

# Fact and Fiction: A Chinese Documentary on Eastern Turkestan Terrorism†

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## ABSTRACT

This article provides, for the first time in public, an English summary and analysis of a 60-minute video documentary called "On the Spot Report: The Crimes of Eastern Turkestan Terrorist Power" (*Dongtu kongbu shili zuixing jishi*). The documentary was shown to the author in August 2002 on a visit to Xinjiang at the official invitation of the Xinjiang International Economic and Cultural Development Center and a transcript was also provided. This rare documentary reflects Beijing's representation of "Eastern Turkestan terrorism," and its efforts to spread this message through the author and the media.

*Keywords* • Xinjiang • CCTV documentary "On the Spot Report: The Crimes of Eastern Turkestan Terrorist Power" • East Turkestan separatism

In August 2002, after several delays lasting a year-and-a-half, I visited Xinjiang at the official invitation of the Xinjiang International Economic and Cultural Development Center. This was not my first visit but the first official one. I was accompanied from Beijing by a friend from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. This was his first visit. After spending two-three days in Urumqi we drove many hours to Yining for a couple of days more and then back to Urumqi, altogether one week. I am still trying to figure out why I was invited – but one of my hosts' objectives was to spread around – through me – the theory of Eastern Turkestan terrorism. This issue was discussed a number of times during my stay. Most importantly, however, the next morning after my arrival in Urumqi I was shown a 60-minute video documentary called "On the Spot Report: The Crimes of Eastern Turkestan Terrorist Power" (*Dongtu kongbu shili zuixing jishi*). According to the transcript it was planned to be

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† An earlier draft version of this paper was presented at the Ninth Annual World Convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities, Columbia University, New York, April 15-17 2004. I would like to thank Mr. Zhang Hongbo and Mr. Itamar Livni for their research assistance. Parts of this paper are based on research supported by a MacArthur Foundation grant No. 02-76170-000-GSS, on "Uyghur Expatriate Communities: Domestic, Regional and International Challenges."

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shown on television twice, on July 23 and 24, 2002 by CCTV Channel 4 in Chinese and simultaneously on CCTV Channel 9 in English but I am not sure if it was. The purpose was to expose East Turkestani terrorist acts in Xinjiang over the previous ten years and their links to Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations. As part of a crackdown on Uyghurs launched after 9/11, the documentary aimed at implicating all East Turkestani and Uyghur organized groups – and their leaders at home and abroad – as "terrorists."<sup>1</sup>

For over ten years now, I have been in touch with some of these organizations and met some of their leaders and officials as well as Uyghurs in and outside China. Although a number of violent incidents involving Uyghurs have been reported throughout these years, China has hardly provided real evidence to justify the attribute "East Turkestan terrorism." Apparently, this TV video documentary was made in order to provide such evidence. Indeed it shows exploded public buses; interviews victims of persecution as well as the victimizers; exposes training camps, arms and explosives – some allegedly smuggled across the border and some produced in underground workshops; uncovers relations with Bin Laden and associates Uyghur "terrorism" with Islamic "radicalism" and *Jihad*. Watching this "evidence" creates an uneasy feeling that some of it at least had been fabricated and in any case by no means could involve the entire movements or their leaders. This is not to say that there have never been any Uyghur violent acts against Han Chinese, Hui Muslims or even so-called Uyghur "collaborators." It is to say, however that at least some of these acts have been no more than ordinary crimes and that those "terrorist acts" shown should by no means be considered as reflecting the agenda of all Eastern Turkestan organizations as Beijing often suggests.

This article provides, for the first time in public, an English summary of the original Chinese transcript of the TV documentary that I was given by my hosts, incorporating the main points. This rare documentary reflects Beijing's representation of "Eastern Turkestan terrorism."<sup>2</sup> Until a few years ago, the Chinese did not use the term "Eastern Turkestan" because it has been used primarily by separatist organizations and leaders who deliberately avoided using the term "Xinjiang" because of its "Chinese" connotation. Since 9/11, however, the Chinese have begun to

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<sup>1</sup> For official Chinese publications on this issue, see: The Information Office of the PRC State Council, "True Nature of 'East Turkistan's Forces," *China Daily*, January 22 2002; "East Turkestan" Terrorist Forces Cannot Get Away with Their Offences (Beijing, January 1 2002); and *History and Development of Xinjiang* (Beijing: May 2003).

