-sen, the father of modern China. The democracy didn't last long before the country was turned over to the leader of the army, Yuan Shi Kai. Under Yuan's brief leadership, China was brought back into empire form, only to fall apart without a strong central leader. "From very early times the Chinese seem to have possessed an extraordinary love and respect for history" (De Bary); each powerful government leader of China has studied the history of China and the patterns described above. The rise and fall of each dynasty pattern raises the question, "Does China need a central strong figure in order to stay unified?" Based on their history of often falling into warring factions without a strong head of state, a conclusion may be drawn that China's leaders today want to maintain a strong central leader as the head of state to maintain the peace.

Han scholars believed that China followed a cyclical history like the one described previously, meaning that it followed a repeating cycle: as long as one person held central power there was peace. In Chinese history, no one central power meant absolute chaos. Perhaps power remains centralized at the top today because the leaders of China believe they are

in a cycle of history which cannot be changed; a central power must always remain in power if peace is to ensue.

China's model of maintaining peace through a strong central figure and small elite ruling group worked for thousands of years for trade. China once was the top country in the world in terms of trade and economic prosperity as seen in the graph below (Desjardins):

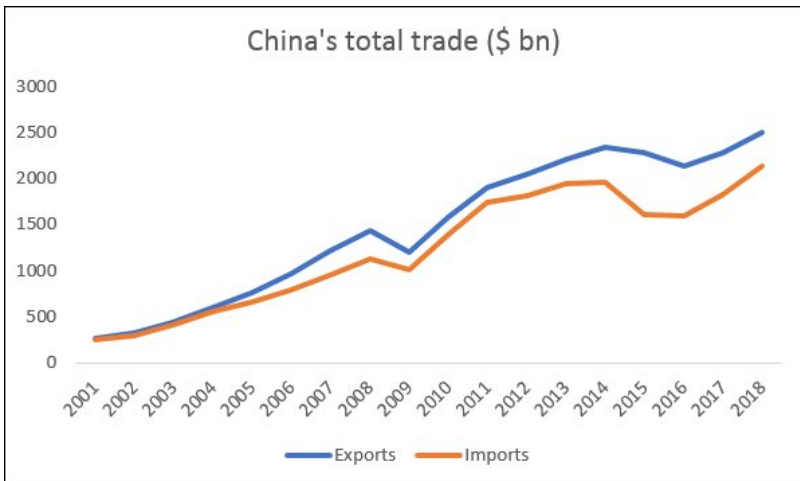


Before the Century of Humiliation, the graph shows that in 1820 China was the leading countries in the world for trade. “The rise of China is granted by nature. In the last two thousand years, China has enjoyed superpower status several times.... Even as recently as 1820, just twenty years before the Opium War, China accounted for 30 percent of the world’s GDP. This history of superpower status makes the Chinese people very proud of their country on the one hand, and on the other hand very sad about China’s current international status. They believe China’s decline to be a historical mistake, which they should correct” (Economy, 189).

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Since the leadership of Deng Xiaoping in the late 20th century, China has begun to regain its former economic status as a world power. “For the foreseeable future, the United States and China will carry the greatest potential to shape Asian and world affairs. At stake in their decisions will be the values, institutions, and policies that guide no less than the world economy, global health and environment, and issues of war and peace” (Lampton, 3). The power that China once had is beginning to be enjoyed again under the rule of a strong centralized government, formatted similarly to how it used to be with the emperor and small ruling elites.

It is due to a strong centralized power, the Communist Party, which supports SOE (State Owned Enterprises) that China’s economy started to flourish as it once had under the Qing and Tang emperors. For example, “in the recent global economic downturn, China has been a stabilizing growth engine contributing more than a quarter of a percentage point to world growth in 2009, which is not negligible (especially in such a bad year)” (Lampton, 10). As seen in the graph below, China’s total percentage for exports is currently slightly above their import percentage:



In terms of GDP, “though currently very modest, China’s share of the global GDP, measured in exchange rate terms in real 2005 GDP, has grown rapidly in the era of reform, climbing from 0.91% in 1778 to 6.96% in 2009. China’s share of global trade has risen from 0.80% in 1978 to 7.70% in 2007.” (Lampton, 12).

The ‘Chinese colossus’ is reemerging as a central world power (Lampton, 13). With such success coming with the support of the government and a strong central leader, is there any surprise that power is hard to share



at the top? If the Party continues with this success on the world trade stage, there is no reason to change the system that worked for thousands of years. “While holding to Confucian values and seeking to reestablish a stable agrarian society, movement leaders built modern shipyards, constructed railroads. And found academics to develop scientific expertise” (Bentley, 543). China is on the rise to regain her former glory; this motivation has the leaders of China controlling their power tightly.

It is due to the Century of Humiliation that China’s leaders are motivated to regain the political and economic power they once had:

“China’s one hundred years of humiliation are deeply etched into the psyche of the Chinese people. The revolutionary leader and president of China’s first republic Sun Yat-sen described the sense of historical weakness felt by China during this period in a speech in 1924: “Today we are the poorest and weakest nation in the world, and occupy the lowest position in international affairs. Other men are carving knife and serving dish; we are the fish and the meat” (Economy, 189).

In order for China to reach their economic goals, strict political control is maintained within a small group of elites. “Their leaders and people often feel that they were unfairly left out when the pie was divided up, and may even believe that, because of their prior weakness, they were robbed of what was rightfully theirs” (Friedberg, 13).

If one looks at the Asian world, many Asian countries have successfully adjusted to a democratic ruling power, stepping away from a central figurehead and small elite ruling class, even though—like China—they were influenced heavily by Confucian hierarchy relationships, a cyclical history, and a period of humiliation. So “why was China unable to transform itself in the manner of Meiji Japan?” (Borthwick, 138). When this blunt question was posed to China’s statesman Li Hongzhang in 1895, he replied, “Affairs in my country have been so confined by tradition that I could not accomplish what I desired [democracy/reform]” (Borthwick, 138). It is because China is so confined to traditions that she is unable to release herself from her historical cycle of a supreme leader, with a small group of elite to rule the people. Even now, it is tradition that keeps the power at the top from being distributed.

It is due to the Confucius hierarchy of power that modern Chinese politics find it difficult to share power at the top. The Confucian values in Chinese culture encourage a ruler to subject relationships, which the Communist Party has fully embraced in modern day. The hunger for China to regain its former economic glory fuels the drive to maintain control over the people, limiting power to be shared among them. This cyclical history of a central leader with the Mandate of Heaven has followed China around

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for thousands of years, giving the political base to modern Chinese politics. It is due to these aforementioned ideas in Chinese culture and political philosophy that it is difficult to share power at the top in modern day China.

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## The Power of Concubines and Empresses

*Emma Nymoen*

In official Chinese history, women were the ultimate scapegoat. The downfall of dynasties was often blamed, not on the weak character of an emperor, but rather on the wife or concubine that seduced him and monopolized his attention away from the empire. The accomplishments and influence of women were often erased or downplayed, often twisted in order to paint the women in a dark and problematic light. Emperors were usually isolated in the inner court of the palace to protect them, but in turn this insulated them from the officials and advisors of the outer court and gave the women around them access to the most powerful figure in the nation. Indeed, while the proximity of women in the inner court to the emperors created a natural conduit for power, it was often seen as an outrageous issue that needed to be fixed. The effects of this influence were overlooked and portrayed from the bias perspective of jealous and power-hungry officials. However, this portrayal of women's access to imperial power as problematic rather than functional is not only prejudiced, but also inaccurate. Understanding concubinage and marriage is essential to understanding women's only path to power and how the government functioned in early China. These social and political roles can be found in the accounts of the lives of queens, concubines, and empresses since the beginning of Imperial China.

There are countless examples of women who have wielded their control over the emperor in order to take part in the political sphere. Studying the way women have influenced issues of succession, advised the emperor in state affairs, and ruled in the emperor's absence demonstrates the various

roles the women in imperial court had, as well as makes it clear how the inner court of women functioned politically.

### Selection of Successors

Firstly, there are many imperial women who have greatly influenced the selection of a successor to the emperor, a process that was essential to determining the fate of both the women themselves, and also changed the course of the dynasty depending on which heir is selected.

Empress Chao (d. 1 BC) of the Han Dynasty and her sister Bright Companion Chao were companions to Emperor Cheng of the Han Dynasty (r. 33–7 BC). According to historian Pan Ku, “Empress Chao, the consort of Emperor Cheng, was originally a government slave of Chang-an . . . she was attached to the household of Emperor Cheng’s elder sister Princess Yanga . . . there [Emperor Cheng] saw [her] and took a liking to her” (Pan 265). The transformation from government slave to one with the power to influence who would next rule the Han dynasty was only possible through Empress Chao’s marriage to the emperor; this was only the beginning of Empress Chao’s upward mobility. Not only did she eventually take advantage of her close position in relation to the emperor, she also benefited greatly from allying with the Empress Dowager Fu by helping her put Emperor Cheng’s nephew (the then-king of Ting-tao) on the throne. “Emperor Yuan’s grandson the king of Ting-tao was brought to court, and his maternal grandmother Empress Dowager Fu sent bribes in secret to Empress Chao and her sister Bright Companion. As a result, the king of Tintao [nephew to Emperor Cheng] was designated heir apparent to Emperor Cheng” (Pan 266).

Neither Empress Chao nor her sister, who had been introduced into the harem, ever bore any children. Therefore, keeping this nephew in line to the throne was the only way the two women could maintain a hold on imperial power. This made it necessary to dispose of any rivals to the throne. When a servant named Tsao Kung became pregnant with the emperor’s child, the Empress and Bright Companion Chao had Tsao Kung and the baby jailed. They gave another servant the instructions to “Bring the child into the palace and select a wet nurse for it . . . She is not to let word of what happened leak out” (Pan 269). Tsao Kung was then given a note and a packet of medicine. The note said

“Be brave and drink this medicine—you can never come to the palace again, as you yourself must know” . . . Then she drank the medicine and died . . . The slave woman Chang Chi took care of the child entrusted to her for eleven days, whereupon the chief of palace women Li Nan

received an imperial command to take the child away. No one knows what became of it. (Pan 269–270)

Later, another woman of the harem, Concubine Lady Hsu, gave birth to a baby, and was ordered to deliver it in a hamper to the Emperor. “He remained alone in the room with the Bright Companion for some time” (Pan 271). Later a jailer was given the hamper with the message “There is a dead baby in the hamper—bury it in a secluded spot and let no one know about it” (Pan 271). It is hard to say whether Bright Companion Chao genuinely had the kind of hold over the Emperor to have persuaded him to murder his own child or if this is an embellishment designed to demonize women, but regardless, the path to the throne remained clear for the king of Ting-tao because of the measures taken by the Chao sisters.