<sup>2</sup> A synopsis has been published by the U.S., "PRC Documentary Depicts 'East Turkistan Terrorism' in Xinjiang, Central Asia," FEA20051223015567 – FBIS Feature – 0015 GMT December 23 2005. See also: Wang Yanbin and Guo Li, "Exposé on 'East Turkistan' Terrorism – Criminal Activities of the 'East Turkistan' Terrorism in Xinjiang," *Liaowang* (Beijing) 40 (September 30 2002): 10-12., in FBIS-CHI-2002-1015.

use the term "Eastern Turkestan" (*Dongtu*, in short)<sup>3</sup>, probably to differentiate more clearly and symbolically between these organizations and the rest of the population of Xinjiang and, more specifically, to diminish the role of Uyghurs whose international profile has grown since the 1990s. Indeed the documentary hardly mentions "Uyghur terrorism" explicitly – although the language, the names, the images and the context implicitly delivers that same message.

The article follows the TV documentary which is divided into seven parts and lasts for sixty minutes. It speaks Chinese and Uyghur (with Chinese subtitles). I was given the entire transcript in Chinese while visiting Urumqi in August 2002. In addition to the visual parts, the text includes interviews with Uyghur inmates who reportedly have been held responsible for the "terrorist crimes"; with their victims and with security cadres and policemen. In between there are interjections by the reporters who give the historical background and some political implications. The first part of this article presents a summary of the Chinese transcript while the second part provides my interpretation and analysis.

## **Transcript Presentation**

*[Start of Transcript]*

### *Bus Explosions*

On February 5 1992, the Chinese New Year holiday, a bomb exploded on bus no. 52 in Urumqi, near the Xinjiang Academy of Science, reportedly carried out by "Eastern Turkestan terrorist forces." Two minutes later, at 21:42, another bomb exploded, this time on bus no. 30. The explosions caused three deaths, nine people were seriously wounded and fourteen people were lightly wounded. Yang Delu, then Deputy Director General of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (hereafter XUAR) Public Security Office that presumably arrested the culprits, testified that those "criminals" (*fanzui fenzi*, he didn't call them terrorists) confessed that they wanted to "celebrate the Spring Festival by lighting firecrackers." He then implied that they belonged to a "violent terrorist organization" called "The Party of Islamic Reformers" (*Yisilan gaigezhe dang*) that was established in 1990 and was responsible for these explosions aimed at splitting Xinjiang from the People's Republic of China (hereafter PRC).

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<sup>3</sup> The full Chinese term is *Dong Tujuesidan* and not *Tuerqisidan* so as to provide the historical continuity going back to the Former Han Dynasty, 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, and to dissociate from Turkey. For an extensive Chinese discussion of these terms, see: Pan Zhiping, "'Tujuesidan', 'Dongtujuesidan' yu 'Weiwuersidan'," ["'Turkestan', 'Eastern Turkestan' and 'Uyghuristan'"], *Xicheng yanjiu* [The Western Regions Studies] 3 (2004): 53-60.

The documentary goes on to explain the historical background of Eastern Turkestan separatism saying that this region had been an integral part of Chinese territory since 160 BC. After mentioning the brief control of various nomadic Turkic dynasties of north China, the documentary jumps to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century when "foreign colonialists" deliberately manufactured "Eastern Turkestan." It was meant to replace Xinjiang as the homeland of the "Eastern Turks", and exclude other "Chinese" nationalities. It is on the basis of this "fallacy" that "Eastern Turkestan splittists" claim independence from China. This claim is the origin of the "terrorist criminal activities" (kongbu fanzui huodong) in Xinjiang. From 1992 to 2001, "Eastern Turkestan forces" initiated at least two hundred violent terrorist attacks, in which 162 people of different nationalities, social cadres or religious believers died and more than 440 wounded. As Yang Delu put it, because the victims were of different nationalities including women and children, the violence and terror in Xinjiang are neither ethnic nor religious issues, "but a kind of criminal activity" (yizhong fanzui huodong).

#### *A Terrorist Training Camp*

According to the documentary, terrorists were trained to perform "criminal activities" in more than ten terrorist training camps built as early as 1990 in Kashgar, Hotan, and Aksu (Xinjiang) by "Eastern Turkestan terrorists." It was only two years later, in the wake of investigating the February 5 1992 explosion in Urumqi, that Xinjiang's Police discovered a terrorist training camp in Bokesumu Village, in Yecheng County. This is one of the earliest terrorist training camps of the Eastern Turkestan terrorists. Located in desolate and uninhabited places, training in weapons and explosives lasted for nine months. According to police records, between October 1991 and June 1992, sixty-two terrorists in three groups had been trained there. During the following few years they were engaged in a number of violent terrorist acts.

Having been trained at the "terrorist camp" in Yecheng County, Yibikayin Maimaiti and Duxun Saimaiti<sup>4</sup> led twelve terrorists breaking into the home of Pei Yinghua on November 20 1996, killing him and his wife – one of the village's few Han families. In his testimony Dai Guanghui, Shazhe County Public Security Office Director, said that the murderers – already executed – targeted a rich and influential Han family in order to scare a thousand Han people and drive them away from the region. Uyghur neighbors stated that there was no reason for the killing

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<sup>4</sup> Unless the Uyghur pronunciation could be established, names of people and places are given in their Chinese transliteration.

as relations with Han people in the village had been good. They added that the "terrorists" had also killed Uyghur cadres and religious figures.

*Traitor-Elimination Acts*

Indeed, whereas one of the terrorists' methods to foment ethnic splits is to oppose and exclude Han people, Han people are by no means their exclusive target. On April 29 1996, eight terrorists broke into the homes of four basic-level Uyghur cadres, killing four people and wounding three. According to one of the organizers, the aim had been to eliminate traitors, basic-level cadres with social prestige and religious figures who were close to the Xinjiang government, in other words, collaborators. Two days later, on May 2 1996, the police surrounded the eight terrorists responsible for the murder, when trying to escape. After resisting for more than ten hours, the terrorists took the most extreme action: they committed suicide, killing themselves by a bomb.

Both violent acts, but primarily the former, had been motivated not only by political or ethnic considerations but also by religious incentives. In addition to learning the use of weapons, "Eastern Turkestan terrorists" also went through extreme religious indoctrination. In 1996 the police captured a tape propagating extreme religious ideas at a terrorist training camp. The tape stated: "Can you take part in the battle? He who does not fight and is not willing to sacrifice his life and property has no faith. He and the likes of him should be shot at, without fearing death." Clearly, this is Holy War or Jihad. The "terrorists" declared that in order to establish Islamic rule, it is their belief that they should keep fighting against all the forces that stand in its way by whatever means. Those opposed should become the targets for attack including all non-Islamic people. This, they said, is our Muslim duty. Anyone disobeying the Islamic law is our enemy, even our own parents, not to mention religious figures.

On May 12 1996, the over 70-year old head of the Id Kah mosque in Kashi (Kashgar) and a member of the standing committee of the National Islamic Association, became a target for an assassination attempt. Spanning five hundred years of history, Id Kah is one of the most famous mosques in Asia. Located at Kashi's central square, the mosque attracts a large crowd of Muslims who participate in the services conducted every day. When he left his house on that morning on his usual way to the mosque, the head of the mosque accompanied by his son were attacked by three terrorists and were seriously wounded. He could no longer conduct the services at the mosque. Two years later, in 1998, the Xinjiang Police captured a terrorist who took part in the assassination attempt. At that time, he told the reporter, the order was to kill him because "we believed that he had betrayed the religion. We had to purify his faith, so we had to kill him. We believe he was scum of religion." In

fact, "the terrorists themselves do not have much knowledge of religion," said Zhang Xiuming, Director of the XUAR Police Office. "When I had religious discussions with many well-known religious patriots, they told me that their [the terrorists'] actions directly violate the religious doctrine. Therefore, they just use the religion to achieve their political aims."