After Emperor Cheng died and the king of Ting-tao, now Emperor Ai, took the throne, Empress Chao was accused of controlling the Emperor and killing potential heirs and their mothers in order to remain in power. However, “Emperor Ai had received considerable assistance from Empress Chao at the time when he became heir apparent, and therefore in the end he did not investigate further the charges against her” (Pan 275). Empress Chao and Bright Companion Chao were able to maintain their power and position despite not having given birth to any children; they were only able to do this because of their intimate access to the emperor and their alliance with Empress Dowager Fu. They determined who would next take the throne, which also secured their immunity by putting someone in power who was indebted to them. They clearly commanded the role of deciding who would be next on the throne, and to discount this as the jealous scheming of women would be a massive understatement. Their influence turned the political tide in their own favor—a goal that any political player would be after—and their success had profound effects.

Empress Guo (c. 184–235 AD) was empress to Emperor Cao Pi of Wei (r. 220–226 AD) during the Three Kingdoms period. According to Chen Shou’s *Records of the Three States*,

Empress Guo[’s] forebears were senior subalterns . . . She lost both parents at an early age and drifted about in the death and disorder of the times, coming to rest in the household of the Marquis of Tongdi. When the Grand Progenitor was Duke of Wei, she was able to enter the Eastern Palace. The empress was a shrewd strategist and from time to time offered advice [to Cao Pi]. When he was designated to be successor, she had a hand in planning it. Once he had assumed the royal throne, the empress was made a lady, and when he assumed the imperial throne, she was made honored concubine. The death of Empress Zhen resulted from the favor shown Empress Guo. In Huangchu, Emperor Wen was

about to name an empress, and he wanted to designate her. Gentleman-of-the-Household Zhan Qian presented a memorial [explaining why this was a poor decision] . . . The emperor did not heed his advice and subsequently made her empress. (Chen 106–107)

To clarify the phrasing of this record, Empress Guo entered Emperor Cao Pi's harem when he was still a prince and had not yet been named heir to the throne. She was able to participate politically through her position as a wife of a prince, and “had a hand in planning” (Chen 106) Cao Pi's succession of the throne. While this explanation is vague, it is also stated as matter-of-fact, without much indication that it is a fabrication for glorification or vilification. It was through her influence in the inner court and the connections she made there that set her husband up for power, and therefore herself. This would eventually prove to pay off, as she continued to exercise influence over the state through Emperor Cao Pi. There was no other way that an orphan girl could have risen out of obscurity and into court affairs.

### **Advising the Emperor**

Secondly, women close to the emperor were often able to advise him in state affairs. While they could rarely rule directly, there were many ways that they could inform the emperor of how they might make decisions at court. Living close to the quarters of the emperor, interacting with him frequently, and gaining his trust gave women of the inner court this access to imperial power. This trust could result in the emperor making decisions based on an empress or concubine's advice, giving them indirect influence over the areas they advised on.

During the Warring States period, not only an empress, but also a concubine influenced state affairs. Concubine Yu advised King Wei of Qi (r. 356–317 BC) about a corrupt minister. Liu Xiang describes this in his record of history saying:

Lady Yu . . . was a high-ranking concubine of King Wei of Qi. When King Wei assumed the throne, he did not rule for nine years but delegated governing to his senior ministers, so that the feudal lords began to encroach on [Qi]. One of his unscrupulous ministers, Zhou Pohu, monopolized power and began to act on his own authority. He was jealous of the worthy and envious of those with ability. In Jimo there was a worthy grandee whom he defamed day after day. While in E, there was an unprincipled grandee who, on the contrary, received his praises daily. Lady Yu told the king “Pohu is a minister given to slander and flattery; you must send him away. In Qi there is a certain Mr. Beiguo, who is worthy, enlightened, and moral. He can join the ranks



of your advisors.” Pohan heard about this incident and began to hate Lady Yu. He said “In the village where she lived as a youth, she had an affair with Mr Beiguo.” The king then began to suspect her. So he shut her in a tower . . . and ordered an official investigation of her. (Liu 122)

However, the minister’s plot was foiled when the king interrogated Lady Yu himself and she explained how she was conspired against. She then said

“I would like to warn Your Majesty that your ministers are doing evil, and Pohan is the worst offender. If you do not assume your duty to govern, the state will be imperiled.” After this the king realized [his error]. He released Lady Yu, and honored her at court and in the market. He enfeoffed the grandee of Jimo . . . and boiled the grandee of E along with Zhou Pohan . . . Once people learned that he had boiled the grandee of E, no one dared to conceal wrongdoing but concentrated all efforts on fulfilling their responsibilities, so that the state of Qi became well governed. (Liu 123)

While the idea that ‘no one dared to conceal wrongdoing’ seems exaggerated, Lady Yu, despite her lower status as a mere concubine, was able to remove a corrupt minister from power, get a virtuous one installed, and protect herself from execution. This could not have been accomplished without a trusting relationship with the emperor, as political rivals were frequently disposed of, but the Emperor instead spoke to her personally and resolved the dispute according to her knowledge and advice. Because of this, Lady Yu was able to save herself and remove a disliked official because of her proximity to the emperor.

Empress Shunxian (c. 605–641 AD) advised Emperor Taizong (r. 626–649 AD) of the Tang dynasty about various state affairs and was lauded for it. In *Notable Women of China*, Song Ruizhi and Ma Li write:

As Empress Shunxian, she was both adviser and supervisor to Emperor Taizong . . . They enjoyed exchanging views, and both benefited. Emperor Taizong praised her openly, saying that the “empress offers excellent advice; I benefit greatly.” Open dialogue and public praise illustrated to others how respectful Emperor Taizong was of his empress. She also cautioned him against harsh discipline and anger within the palace, tactfully persuading to employ sound judgment. One day, when the emperor had lost his temper, “venting his anger on the palace maids for no good reason,” she cautioned him: “I am also angry, but it is my fault. I did not give them correct orders. Your majesty should not be angry with them. I will explain everything to you later. Inside the palace, punishment cannot be employed at will.” Her admonishment of Emperor Taizong was respected. (Peterson 183)

This close partnership could only have been available to a woman in the inner court. Empress Shunxian advised and supervised the emperor, as well as directly informed him of how he should run a household, and was praised and respected for it. Empress Shunxian was also able to utilize her close relationship with the emperor to exert influence over state and personal matters, which she couldn't have done outside of her position of empress. This position opened up opportunities she would not have had otherwise and allowed her to directly impact the court.

### **Ruling on the Emperor's Behalf**

Lastly, the access that women had to the emperor sometimes gave them the opportunity to make imperial decisions and to advise the state in the emperor's absence. While exercising control over the emperor to secure an heir and for the emperor to act according to given advice are both clear exertions of political power, empresses were sometimes able to reach a position where they were able to make decisions when the emperor was not present. This shows a political power that extends beyond a personal relationship with the emperor and into a command over members of the court and the authority needed for those commands to be followed.

The same Empress Guo, who assisted in putting Emperor Cao Pi of Wei on the throne, was able to make decisions and advise officials in his absence. According to Chen Shou's *Record of the Three States*,

The emperor went east on a military expedition against Wu. He got as far as Guangling, while the empress remained behind in Qiao Palace. At this time, [Chief Commandant of Imperial Equipages] Biao remained behind the imperial bodyguards. He wanted to stem the river's flow to get fish. The empress said: "The river is meant to freely transport supplies. Besides, there is too little timber, and servants are not available. You would also need to take state-owned bamboo and wood for your personal use to make the dam. But now, Commandant of Equipages, whatever it is that you find you lack, how can it be fish?" (Chen 108–109)

Empress Guo was able to overrule the decision of a court official and was sufficiently knowledgeable about the topic in question in order to refute it. She supported her opposition to the building of a dam by citing her knowledge about river transport, labor, and state-owned materials. Additionally, this was all done in the absence of her husband. Empress Guo, by taking full advantage of the power available to her through her marriage to the emperor and the influence she could wield, made decisions independent of her husband.

In a slightly different vein, Empress Yan (ca. 104–134 AD), empress to Emperor An of the Western Han (r. 106–125 AD), secured power immediately after the death of her husband by acting on his behalf. Yang Fanzhong expounded on the way Empress Yan was able to secure power for herself through her position in the inner court in *Notable Women of China*, saying “As Empress Yan, she became adept at scheming and enforcing loyalty to herself. She defended her high position in the palace, monopolized the emperor’s attention and affections, and secured places for her relatives at court” (Peterson 118). Empress Yan’s control reached its dramatic climax when

In early 125 AD, Emperor An and Empress Yan toured the Han empire . . . On the return to the palace, however, Emperor An died of an acute disease . . . Since she was far removed from the capital, Yan feared she would lose her power at court . . . she hurriedly returned to the capital, falsely reported that the emperor was seriously ill and had stayed in Woche. The next day, she announced the emperor’s death, saying she, as empress dowager, henceforth would rule the empire. To strengthen her position, she set about to control the army. She appointed her brother Yan Xian general commander of the imperial armies . . . Concerned about how she would hold onto power without a son, she conspired with Yan Xian to create a puppet emperor; her choice was Liu Yi, the son of Prince Jibei, then a young boy under ten. In this way she countered the criticisms of the court and secured the confidence of the people. She dominated his regency and ruled as she liked. (Peterson 119)

Empress Yan could only have arranged this kind of puppet government for herself through influence obtained through her marriage. With a voice in the court through a position close to her husband, Empress Yan must have been able to create an atmosphere where she could be believed when she lied about the circumstances of her husband’s death, giving herself enough time to gather supporters and put herself in control over the head of the state. This was a power separate from what she could have exerted through her husband, it was completely her own.