*The "Hotan Conference" Plan*

At the beginning of 1996, after "hundreds of terrorists had been trained" and in order to work out a unified course of action and impose strict organizational discipline, the Eastern Turkestan terrorists held a so-called "Eastern Turkestan Islamic Conference" in Hotan. Seized by the police, a video of the conference had been made. According to one of the participants, a member of the so-called "Allah Party [Hizbullah] of East Turkestan" [Dongtu yisilan zhenzhudang], the video was made to commemorate the meeting and to enable other members of the organization who had not participated in the conference, to grasp its spirit. The participants were heavily dressed and their face covered "as a means to improve the quality of the conference. Also, the participants did not want the others to recognize them, so they all wore gauze masks."

The conference formulated disciplinary ground rules. When joining, each member had to pledge his loyalty to the organization; not to hesitate to sacrifice his life and that of his family; to absolutely obey higher level orders; not to ask others about their life; and to impose capital punishment upon those who betray the organization's members and secrets. No one should act without authorization, and those who violate discipline should be punished, depending on how serious the violation is. Anyone who does not act according to his pledge or wants to withdraw could get killed at gunpoint. Detailed notes were taken of each one's home address.

The Hotan conference designed a detailed program of action to be carried out in four stages. In the first stage, the main effort was to raise money and train the men. Unlike before, the new camps trained children between the ages of eight and fifteen who not only received physical training but also went through extreme religious indoctrination exercised under strict centralized control. In the second stage efforts had been made to kill a number of famous "scum" people in Xinjiang. The Hotan Conference had listed twenty-four targets for assassination. The program stated: "Our aim is to wipe out the religious traitors and the scum of our nation and society. By attacking them we warn others and weaken the power of the government: that is [we intend] to drive the Han people away and then explode the bridge [zhaqiao ganhan]."

The goal of the third stage was to create conditions for guerrilla war. After the Hotan Conference ended, the Xinjiang Police destroyed a total

of over ten secret storehouses in different places, used for concealing firearms. It also captured hundreds of different guns as well as a large number of explosive devices including time bombs, explosives and detonators. The last stage was aimed at mobilizing the entire people to take part in the war and wage a life-and-death struggle. A programmatic document issued by the Hotan Conference clearly proposed to propagate Holy War [Shengzhan, Jihad] and to promote independence by performing bigger terrorist acts. In a more precise language the document called on the readers "to perform, at any cost, all kinds of terrorist acts at crowded places, such as kindergartens, hospitals and schools, in order to create a terrorizing climate and to enlarge our influence."

On February 25 1997, less than three months after the Hotan Conference took place, several terrorists carried out a series of explosions on buses no. 10, no. 14 and no. 2 in Urumqi. Two Uyghur primary school pupils, not yet ten years old, who were riding bus no. 10, were killed instantly and others were badly wounded. Caught later, one of the terrorists who had been involved in the February 25 bomb attack confessed: after all, at the time we felt resentful towards the government and wished to take revenge by carrying out the attack. Asked how he felt about the fact that some Uyghurs had been killed he said: "As a subordinate I could only obey orders and submit to the command of my superiors. I just did what I was told to do." He added that he might have carried out whatever he would have been told to do, even a terrorist attack like 9/11. "Our acts against the government, which included the use of bombs and shootings, are basically the same as those undertaken by international terrorists."

#### *The Origin of Weapons*

Between 1992 and 1997 the police uncovered over thirty "Eastern Turkestan" terrorist organizations in Xinjiang and captured hundreds of terrorists. Since then, a number of key members of the "Eastern Turkestan" terrorist organizations in Xinjiang escaped to foreign countries, where they have colluded with international terrorist forces outside China and continued to carry out terrorist acts and violence in Xinjiang. A substantial quantity of weapons and ammunition was captured at the Horgos border station [with Kazakhstan, near Yining] on April 6 1998, on board a lorry.<sup>5</sup> The shipment included AK-47 assault rifles, pistols and silencers, varied ammunition, explosives, detonators, bullets and antitank grenades. Between the middle of February to April 6 1998, the Eastern Turkestan terrorist organizations outside China have smuggled fifteen loads of weaponry into China. According to Wang

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<sup>5</sup> The original Chinese transcript says "train" (*huoche*) but there is no railroad in this border station. Instead it should be "lorry" or "truck", also *huoche*, but a different *huo*.

Mingshan, Deputy Director-General of the Yili-Kazak Autonomous Prefecture Public Security Department, the April 6 load of weapons had been the largest ever smuggled into the PRC since its foundation.

Wang Mingshan said that this weapon shipment had been planned and organized by a terrorist organization headed by Maimaitiming Aizilaiti [Mehmet Emin Hazret], based in Central Asia. Hazret, alias Aizimujiang, had originally worked as a screenwriter for the Xinjiang Tianshan Film Studio. In 1989, after he had left the country, he became the leader of the "East Turkestan Liberation Organization" [Dongtu jiefang zuzhi], a terrorist group outside China. In 1997 Haimiti Maimaitijiang [Hamid Mehmetjan], who at that time had been studying in Egypt, joined the organization and a year later Mehmet Emin Hazret sent him back to China with strict orders to receive the weapons shipment on April 6, to recruit new members to the organization and to send him a list of targets for assassination and bomb attacks. He was just one of over thirty members of the organization who were sent to China. In 1998 Hazret had planned to carry out a series of terrorist attacks in Xinjiang.

On April 24 1998, a serious gunfight broke out between the police and the terrorists. Wang Mingshan states that their resistance was based on professional strategic action. Indeed, during the interrogation they all confessed that they had been specially trained at military bases in Afghanistan. This is corroborated by one of the "key members" of the "East Turkestan Liberation Organization", who had joined in April 1998 and was arrested after he returned to China in April 2000 for illegally manufacturing explosive devices. A native of Yili, Xinjiang, Wuquwenla Rouzi, alias Tajier Aji [Tajir Haji], confirmed that "East Turkestan Liberation Organization" members had been ordered to go abroad for training courses. These include instruction in designing, assembling and disassembling pistols, rifles and other different weapons and making explosive devices.

The "East Turkestan Liberation Organization" was established in 1990. Its main goal has been to oppose and exclude the Han people in Xinjiang and finally to accomplish Xinjiang's independence. It is one of several organizations set up abroad to split the nation. As early as the 1950s, Yimin [Mehmet Emin Bughra], former vice-chairman of the Guomindang Xinjiang Government, and Aisha [Isa Yusuf Alptekin], Secretary-General of the Xinjiang Government, escaped before Xinjiang's liberation. They then established the "East Turkestan Party", "The Association of Eastern Turks Overseas" and other separatist organizations, with the support of foreign anti-China forces. On December 12 1992, these separatist organizations held the so-called "Conference of Eastern Turkestan" abroad. At the conference they designed a staged plan. According to the plan, during the first two years



they would develop the organization and expand their forces; during the next three years they would activate them; in 1997 they would go all out and in 2000 they would achieve independence.<sup>6</sup> In order to implement their plan, in 1997 they began to set up training camps abroad, train terrorists and gradually send their members to China, waiting for the opportunity to carry out acts of terrorism.