## Conclusion

Before entering the inner court a woman rarely had much control over her own fate and was instead subject to the decisions of her guardians. Entering the harem of a king or emperor also was not a woman’s personal choice, but one made at the whim of the emperor himself or through the connections of those who looked after her. But once there, a woman with enough intelligence, charm, resolve, and strategy could haul herself up the

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political ladder and gain more power than she ever could have otherwise. This was sometimes a way that women of low status could rise through the ranks. Women could scrape together their own empowerment by taking advantage of the system they were subject to, with the possibility of gaining independent control. They were able to do this indirectly, by having a part in who succeeded the Emperor or by advising the Emperor himself. They were also able to do this indirectly, by gaining enough trust and support to command authority when the emperor was away.

The influence of these women in their various positions is impossible to define as nothing more than meddling in or intruding on the political sphere of men. While many of these women clearly operated according to a personal agenda, it was often to the purpose of manipulating the court for both genders. And when these women acted for personal or benevolent reasons it resulted in affecting everyone around them. Determining who would take the throne next not only confirmed security for the woman who put that heir in line, but it also influenced the structure of the court according to who supported one heir over another. The people who influenced or controlled the man on the throne clearly had the most power, and it was often women who had that control. Advising the emperor was a legitimate method of influence. The emperor had official advisors employed, but empresses and concubines who had constructed a trusting relationship with the emperor could serve the same purpose as those officials. Their persuasion could further their own goals or goals that benefited the state, such as advising which officials should be deposed.

And finally, some women could build up their power through the emperor in order to wield authority on their own, building up their own base of power where others in the court would believe what they said and follow their orders. To say that the women of the inner court's influence was petty and nominal ignores the reality of who became emperor, who had access to successors, the decisions that the emperor himself made, who he trusted, how much others trusted the women in his circle and how much they would obey her. Erasing these actions skews the reality of the court and paints a false picture of history.

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# Colonialism and Indigenous Peoples of Taiwan

*Sabrina Wong*

Taiwan can be found about 100 miles off the southeastern coast of China in the Pacific Ocean. It consists of a main island and many smaller surrounding islands. Before the arrival of the Dutch, the only inhabitants of the island were the Taiwanese indigenous peoples, also known as the Formosan people, Austronesian Taiwanese people, or Gaoshan people, who had been there for thousands of years. For consistency, throughout this paper, I will refer to them as Taiwanese indigenous peoples. The Taiwanese indigenous peoples are made up of different tribes, traditionally with over 26, 16 of which are recognized today by the Taiwanese government. Each tribe had its own governing system, so there was no central government in their society, and their lifestyle was based on hunting and gathering, as well as fishing. Taiwan's climate is tropical, with mountainous terrain in the eastern part and plains in the west and traditionally, each tribe lived in different areas, and a tribe's land was divided into territories, which included sacred grounds, farming grounds, and hunting grounds (Stephens, 2018).

Researchers have estimated that Taiwan was inhabited by indigenous tribes anywhere from 8,000 up to 15,000 years before the arrival of the Dutch (Sui, 2011). Researchers and linguists have also found evidence pointing towards Taiwanese indigenous people being the ancestors of all other Austronesian people, languages, and cultures, including those in Southeast Asia, Madagascar, and the Pacific Islands. Due to the oral nature of their languages, there is no written history or record of the people until about 400 years ago. Still, through linguistics, archaeology, oral history,

and records from non-indigenous people, much has been and is still being learned about their history (Li, 2001).

Like most other indigenous cultures, before colonialism, indigenous Taiwanese cultures had no forms of private land ownership. Instead, people viewed themselves as part of the land, belonging to the land and living in interdependence with gratitude. The human's responsibility was to care for the land so that it would be able to sustain future generations and to show respect for the land and all that it provides for human life (Teyra, 2019).

Over the past 400 years, however, many of these cultural practices, attitudes, and values have been lost and destroyed. The colonization of Taiwan by the Dutch, Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese has negatively impacted the physical and cultural wellbeing of the indigenous peoples of Taiwan. These effects can still be seen today through employment rates, income inequalities, incarceration rates, the division of land and land ownership, extinction and endangerment of languages, propaganda and cultural commercialization, and other means, some of which will be discussed in this paper.

### **Dutch Colonialism (1624–1661)**

Taiwan indigenous peoples first experienced foreigner's colonization in 1624, with the arrival of the Dutch East India Company in Taiwan. The appearance of the Dutch marks the beginning of a long and turbulent story in which Taiwanese indigenous peoples were colonized and oppressed by foreign powers, which continues today. From 1626–1642, the Spanish colonized northern Taiwan to enhance their trade systems and use Taiwan's strategic location as a port but were blocked by the Dutch from taking further control of other parts of the island. Before arriving in Taiwan, the Dutch had gained a stronghold on Japanese silver and Chinese silk for commercial use. Upon meeting Plains indigenous Tribes, the Dutch began trading for deerskin, deer horns, and venison. When the Dutch realized that they could sell the deer products for very high prices in Japan and Southern China, the demand for deer trade grew, and they established headquarters and settlements in those areas where the Plains Tribes lived and hunted. The indigenous communities surrounding the Dutch colonies faced difficulties in remaining separate economically, culturally, and politically. Although the Dutch were small in numbers, with around 600 officials and 2,200 soldiers, they still used some military force and other methods to take control over Taiwan. The Dutch implemented taxes on surrounding villages, appointed chieftains over these villages to keep them from working together and rebelling against them, introduced missionaries and missionary education, and subsequently converted many indigenous peoples to Christianity. The Dutch also began to establish plantations for sugar cane and rice fields. To sustain the crop growth, they recruited many



Han Chinese, especially those from Southern China, to come and work in the fields. They also brought in 25,000 Han Chinese to be their soldiers, leaving the total number of new Han Chinese in Taiwan anywhere between 30,000 to 100,000.

In comparison, the population of indigenous people at that time was around 69,000 (Hirano, Veracini, Roy, 2018). Additionally, other Han Chinese may have already come to Taiwan to escape political conflict in southern China by the time the Dutch arrived to begin the deer trade. After less than fifty years from their arrival, foreigners already made up the same percentage, if not more, of the population as the indigenous peoples.

All these implementations and changes from the time the Dutch arrived helped to strengthen Dutch power while laying a foundation for future continued Chinese immigration and colonialism. As the number of Chinese immigrants increased, less of the land was available to the indigenous peoples. As mentioned earlier, tribal lifestyle consisted of hunting and gathering, or fishing, depending on the location of their tribes relative to the mountains and the sea. With an ever-growing Chinese population, there was less land access available to the indigenous people and more conflict between the indigenous tribes and the Chinese. Over time, the Dutch began to allow both the Chinese and the indigenous peoples to sell deer skins to them, making the trade extremely competitive, and significantly endangering the deer population. This also led to violence, as the Chinese would trespass onto indigenous land and hunting territories to find more deer. These occurrences all disrupted the traditional ways of life and practices developed and established by indigenous tribal cultures so many years before. Throughout this time, Taiwan acted as a middle ground for the Chinese and the Dutch while simultaneously losing their resources and freedoms.

Chinese rule over Taiwan began in 1661, when Zheng Chenggong fled mainland China with his supporters, conquered the Dutch headquarters in Taiwan, and took power over Taiwan. After he died in 1662, his son took his place and worked towards gaining greater control over indigenous land that had not yet been taken in more remote parts of the island. This led to a further decrease in resources and hunting land for indigenous peoples, not to mention the loss of territories used for sacred and other cultural practices.

### **The Qing Dynasty (1683–1895)**

In 1683, the Qing dynasty conquered Zheng Chenggong's Kingdom of Tungning and established permanent communities and settlements around the plantations and farming lands. These new communities developed individual and unique cultures and traits that were different from traditional

Chinese cultures. Land ownership during this time was different than during Dutch colonialism. Now, landowners began to bring peasants from Southern China and allow them to co-own land, according to work done and profit made after a certain amount of time, which promoted the further establishment of Chinese settlements and communities throughout indigenous lands (Hirano, Veracini, Roy, 2018).

As has happened in many instances of colonization, the Chinese were very degrading in the way they viewed indigenous peoples. They used propaganda and other methods to portray them as barbaric and less than human. The Chinese view of their own race as superior was used to justify colonization efforts and gain more support from settler communities in their cruel actions towards indigenous peoples. During this time, there were also great Sinicization efforts made by the Qing dynasty, as they attempted to influence the indigenous peoples to adopt Chinese culture, customs, and lifestyles. With the rise in these efforts, many indigenous peoples abandoned many of their cultural and political traditions and replaced them with Chinese practices and customs. They began to pay taxes, provide military service and were in many instances forced to labor for the Qing dynasty. Similar Sinicization efforts are still seen today in modern China and can be found throughout Chinese history (Harvey, 2019).

While the Dutch forces focused on trade and central locations, the Qing focused more on expansion and gaining economic power and administrative control over the indigenous communities, especially those in remote parts of the island, which the Dutch had not been as concerned with. To accomplish this, the Qing authorities encroached even more upon indigenous lands, illegally allowing new settlers to live in those territories. Other Sinicization efforts by the Chinese can be seen through their establishment of schools modeled after the Chinese education system of that time. These government-run and sponsored academies were strategically placed throughout different indigenous territories to wash out indigenous cultures and assimilate indigenous peoples into a new Chinese way of life.

Many other associations, secret societies, clan conflicts and feuds, political organizations, religious orders, and others were brought in from mainland China and took root in settler communities throughout Taiwan. These internal conflicts from the settlers commonly resulted in violence and fights. With the rise in Chinese power, uprisings, rebellions, and protests from the indigenous peoples were also common. The Qing government also used its power to turn tribes against settlers and other tribes, promising protection, and other incentives. Other indigenous peoples, especially those in plains tribes, were forced to leave the territories that their people had lived in for thousands of years and migrate to other areas, mainly the mountains or the Eastern part of the island. Coercion, debt, and fraud were

among other methods used to pass a portion of indigenous land into the hands of the Qing dynasty over time. The exploitation of indigenous land, lives, and resources continually increased as years went on. By the end of the Qing's reign, the violence from settlers toward indigenous peoples was more extreme than ever (Munsterjelm, 2002).

### **Japanese Rule (1895–1945)**

Despite the Qing dynasty's occupation of Taiwan for over 200 years, when the Japanese took control over Taiwan after defeating the Qing in the first Sino-Japanese war in 1895, over half of the land remained in the hands of indigenous tribes (Munsterjelm, 2002). The Japanese rule over Taiwan played a large part in shaping the Taiwan that exists today. Upon their arrival, the Japanese chose to use the Chinese and indigenous peoples' historical conflict and struggles to their advantage, showing their benevolence through attempting to bring these multiple groups together after centuries of discord. They portrayed themselves as those who would bring help and hope to make up for the mistakes and incapability of the Qing dynasty, which came before them. Despite this display and front that the Japanese showed of wanting to help the people, especially the indigenous, they were still primarily focused on economic gain and increasing administrative control over Taiwan. Through their policies, the Japanese isolated indigenous peoples from the other settlers and withheld resources, including weapons, gunpowder, rifles, etc. This was done to "civilize" the indigenous people and cause them to be solely reliant upon farming rather than hunting. The Japanese considered a reliance on hunting to be an example of indigenous barbarism.

If any indigenous cultural practices or traditions did not align with Japanese regulations or customs, the Japanese considered it to be defiance of their rule. Over time, the Japanese increased their control over the indigenous population; for example, they forcibly removed many rifles from their possession and stopped acting as committed to indigenous welfare as they had when they first began their rule. They crept further onto indigenous land for economic pursuits, monopolized many industries, and used other tactics to increase their control. Like the Qing dynasty's reign, when the Japanese began to mistreat the indigenous people so explicitly, they did not passively accept it; they did fight back, resulting in violence and deaths on both sides.

This conflict grew in intensity over time as the Japanese responded by using more military force, invading, occupying, embargoing, and destroying tribal villages, and brutally killing the indigenous. These patterns of violence from both sides continued throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s, continually eliminating indigenous lives and rights through the

removal of resources essential for survival and shrinking their population. Colonizers and immigrants alike continued to regard the indigenous peoples as barbaric savages while placing themselves far above them as civilized, intelligent, and benevolent. Further attempts to erase indigenous cultures and identities were made through forced resettlement, Japanese educational systems, and discouragement of traditional practices by the implementation of restrictive laws. In short, indigenous cultures could only be practiced within the Japanese Empire's parameters, which caused many traditions to be lost.

Another important characterizing factor of this time was the Japanese's conquest of camphor. These crystals were in high demand for trade because of their industrial and pharmaceutical value and were available naturally throughout Taiwan. From the late 1800s to the early 1900s, the Japanese military invaded indigenous territories and communities in the highlands, burned down their villages, killed those who resisted as well as innocent civilians, and forced thousands of others to relocate, all so that they could have greater access to and control over the camphor industry. During this time, the Japanese conquest of camphor was highly influential in shaping politics, ideologies, and military policies from approximately 1895–1915 (Roy, 2019).

### **The KMT and the Republic of China (1945–Present)**

After World War II and the Chinese Civil War, the defeated Kuomintang, or KMT, fled to Taiwan and established their rule as the Republic of China. Like the other colonizers who came before, they legitimized their control through the criticizing, belittlement, and demonization of their Japanese predecessors. New settlers from mainland China assumed superiority and took higher positions in society than both old settlers and indigenous peoples. Additionally, to create what they envisioned as a unified Han Chinese identity for all of Taiwan, they declared all people to be Chinese and disregarded all indigenous identities, suppressing their rights and cultures in new, impactful ways. Any attempts to protest against the KMT's identity impositions were responded to and suppressed with brutality, leading to martial law and a period referred to as "White Terror." This time period began with an event in 1947 called the 228 Massacre, which started when the KMT confiscated cigarettes and money from a woman selling them and hit her on the head with a pistol. Bystanders gathered in anger, and in the following days, mass protests led to open rebellion, which resulted in the tens of thousands of deaths over several weeks. The KMT killed all who they perceived to be opposed to their rule and randomly throughout their patrols to instill fear among the people (Shattuck, 2017). Martial law was then put into place from 1949 to 1987, which removed all political parties,

freedom of speech, and human rights for both old settlers and indigenous peoples. The indigenous peoples were forced to learn Mandarin and assimilate further into Chinese culture and were taught to look down upon their traditional cultures.

Education was maintained and directed by the KMT, so student curriculum and course materials included false information that perpetuated stereotypes about indigenous peoples and cultures while showcasing the magnificence of being Han Chinese. These attitudes that were fed to the indigenous people taught habits of identity-shame and of constantly striving to be less indigenous and more Chinese. Many indigenous people did not wish to be called by their names in their tribal languages or practice their cultural traditions but instead felt more comfortable and content inside the Chinese societies built around them. These course materials and information shared in schools that degraded indigenous peoples and cultures also perpetuated hatred of indigenous peoples from their classmates and superiority of the Han Chinese as a race and culture.

Along with these efforts, the KMT assassinated six leaders of various indigenous tribes to threaten and discourage indigenous peoples from seeking autonomy. Writings and records of indigenous peoples during the White Terror are scarce. The few lines in writings that do mention indigenous peoples show a perpetuation of stereotyping them as savages and less than human. Still, much has been learned about indigenous peoples' experiences during the White Terror through trauma fiction writings, short stories, and essays written by indigenous peoples in more recent years that recollect experiences shared within their communities and the tragic histories of their people (Smith, 2012).

In modern society, the negative consequences of colonization can be seen through the high unemployment rates of the indigenous people. Additionally, the household incomes of Taiwanese indigenous people are 60% below the national average income, if not lower (Munsterhjelm, 2002). The traditional cultures are perpetuated and changed through tourism encouraged through the government, stripping meaning and degrading indigenous cultures to make more money for the new Taiwan. For example, they have created amusement parks that claim to be preserving indigenous cultures, but in reality turn what is sacred and precious to them into entertainment for tourists and increase their economic gain just a little more. Land rights are also a constant struggle and battle that the indigenous people face. Recently, according to modernization plans, tribal villages and territories have been moved without the peoples' consent, such as the building of Hualien Airport and various national parks (Simon, 2002).

Today, the 16 nationally recognized Taiwan indigenous Nations are Amis, Atayal, Bunun, Hla'alu (Saaroa), Kavalan, Kanakanavu, Paiwan,

Pinuyumayan, Rukai, Saisiyat, Sakizaya, Seediq, Tao (Yami), Thao, Tsou, and Truku (Taroko). There are three locally recognized tribes which are Makatao, Siraya, and Taivoan. Additionally, 10 of the unrecognized tribes are Babuza, Basay, Haonya, Ketagalan, Luilang, Pazeh/Kaxabu, Papora, Qauqaut, Taokas, and Trobiawan. In 2017, the government put an indigenous languages development act to include the languages of those 16 different recognized indigenous tribes as Taiwanese national languages (Stephens, 2018). This was done with the hopes of preserving and protecting the culture and languages of the Taiwanese indigenous tribes (Taiwan Today, 2019). There is some movement towards increasing indigenous peoples' rights, but at a weak pace that does not make up for or address the many challenges, gross human rights violations, abuses, persecutions, and oppression they have suffered and continue to suffer today.

Tribal recognition by the Taiwanese government is a battle the indigenous communities face because recognition affects their rights, resources, and support from the government. One of the main reasons given that more tribes cannot be recognized is that there is too much of a mixture of Han Chinese into those tribes, so they are not pure or recognizable as individual tribes anymore. On the other hand, over 75% of Hakka and Hokkien Chinese people in Taiwan are also thought to be of indigenous descent. Favoring Chinese descent over those of indigenous descent continues a narrative of valuing Han Chinese customs, culture, and race over other minority and indigenous groups. This is dangerous to the lives of all indigenous peoples throughout Taiwan, as even today, indigenous identities are taken away from indigenous peoples before they can even recognize or embrace them. Since the Taiwanese government started recognizing the Taiwanese indigenous peoples, there has not been nearly enough change; the goals of the Chinese Han to have a homogenous population continue just as they did when they first took control over Taiwan. In essence, those who are of indigenous descent are told that they are not indigenous enough to claim it as part of their identity. Even if an indigenous person runs for office, they hardly ever receive support from the other indigenous people. This is how disconnected the indigenous peoples are from each other and from their cultural identities as Taiwanese indigenous individuals. Colonization has created a divide between all indigenous peoples in ways that cannot be fixed or restored today.

Another example of how colonialism continues to affect indigenous peoples today is the nuclear waste that has been deposited by the Taiwanese Government on the outlying Taiwanese Island Lanyu, sacred land for the indigenous Tao tribe, without their consent or approval, since 1982. From the year it began until the present, the Tao community has protested it and demanded the waste be removed from their land. In the early 2000s,

a plan was made by the Taiwanese Government to remove all the nuclear waste from Lanyu by 2016, but they never implemented it. In 2019, Taiwan's president addressed this concern by offering to compensate the tribe with millions of dollars over a series of years but never agreeing to remove the waste or address the people's concerns as a priority. There are estimated to be over 100,000 barrels of nuclear waste stored there. The tribal leaders quickly rejected the monetary offer, saying that they could sustain themselves through their farming, and again demanded the removal of the nuclear waste (Aspinwall, 2019). Today the waste storage facility remains in Lanyu without further plans to remove it (World Nuclear Association, 2021).

Taiwan's Council of Indigenous Peoples declared nearly half of Taiwan's land to be indigenous ancestral land. Still, most of this land is public, a large portion designated as national parks, and cannot be owned privately. Because it is public land, the government can prohibit certain cultural activities from taking place on the land, even if it was originally a tribe's sacred land within their territory, dedicated to practicing certain cultural customs and traditions. One concern related to the issue with ancestral land is the restriction of hunting as a crucial part of indigenous culture, not only as a means of getting food but also as a social and spiritual practice. Legislation prevents people from hunting on public land unless it is for specific government-approved public ceremonies.

Additionally, laws prohibit individuals from hunting unless they use homemade guns and ammunition, both ineffective and dangerous. These are just a few of many examples that can be found of how the indigenous peoples of Taiwan still suffer today due to the colonialism that began on their land about 400 years ago. To claim that colonialism is all in the past would be to disregard the lives that have been lost, the traditions that have disappeared, the languages that have gone extinct, and ultimately ignore the existence and struggles of a people.

## **Conclusion**

When the Dutch arrived in Taiwan in the early 1600s, the indigenous peoples had been living off the land and in different tribes for thousands of years. Today, merely four hundred years later, indigenous peoples make up only 2% of Taiwan's population today, numbering around 535,000 with 55 counties out of the country's population of 23.5 million people. In a place that was once their home, they are now struggling to find a place to survive physically and culturally. Nine of the Taiwanese indigenous languages are already extinct, five are on the verge of becoming extinct, and ten others are either vulnerable or endangered. The loss of a language equates to the loss of a culture and people, especially for cultures with rich oral histories.

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This is a result of colonialism and Sinicization over the years, which have turned Taiwan into a part of China, and turned indigenous people into minorities in their homeland. They fight for their lives while living in a society designed by other people motivated by selfish interests. Since the Dutch arrived, the indigenous people have been disregarded; every act by each colonial power, from the Dutch, Qing, Japanese, and KMT, has been an attempt to gain more for themselves, always at the cost of the wellbeing of the indigenous people.

The adverse effects of colonialism on Taiwanese indigenous Peoples can be seen through employment rates, income inequalities, incarceration rates, the division of land, loss of languages, the exploitation of cultures for monetary gain, and many other means, all of which could not be explored in such a short paper. Although we have just scratched the surface, it is evident that there are many layers to the impacts that colonialism has had on the indigenous peoples of Taiwan. The detrimental effects of colonialism on First Nations and indigenous peoples can be seen in countless other countries around the world. By learning and leaning into what colonialism has meant for them, we will find ways to restore some of what has been lost, allowing for indigenous voices to be heard at last.



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# Economic Sanctions and the Future of the North Korean Nuclear Program

## Literature Review

*Drew Horne*

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), or North Korea, has proven to be a stumping issue for policymaker and academic alike. Dubbed “The Impossible State” by Victor Cha (2012) and the quintessential “Hard Target” by Haggard and Noland (2017), North Korea's unique mix of autarkic authoritarianism, stubbornly resilient socialist system, and burgeoning nuclear capability, all situated in perhaps the most geopolitically fraught region in the modern world, has led journalists, academics, policymakers, and even thrill-seekers (think Dennis Rodman) to try to understand this enigmatic, what Lankov (2013) calls, “political fossil.” Within the myriad issues presented by North Korea, two questions of equal policy and theoretical importance emerge: 1) how to manage the nuclear weapons of the world's most recent nuclear breakout state, and 2) whether economic statecraft, contemporarily defined as both economic sanctions and economic inducements (Haggard and Noland 2017) can be effective tools in that process.

This paper summarizes the major developments in the literature regarding these two issues, specifically asking the question “What effect do economic sanctions have on North Korea's nuclear program?” Thus, economic inducements (as opposed to sanctions) as a means of statecraft, along with other North Korean behavior such as human rights abuses, cyberattacks, and state-sponsored terrorism, are beyond the scope of this review. Multiple nuclear crises over multiple decades have brought the Korean Peninsula to the brink of war, and the main policy approach has been to levy ever-increasing economic sanctions on the country. Have they

worked? How can we evaluate sanctions' efficacy? Will a sanctions-first policy continue to be a viable approach for bringing lasting peace to East Asia? These questions hinge on understanding how sanctions have affected the nuclear program up until now.

The paper is organized as follows: first, an introduction to North Korea's nuclear program and the economic sanctions levied against it in response, followed by a review of the theory behind economic sanctions, then the literature on the strategic importance of North Korea's nuclear program to the regime, and finishes with a review of how these two areas of scholarship have been blended in the literature to answer the North Korea case.

### **Introduction to North Korea's Nuclear Program**

While it is outside the scope of this paper to track every development in the nuclear program, it is important to note how international pressures influenced the leadership's calculus and decision-making. Good accounts of North Korea's nuclear journey are made by Oberdorfer (2001) and Reed and Stillman (2009). Information on UN sanctions is publicly available on the UN website, and a Congressional Research Service (CRS) report tracks helpful dates along this timeline (Manyin et al. 2020).

North Korea joined the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, despite its clear interest in a nuclear weapons program, in December 1985 by signing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, more commonly known as the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This step included promises not to manufacture or receive nuclear weapons along with the obligation to accept inspections of declared nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) beginning in December of 1988.

North Korea's reticence to comply with its treaty obligations while substantially increasing its nuclear production capabilities led to the first major nuclear crisis in the early 1990s. North Korea attempted to hide evidence of its illicit program during IAEA inspections, and subsequently refused to allow inspectors access to suspect facilities. This situation led to a prolonged crisis which neared war on several occasions, only reaching a resolution through a high-profile visit by former President Jimmy Carter and a massive arrangement of economic quid pro quos called the Agreed Framework. As part of the agreement, the US agreed to provide civilian nuclear energy resources and interim crude oil supplies in return for North Korea freezing and dismantling its nuclear program. The first nuclear crisis provides a vigorously debated linkage between economic statecraft (in this case the reduction of sanctions and positive economic inducements) and the promise to dismantle a nuclear program.

Soon after the negotiation of the Agreed Framework, however, both parties reneged on treaty obligations and distrust again abounded. Prompted by North Korea dramatically leaving the NPT, China revived negotiations the form of the Six Party Talks, which continued from 2003 until 2008. There was promise for a settlement in 2005 with the Joint Statement, which included quid pro quos of security assurance and economic assistance by the US and its allies in return for tangible steps towards denuclearization. At the same time, however, the US Department of Treasury targeted North Korean leaders' financial assets in the Macau bank Banco Delta Asia (BDA), freezing some \$25 million. The talks then temporarily collapsed as North Korea increased its testing of ballistic missiles and tested its first nuclear weapon in October of 2006.

The 2006 nuclear test was closely followed by the first United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sanctions against North Korea with UNSC resolution 1718, mandating member states to restrict trade of luxury goods, banning all arms trade, and freezing financial transactions with several designated North Korean individuals (all information regarding UNSC sanctions can be found on the UN website). The Six Party Talks failed to reach a successful resolution, and the collapse of the talks was followed by North Korea's second nuclear test in May 2009. In response to this second test, the UNSC passed Resolution 1874 which strengthened the arms embargo by authorizing states to interdict (or forcibly inspect) suspect North Korean cargo ships.

From this point, nuclear tests and additional sanctions continued in relatively quick succession, just as Kim Jung-il's son Kim Jung-un came to power in 2011. In response to a December 2012 missile launch, the UNSC passed Resolution 2087, further expanding sanctions. The February 2013 nuclear test was met with UNSC Resolution 2094, again expanding the scope and enforcement of financial and trade sanctions. Nuclear tests in January and September 2016 were met with UNSC resolutions 2270 and 2321, respectively. Then, in August 2017 Resolution 2371 expanded sanctions in response to an earlier Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) test, which was followed by North Korea's sixth and largest nuclear test in September and subsequent UNSC sanctions through Resolution 2375. The UNSC further tightened these sanctions through Resolution 2397 in December 2017.

The increasing magnitude and frequency of these tests led to a prolonged crisis in 2017 in which the US seriously considered preventive war (Jackson 2019). North Korea's ICBM test in November of 2017 showed that North Korea had the capability to strike anywhere in the United States given the missile's extended range. It is important to note that, despite the various UNSC sanctions imposed to halt the program, North Korea's

technical advancements continued at a pace that shocked analysts. For instance, Jonathan Pollack (2009), a well-respected scholar of nonproliferation, predicted that North Korea would fail to create an operational nuclear force merely months before the second nuclear bomb test. Instead, as of 2018, North Korea had enough material for 30-60 nuclear weapons and the capability to soon develop an operational re-entry vehicle to deliver those weapons on ICBMs (Kristensen and Norris 2018).

While the 1994 Agreed Framework was premised on economic inducements, or conditioning economic aid on concessions regarding the nuclear program, the UNSC sanctions starting in 2006 have taken a more coercive approach. The Human Costs and Gendered Impact of Sanctions on North Korea report splits the UNSC sanctions into two distinct generations: the first generation were “smart sanctions,” those passed from the 2006 through the beginning of 2016 which targeted individuals in leadership and military supply chains, and the second generation, from the November 2016 sanctions through the 2017 sanctions, which targeted broad sectors of the economy focused on key export industries (Korea Peace Now 2019).

### **Economic Sanctions and Nuclear Reversal**

It is important to place the debate on North Korean sanctions into the larger discussion on economic statecraft and linkage, defined as the connecting of an action by one state (such as implementing sanctions) with a favorable reaction from another (such as giving up its nuclear weapons) (Haggard and Nolan 2017, 4). There are potentially many causal pathways through which sanctions could lead to policy concessions. The most straightforward mechanism is by denying the target the ability to continue its current path, such as through strategic export controls or interdiction (Jones et al. 2009; Kraska 2019). Hymans (2006b) labels these “supply-side” constraints to proliferation. Most other mechanisms focus on sanctions as coercive measures that raise the costs on leaders either directly or indirectly through dispersed public pressure (Haggard and Nolan 2017, 6–7). Here, the underlying logic goes that leaders will choose to acquiesce to the sanctioning states’ demands rather than continuing to incur the costs of sanctions.

Given these two logics, many evaluations of sanctions focus merely on how well sanctions are implemented in coordination with other states (Kim and Martin-Hermosillo 2013; Chanlett-Avery et al. 2010; Habib 2016), or whether there are significant economic impacts to the target country (Jeong 2019). Scholars taking this approach typically agree with the traditional theory that higher degrees of economic interdependence will enable sanctions to take a bigger toll, thus improving the likelihood

the target state will capitulate (Baldwin 1985; Shambaugh 1999; See also Blanchard and Ripsman 2008, 373–374; Baldwin and Pape 1998).

However, a growing body of literature argues that the domestic political conditions of the target state are instrumental in determining sanctions impact (Haggard and Noland 2012, 2017; Solingen 2007, 2012; Brooks 2002; Blanchard and Ripsman 2008). Brooks (2002) addresses and modifies the core idea of this camp that sanctions are ineffective against authoritarian regimes. Instead, he argues that authoritarian regimes are likely insulated from sanctions targeted at the macroeconomy or key export industries (which happens to explain the “second generation” of UNSC sanctions on North Korea), but are more likely to be susceptible to selective sanctions targeted at individuals in the ruling coalition (such as the “first generation” of UNSC sanctions) (2). Solingen’s (2007, 2012) approach, however, rejects the simplicity of the regime-type model. Instead, she argues, domestic factors which determine openness to international economic markets are the key variable in explaining proliferation decisions. Some authoritarian regimes are very integrated in economic exchange, but North Korea is essentially autarkic. Blanchard and Ripsman (2008) also reject the regime-type model, but for different reasons. They argue that a country’s level of “stateness,” a variable they construct to include state autonomy from public pressures, capacity for repression, and legitimacy. North Korea would score high in all three categories, and fits Brooks (2002), Solingen (2007, 2012), and Blanchard and Ripsman (2008)’s description of a difficult target of sanctions.

### North Korea’s Nuclear Calculus

It is necessary to review not only the ability for sanctions to impose costs but also to evaluate the value that the Kim Jung-un regime sees in the nuclear program. Here, again, there is significant variance in how scholars assess the regime’s strategic motivations for nuclear weapons, but they almost universally acknowledge that the regime is highly unlikely to give them up any time soon.

The core argument, both of scholars and of the North Korea propaganda machine, comes from a realist focus on the external threats faced by the regime and the need for a credible deterrent. The US and its 30,000 some troops and various nuclear-capable forces surrounding the Korean Peninsula are the existential threat, and nothing short of nuclear weapons can assure North Korean survival (Lankov 2017; Jackson 2019, 7; Sagan and Waltz 2013, 184–191; Roberts 2016, 58–74; Roehrig 2012, 89–94). North Korean leadership themselves espouse this view in many official statements, making them what Lankov (2017) calls “hyperrealists” in their alarming portrayal of external security threats. However, Solingen (2007)

points out important variation in the drivers for the North Korean leadership. She concludes that while security concerns may be most salient today, in several historical episodes (such as during the Agreed Framework) nuclear weapons were seen less as non-negotiable deterrents than useful leverage in various negotiation settings (118–121).

Neorealists and neoliberals converge on several subsequent theories of North Korea's nukes. The first is the idea that nuclear weapons give the regime the ability to extort resources from abroad. The reasoning is that as North Korea increases violence, and as it has the deterrent shield of nuclear weapons to protect it from retaliation, neighboring states will offer placating foreign aid or political concessions (Cha 2018, 238–242; Lankov 2015, 180–191). A slightly different theory than extortion is that of the bargaining-chip; nuclear weapons give the regime the upper-hand in negotiations and can be sacrificed if given sufficient economic and security incentives, as seemed to be the case in the Agreed Framework arrangement (Oberdorfer 2001, 249–250; Solingen 2007, 120). Even Lankov (2015) agrees that bargaining away the program may be secondary goal, and perhaps on balance may be even more important than deterrence (Lankov 183–84).

Just as much scholarship of sanctions efficacy has turned to domestic political factors, so too have scholars begun to assess proliferation in its domestic context. Many scholars argue that North Korea's unique domestic politics, especially the structure of the ruling military elite and the self-reliance ideology have shaped Pyongyang's perceptions of the external security environment (Haggard and Noland 2012, 2017; Solingen 2007). Solingen (2007) distinguishes between state security and regime security, showing that the Kim regime's ultimate motive is its survival, not the well-being of its country (although the two are often inter-connected) (122). Thus, the Kim regime values the nuclear weapons for what they represent: the only defense against the evil intentions of America, thus legitimizing the Kim regime in the face of widespread economic suffering (Jackson 2019, 6; Lankov 2015). This theory comports well with that of nonproliferation experts Hymans (2006b) and Sagan (1996) who show that demand for nuclear weapons can include the desire for domestic legitimation and external scapegoating.

While domestic politics may shape the value of nuclear weapons to the regime, another branch of theories explores a more psychological dimension. Hymans (2006a) shows that leaders with an “oppositional nationalist” worldview—or one that combines a strong sense of national identity with a belief that one's national identity, beyond just security, is at stake—are much more likely to see nuclear weapons as a necessity for state security. Huh et al. (2017) show that the regime's official propaganda closely fits this description. Many scholars focus instead on individuals, and in this case on



Kim Jong-un. The pace of ballistic missile and nuclear testing rose dramatically after the third Kim came to power in 2011, leading some to suggest that his psychological background predisposes him to highly value nuclear weapons. For instance, Jung (2020) explains that Kim's early childhood experiences as a student in Europe imbued him with hatred for the Western world because of his inability to build meaningful relationships there. Fifield (2019) delves into his psychology, citing experts who call him a "classic narcissist" who strokes his thin ego with powerful nuclear weapons (189–192, 223–240).

While scholars differ in how they assess North Korea's motivations behind its nuclear program—varying from the strict realists' claim that it is a natural response to external threats to the biographers who argue the nuclear weapons are critically important to Kim Jong-un given his background and psychology—these theories may not be mutually exclusive. While it may be hard to determine which cause is predominant, taken together they share a similar story: North Korea's nuclear weapons are critical pillars of state and regime security, state legitimation, international honor, and individuals' egotistical ends.

### **Sanctions Efficacy and the North Korea Case**

The two academic conversations, one focused on sanctions, the other focused on North Korea's nuclear motivations, converge into a larger discussion on sanctions efficacy in the North Korea case. The scholarship on economic sanctions has, with some limited consensus, established conditions which make it harder for sanctions to lead to effective policy linkage. As reviewed above, these conditions that have inadvertently pejorated policy change efficacy include authoritarian regimes, statist economies, humanitarian problems caused by outside parties offering unconditional aid, and situations where engagement must be coordinated across multiple countries (Haggard and Noland 2017, 12–13). The scholarship on the nuclear program also shows that the nuclear weapons are of critical importance to the regime, more than economic development (Lankov 2015).

As expected, many studies conclude simply that sanctions are not working. Among these, Jeong (2019), finds practically no economic impact on North Korea's luxury goods from UNSC resolution 1718, the first set of sanctions imposed on North Korea following its 2006 nuclear test. Blanchard and Ripsman (2008) would reject the premise of evaluating sanctions' efficacy based solely on economic impact, but even they would agree that there must be some impact from the sanctions for there to be a chance of policy outcomes. Chanlett-Avery et. al (2010), focusing on UNSC resolution 1874, are pessimistic that there will be any real impact. They focus on serious problems of enforcement and coordination, and

point to China's participation as key, something Jeong's (2019) findings also corroborate. Few other studies evaluate specific UNSC sanctions, presumably because of the difficulty with disaggregating the effects of subsequent sanctions. Along with this group, realists dismiss out of hand the possibility that sanctions will matter, asserting that North Korea's security concerns will always be more important than economic worries (Sagan and Waltz 2013; Jackson 2019).

Not all scholars, however, are so quick to be dismissive of sanctions. Jones et al. (2009), for instance, argue that sanctions can be determined successful insofar as they have acted as 'speed bumps' to illicit weapons programs, slowing the speed of progress down to allow time for policymakers to intervene. There has been little argument on this point, although it is difficult to prove anything about a counterfactual world without sanctions against which to judge the current sanctions regime (134–35). Other scholars have been optimistic that targeted US financial sanctions, such as the BDA sanctions of 2005, have succeeded in forcing North Korea from world financial markets (Hoare 2012). What, if any, effect this has had on the nuclear program, however, remains unaddressed in these claims. Also in the camp of sanctions optimists are policymakers (and some scholars) who see the resolution of the 2017 crisis as a success of the "maximum pressure" campaign of harsh sectoral sanctions. This group asserts that it was the harsh, costly nature of the 2016 sanctions that took effect which forced North Korea to the negotiating table (Woo, 2020; Jackson 2019).

In response to the sanctions optimists, another group swings to the other extreme; not only do sanctions not help, sanctions may hurt. Representing this camp are Jackson (2019) and Park (2014). They both assert, to varying degrees, that sanctions have been bad for the resolution of the nuclear weapons program. In 2017, as the US and North Korea continued to escalate a war of words and military mobilization, this group asserts that it was the successful 2017 launch of an ICBM that completed North Korea's operationalization of its nuclear deterrent which allowed North Korea to de-escalate, secure in its deterrent capability. The maximum pressure campaign itself is what incentivized the regime to pursue an advanced technical nuclear capability, convinced that the hostile intentions of sanctioning countries called for a credible deterrent (Jackson 2019). Huh et al. (2017) corroborate this causal pathway through a textual analysis of North Korean news media, finding that under Kim Jung-un and during the maximum pressure campaign, regime rhetoric turned highly adversarial (in line with the 'oppositional nationalism' characterization of Hymans).

## Conclusion

Scholars of economic sanctions, while remaining pessimistic about the likelihood that economic coercion can lead to major policy concessions, have put forth several plausible (sometimes competing) conditions under which sanctions could be efficacious. In each case, North Korea emerges as the quintessential “hard target” state; one that is both insulated from and unlikely to capitulate to sanctions pressure. When it comes to the impetus for and strategic value of nuclear weapons, most scholars agree the weapons are highly valuable to the regime and are unlikely to be bargained away for a paltry sum. Significant disagreement does arise, however, over the question of whether the North Korean regime would *ever* willingly give away its nukes. The areas of debate among these two fields contribute to a range of explanations for the core question of this paper: “What effect do economic sanctions have on North Korea’s nuclear weapons program?” Some say they have helped move the regime toward negotiation or have at least slowed down the development of the program, relying on counterfactual assumptions about how North Korea’s WMD program would have proceeded absent international pressure. Some are bolder, asserting that sanctions have significantly altered the North’s decision-making regarding the program and make it likely that leader Kim Jung Un may relinquish his weapons in the future. Conversely, still other studies conclude that sanctions have only reinforced in the psyche of North Korean leadership the existential need for nuclear weapons, working entirely against the purpose for which sanctions were originally intended.

Each of these conclusions offers support for differing policy responses, ranging from strengthening enforcement by punishing sanctions violators to a gradual reduction in sanctions and tacit acceptance of North Korea as a nuclear state. Needless to say, a more robust scholarly consensus on this issue is needed. For instance, no study has systematically evaluated the efficacy (or counterproductivity) of the ‘smart’ sanctions versus the post-2016 broad sectoral sanctions. More generally, the literature is weak on comprehensive quantitative studies, although mirrored trade data and South Korean government estimates of the North’s economic status exist as largely untapped data sources. Foundational theories of international trade, including the Heckscher-Ohlin Theory and accompanying Stolper-Samuelson Theorem, suggest that one should look to the sectoral impact of sanctions and analyze whether key decision makers are poised to personally benefit or lose from openness to trade; it is plausible that a semi-autarkic sanctioned economy is actually preferred by elites over open trade. It is not just the economic impact that needs a closer look; our assumptions about North Korea’s strategic intentions should also be challenged. For instance, claims that North Korea’s weapons are non-negotiable instruments of state

security must be rigorously examined in the light of past willingness to bargain parts of that program away, with Huh et al's (2017) analysis of regime rhetoric an appropriate step in that direction. It is time for a cohesive sanctions strategy that resolves these important analytical differences, as North Korea's nuclear capabilities continue to grow and threaten peace in the region.

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# **Xinjiang:** Uyghur Nationalism and PRC Economic Ambitions in The Region

*Erin Kitchens Wong*

The People's Republic of China (PRC) has maintained a long and strenuous history of relations with its western-most province of Xinjiang (Xinjiāng, 新疆). Relations with ethnic minorities in the region have been significantly influenced by changes in both domestic and foreign policy. Since the founding of the new Chinese state under Mao Zedong, the Uyghur (Wéiwú'ěr, 维吾尔) population of Xinjiang have seen vicious swings to and from radical domestic policy.

As Maoist ideals of Chinese nationalism spread, Uyghurs have been forced to either conform or rebel in order to maintain their own national identity and culture. In the last decade, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the paramount ruling body in the PRC, have enacted a highly sensitive surveillance state in Xinjiang and implemented a violent crackdown on any sense of rebellion or separatism in the Xinjiang region. The CCP's policy approach to the Uyghur population in Xinjiang has and will continue to play an important role in China's domestic stability and in its relations with its central Asian neighbors. The recent developments in CCP policy toward ethnic Uyghurs in Xinjiang which has resulted in the imprisonment of more than 1 million Uyghurs in re-education centers has incited international concern and significantly influences Chinese foreign relations today.

## **Research Question & Thesis**

In late 2017, the international community discovered a sudden construction boom in Xinjiang China which erected a variety of prison-like

structures and detention centers in the province. In 2018, reports began to circulate that ethnic Uyghurs and Kazakhs (another Muslim ethnic group in Xinjiang) were being detained with no charge against them and facing beatings, violent interrogations, and forced “re-education” in these centers. CCP officials have maintained that these detention centers are re-education and training centers meant to restore stability and economic prosperity to the region and that participants attend voluntarily (Sudworth 2018).

Outside of the detention centers, Xinjiang has transformed into a tightly controlled police- surveillance-state where locals face constant inspection from party officials and police. This paper seeks to more fully understand the motivations behind the CCP’s re-education and suppression campaign in Xinjiang targeted against the Uyghur people. The following will first provide a historical summary of Xinjiang-PRC relations, then examine the current social, political, and economic situation in the province, and finally explore the economic opportunities available to the PRC in the region.

Contrary to CCP propaganda about restoring stability to the region, the following asserts that the tightly controlled campaign of suppression and re-education in Xinjiang is a highly strategic means at achieving economic goals. CCP motivations in Xinjiang are highly strategic and for-profit. The CCP has and will continue to maintain its tight and violent grip on Xinjiang until all threats of Uyghur identity and nationalism are under complete Han Chinese control.

### **Part I: Historical Summary of Xinjiang-PRC Relations**

The official name of the Xinjiang province is the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (Xīnjiāng wéiwú’ěr zìzhìqū, 新疆维吾尔自治区). For simplicity and brevity this paper will refer to the region as Xinjiang, but a knowledge of its full title is important for understanding the region’s political background. Xinjiang is home to a number of ethnic groups, most significantly the Turkic-speaking Muslim Uyghur minority who make up about eight million of Xinjiang’s 19 million people (“Xinjiang Territory Profile”). There are variations in the spelling of Uyghur, including Uighur, Uygur, and Uigur. For consistency, the spelling Uyghur will be used throughout this paper as it has been said to more closely approximate the proper orthography and pronunciation of the Uyghur language (Staff RFA, 2010). Xinjiang is located in the northwestern corner of China, bordering seven different countries. Its strategic location makes it an important gateway from China to its Central Asian neighbors.

Figure 1. Source: Encyclopedia Britannica



The Xinjiang region and its Uyghur population have little in common with China historically, culturally, or linguistically. Uyghurs are a Turkic people that practice Islam and more closely share ancestry, history, and cultural practices with their Western neighbors of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. China's earliest claims to the Xinjiang region originate in the Qing Dynasty (Qīngcháo, 清朝) in the 1750s during a time of expansion for the Chinese empire (Brophy 2018).

Going into the 1900s, Xinjiang was surrounded by Central Asian states that were satellite states of the Soviet Union. Both the Soviet Union and China at the time were seeking to increase their influence in the region. Turning to the Soviet Union for support, Uyghurs petitioned for self-rule but were denied. Then by the 1930s, a large-scale rebellion resulted in the creation of the Islamic East Turkmenistan Republic (ETR) (Brophy 2018). In September of 1945, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) received requests from the ETR to mediate between them and the Chinese Nationalist Government (“The Situation in Xinjiang”). In official documents, CPSU explain that the rebel leaders of the ETR were focused on achieving autonomy, not separation from greater China.

They stated at the same time that the population which had revolted had not set itself the goal of breaking away from China. They pursue

the goal of achieving autonomy in that part of Xinjiang where Muslims constitute a clear majority of the population, specifically the Ili [Yili], Tarbaghatay [Qoqek or Tacheng], Altai, and Kashgar [Kashi] districts. They also pointed to the lack of rights for the Muslim population in Xinjiang and also to the oppression, lawlessness, and mass repressions by the Chinese administration which by its actions has forced the Muslims rise in arms to defend their rights. (“The Situation in Xinjiang,” 1945)

In 1949, the USSR helped broker a deal with Mao Zedong and the CCP which allowed the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to take control of Xinjiang and dissolve the ETR entirely (Brophy 2018). Advising the CCP delegation on Xinjiang, Stalin encouraged the Han Chinese occupation of Xinjiang.

One should not put off occupation of Xinjiang, because a delay may lead to the interference by the English in the affairs of Xinjiang. They can activate the Muslims, including the Indian ones, to continue the civil war against the communists, which is undesirable, for there are large deposits of oil and cotton in Xinjiang, which China needs badly. The Chinese population in Xinjiang does not exceed 5%, after taking Xinjiang one should bring the percentage of the Chinese population to 30% by means of resettling the Chinese for all-sided development of this huge and rich region and for strengthening China’s border protection. In general, in the interests of strengthening the defense of China one should populate all the border regions by the Chinese. (“Memorandum . . .”, 1949)

With the establishment of the new Chinese state under the CCP in October of 1949, Xinjiang experienced a new form of Chinese rule. The CCP inherited strong Sinocentric ideology from their nationalist predecessors. The nationalist government, under the leadership of Sun Yat-sen, strongly opposed independence movements by Mongolians, Tibetans, and Uyghurs, asserting that China would be “a single state out of a single race,” and that all ethnic minorities in the state would eventually unite with the Han (ethnic Chinese) in a “single cultural and political whole” (Hyer 2006, 77).

Although the Communists initially supported the right to national self-determination and held strongly anti-imperialist views, the party eventually shifted its stand in an effort to create a strong and united China. After forcibly annexing both Tibet and Xinjiang, the First National People’s Congress of the CCP drafted a constitution that “did not consider secession a legitimate right and considered regions inhabited by non-Chinese ‘inalienable parts of the People’s Republic of China’” (Hyer 2006, 77). The new government would allow for the establishment of autonomous regions but

enacted a Program for Enforcement of National Regional Autonomy which stated that “all national autonomous districts shall be inseparable part of the territory of the People’s Republic of China” (Hyer 2006, 77).

Despite strong constitutional mandate, Beijing has struggled to maintain control over the Xinjiang autonomous region since its annexation in 1949. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Xinjiang witnessed nationalist movements amongst many of its neighbors which resulted in them becoming independent post-Soviet states. These visible nationalist movements had a measurable effect on the Uyghur population in Xinjiang which has since seen a “stronger assertion of Uyghur and pan-Turkic nationalism with renewed demands for a change in the status quo” (Hyer 2006, 75).

Religious and ethnic tensions in Xinjiang have produced instability and violence in the province. Anti-Chinese riots have resulted in deaths and injuries on both sides. Ethnic demonstrations in Xinjiang have been met with brutal crackdowns by the PLA and the execution of Uyghur leaders. In order to bring stability and economic prosperity to the region, the CCP launched the “Great Leap West” campaign in 1999 (Liu & Peters 2017). The ambitious economic undertaking was aimed at developing China’s Western frontier and providing increased economic opportunity in the region. The CCP’s strategy behind the Great Leap West campaign was to increase the standard of living and economic situation in Xinjiang in order to ease ethnic tensions and bring much needed stability to the province.

As Xinjiang modernized, Han workers migrated to the region in alarming numbers. From 1949 to 2010, the number of Han Chinese living in Xinjiang increased from just 7% of the total population, to over 40% (Zhao 2019). While Xinjiang’s economy did benefit greatly from the Great Leap West campaign, the economic growth was not enjoyed equally by both the Uyghur and Han populations. In 2011, the average monthly income for a Han Chinese living in Xinjiang was 1,141 RMB (approx. 161.24 USD), while the average Uyghur in Xinjiang earned just 892 RMB per month (approx. 126 USD) (Zhao 2019). Economic progress in Xinjiang did not ease ethnic tensions like expected, but evidence shows it may have exacerbated them.

In 2009, the capital city of Urumqi saw the worst social unrest in China since the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989 when a growing protest clashed with local police and resulted in 197 dead and 1,712 wounded (Liu & Peters 2017). In response, Beijing increased domestic security spending in Xinjiang by 90% in 2010, but violence has continued (Zhao 2019).

In 2014, attackers set up explosives in an Urumqi market, killing mostly ethnic Hans (Liu & Peters 2017). In 2015, several Uyghurs stormed a coal mine, killing 50 and injuring another 50—a majority of them being ethnic Hans (Liu & Peters 2017). While the CCP has attributed the anti-

Chinese demonstrations and terrorist activities to separatists, religious fanatics, and foreign forces, experts have found no evidence of an existence of a coordinated separatist movement Xinjiang (Hyer 2006, Islam 2019). Beijing has been unable to reconcile the deeply rooted ethnic and religious divides between the Han and the Uyghurs in Xinjiang and have thus turned to extreme measures to stabilize the region.

### **Part II: Current Situation in Xinjiang Explained**

Attitudes and policy towards the Uyghur population in Xinjiang shifted dramatically following the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001. Following the attacks, “the global climate toward any form of religious or ethnic divide within a nation state changed markedly” (Attwood 2010). In joining the new global War on Terror, the PRC was internationally sanctioned in taking more extreme measures against Muslim minorities in their country. Rights for Uyghurs in Xinjiang were significantly reduced, with the strictest restrictions placed on religious and linguistic freedoms (Attwood 2010).

Working alongside the U.S. in the global War on Terror, the PRC has categorized the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) as a terrorist organization and used this categorization to justify military action against Uyghurs and other Muslims in Xinjiang (Islam 2019). When seeking to appeal to the U.S., portrayals of Uyghur terrorism and separatism in the state media is often exaggerated or unconfirmed (Attwood 2010). Experts on Xinjiang have yet to determine if ETIM is even a Xinjiang-based Uyghur group and have reached consensus that no unified agenda or coordinated terrorist or separatist movements exists among the Uyghur population in Xinjiang (Islam 2019, Millward 2004, Finley 2007, Hastings 2011). However, the CCP has successfully leveraged the current international political climate to legitimize and justify their increasingly extreme and unsettling measures against ethnic Uyghurs.

In May 2014, China launched its “Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism” (Yánlì dǎjī bàoli kǒngbù huódòng zhuānxiàng xíngdòng 严厉打击暴力恐怖活动专项行动) after a stabbing attack by Uyghur militants at a Xinjiang train station that resulted in the death of 30 people (Ramzey & Buckley 2019, Human Rights Watch). In private meetings with high ranking officials, President Xi announced that Xinjiang would double its anti-terrorism budget and “strike hard against violent terrorism, showing no mercy, in accordance with the law” (Kaiman 2014, Ramzey & Buckley 2019).

In August 2016, former Party Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region, Chen Quanguo, was appointed Party Secretary over Xinjiang. (Brophy 2018, Ramzey & Buckley 2019). Upon taking office, Chen dis-

tributed President Xi's speeches to local party officials, and sent out a command to "round up everyone who should be rounded up" (Ramzey & Buckley 2019). This "rounding up" of Uyghurs went on in secret before the international community became aware in late 2017. In the spring of 2018, satellite images of once empty desert areas in Xinjiang revealed newly constructed secure compounds (Sudworth 2018). Satellite imaging has shown that these compounds have increased in both size and number. These compounds have been referred to as re-education centers by party officials and condemned as detention centers, prisons, or internment camps by international critics.

**Figure 2. Source: Center on Foreign Relations**



Human Rights Watch, an international human rights organization, has compiled a report on the situation in Xinjiang based on interviews with individuals affected by the Strike Hard Campaign that are currently living outside of China. Conducting primary research in Xinjiang is severely limited at this point due to strict government restrictions. While many of the first-hand accounts included in news reports cannot be verified, the accounts have been consistent in detail and corroborated each other. Documents and interviews obtained by the Human Rights Watch reveal

“a multitiered system of surveillance, control, and suppression of religious activity aimed at Xinjiang’s Uyghurs” (Human Rights Watch).

In March 2017, the Xinjiang government passed an anti-extremism law prohibiting people from participating in religious practices like growing long beards or wearing veils in public (Maizland 2019). The law also recognized the use of so-called “training centers” to eliminate extremism.

Xinjiang has since evolved into a high-tech surveillance state, which utilizes cutting-edge technology to monitor its people. In Western Xinjiang, police checkpoints are found approximately every 100 yards, facial-recognition cameras are everywhere, and the biometric data of every citizen is collected and stored (Maizland 2019, Brophy 2018). The CCP has characterized any expression of Islamic faith as extremist and a cause for detainment. Party members are recruited to stay in Uyghur homes and report on any extremist behaviors, which could include fasting during Ramadan, giving children certain names, or preparing or consuming Halal food (Maizland 2019). Uyghurs are regularly stopped to be questioned or have their personal belongings and cell phones searched for any evidence of “extremism” or religious practice.

Uyghurs are being arrested or detained with no charge, and no legal protections. Human Rights Watch reports of a former detainee who was “taken away for having set his watch to [the unofficial] Urumqi time” and three restaurant owners who “got detained because they don’t allow smoking or drinking in their restaurants” (Human Rights Watch).

Reports of abuse, forced confessions, and torture within the detention centers where Uyghurs are held without being charged are growing. Currently, estimates of Uyghurs who have been arbitrarily detained in detention centers in Xinjiang range from 1 to 3 million. It is difficult to overstate the gravity of the situation in Xinjiang for the ethnic Uyghur population. While it is impossible to include all the harrowing personal accounts from survivors, it is important to recognize the significance of their own holo-caustic environment they are now forced to endure.

### **Part III: Economics of Xinjiang**

The extensiveness of the CCP’s efforts to erase Uyghur nationalism, identity, and religiosity in Xinjiang is extreme in both theory and practice. Past efforts to bring stability and calm ethnic tensions in the region have never reached this level of intensity. Uyghur activist Rushan Abbas has asserted that the CCP’s

desire to exact ideological control over the entire nation, like some analysts have suggested, does not fully explain why Beijing has suddenly intensified its efforts in Xinjiang . . . This has everything to do with Xi



Jinping's signature project, the Belt and Road initiative, because the Uyghur land is in the heart of the most key point of Xi Jinping's signature project. (Zhao 2019)

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched in 2013 by President Xi, is seen as an effort to increase China's global influence by building a figurative and literal "belt" that would link China with Central Asia, Russia, Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and South Asia through a Twenty-first Century Maritime Silk Road (Kidwai 2018). The initiative has already attracted more than 80 countries and international organizations who act as investors that the PRC seeks to continually attract and appease.

Xinjiang is a critical location along this new silk road as many of the key routes of the BRI run straight through the region (Zhao 2019). For example, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, one of the largest projects of the BRI, runs through Xinjiang to link China to the Pakistan port of Gwadar (Zhao 2019, Kidwai 2018).

**Figure 3. Source: Berkeley Economic Review**



In May 2019, China had already spent over \$200 billion on projects part of the BRI, and a World Bank study found that "BRI transportation infrastructure could increase global exports by 6.3% while partnering states along the economic corridor could see up to a 10% increase in exports" (Zhao 2019). The PRC has significant economic motivations to eliminate unrest in Xinjiang, and fears that instability in neighboring states or separatist movements in Xinjiang could seriously threaten BRI projects. Such projects that could significantly increase the standard of living for the population in Xinjiang.

In addition to its critical location as part of the BRI, Xinjiang is also a resource-rich region. Its reserves of natural gas, coal, and other fossil

fuels are vital to China's rapid industrialization and represent over 20% of China's total energy reserves (Zhao 2019). Xinjiang is the platform on which President Xi hopes to build to project global influence and losing it to violent separatists would be disastrous to him strategically and economically. Xinjiang is a resource-rich region and gateway to even more oil and natural gas deposits in Central Asia that would create rich dividends for China as a whole. The CCP and President Xi will not relinquish any degree of political authority in the region and will seek to maintain absolute control at any cost.

### **Conclusion**

China has a troubling history of trading human life for economic progress that stretches back to the brutal dynastic regimes of antiquity, continued into the Great Leap Forward of Mao, and remains in the Uyghur repression of today. Contrary to CCP propaganda, evidence suggests that the brutal repression campaign against Uyghurs in Xinjiang is about much more than terrorism and separatism.

Xinjiang stands as a direct threat to the CCP and President Xi not because of violence, but because of its population that has continually struggled against China's strict policies of assimilation and sought to maintain its own ethnic and cultural identity. The PRC has "in the name of combating Islamic extremism . . . embarked on a massive campaign of detention and indoctrination of ethnic minorities" with the goal to eradicate any possibility of a unified opposition (Brophy 2018).

Efforts by the party to calm ethnic tensions and assert stability through economic progress is long gone. The detention centers in Xinjiang have been established to violently demand loyalty to party, teach Han Chinese language, culture, and customs, and eliminate Uyghur identity and unity. But it is clear that the CCP's current approach is to end conflict in Xinjiang by erasing all space to make claims to a unified Uyghur nation. Motivations behind the abusive campaign of repression and re-education in Xinjiang is a highly strategic means to ensure economic and geopolitical power for the Chinese state. The CCP will continue to maintain its tight and violent grip on the Uyghurs in Xinjiang until all threats of Uyghur identity and nationalism are under complete Han Chinese control.

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