By then, "terrorists" had already begun illegal arms production in Xinjiang. On July 5, 1998, the Hotan Police uncovered a small munitions factory for the manufacturing of antitank grenades and other explosive devices at an ordinary village in Moyu County, Hotan Prefecture. On the surface, this residence looks no different from any other but, in addition to seizing a large amount of firearms, ammunition and raw materials, the police discovered a hidden tunnel nearly thirty meters long with electric light. Inside, explosives and cases for making antitank grenades were piled up. Antitank grenades were first found here together with the moulds, raw materials and half-made antitank grenades. In 1999 the Hotan Police located another workshop for illegal production of explosive devices and captured a great amount of homemade antitank grenades. Che Yuping, Director of the Hotan Prefecture Public Security Department, testified that in 1999 alone they captured more than five thousand antitank grenades with lethal radius of about three meters. Within less than three years, between 1997 and 1999, nearly six thousand such grenades were produced by the "terrorist organizations."

Who funded their production and where did the knowledge come from? At the end of 1999, the Xinjiang Police arrested Sidike Hasimu, one of the principal criminals who had illegally made these explosive devices. He arrived in Hotan in early 1999 carrying some chemicals such as sodium hydride and ammonium nitrate – used for the making of explosive devices, a trade he had learned in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. He was one of eight key members that, according to Che Yuping, were sent to slip into Hotan. Soon after their arrival they began recruiting people and training them in making explosives. Their plan was to establish a military stronghold, so that they could confront the local security forces for a long time and fight a guerrilla war. This operation was organized under the command of Aishan Maihesumu [Hasan Mahsum]. A native of Kashgar, he had left Xinjiang in 1997 and shortly afterwards joined the

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<sup>6</sup> Later called The First National Assembly, this was the Eastern Turkestan World National Congress, held in Istanbul. Representing Eastern Turkestani communities from all over the world, the Congress indeed called for independence but there is no evidence whatsoever of any "staged plan" or "timetable." In fact, the meeting has failed to produce an effective organization or coordination for collective action. Yitzhak Shichor, "Virtual Transnationalism: Uygur Communities in Europe and the Quest for Eastern Turkestan Independence," in Stefano Allievi and Jørgen S. Nielsen, Eds., *Muslim Networks and Transnational Communities in and across Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 281-311.

"Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement" [Dongtu yisilan yundong], "a terrorist organization."

According to Mutalifu Hasimu (Mutalif Kasim), the purpose of the organization is to establish a global emirate [qiuzhang] with a constitution based on Islamic law, to be launched in Xinjiang, first by means of war and by military force. Also a native of Kashgar, he is one of the key members of the "Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement" terrorist organization. In June 1999 Hasan Mahsum sent him back to Xinjiang to find weapons and then to look for rich donors and raise money; next he was ordered to get a map of the border area between Afghanistan and China, around Tashkorgan County, and collect intelligence about the geographic conditions there. Mahsum believed that if he would have waged war against China, this is where it would start. Already in the early 1990s, Mahsum was one of the leaders of "Eastern Turkestan" terrorism in China and a lecturer at the Yecheng County "Eastern Turkestan" training camp in Xinjiang preaching the ideas of "Holy War" [Jihad] to the terrorist trainees. In 1997, Mahsum escaped to Afghanistan, where a civil war was raging at the time. With Afghanistan as his base he continued recruiting new trainees for the terrorist training program. One of them was Mutalifu Hasimu.

#### *The Bin Laden Connection*

Mutalifu Hasimu left China for religious studies abroad.<sup>7</sup> Shortly after his arrival and seven months before he was to take his college entrance examination (in September), Hasan Mahsum and others approached him and told him to quit his studies. He was no different than many others who, since the early 1990s, had left Xinjiang for study or business in one of its eight bordering countries. These people have become the targets for the recruitment teams of the "Eastern Turkestan" terrorist organizations operating abroad. These splittists tempted and used pious Muslims who only wanted to improve their knowledge of Islam and led them astray. In 1997 the "Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement" began to set up offices in different Asian countries, recruiting people for a terrorist camp in Afghanistan by offering board, lodging and scholarships as bait. In fact, each terrorist organization had its own recruiting offices. The recruits were sent to Afghanistan and then the local offices placed them in different bases. In addition to physical training they received basic-skill drills such as assembling and disassembling different weapons and shooting. Those considered reliable were later sent to another base for an advanced course in chemical explosives. The entire training course lasted

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<sup>7</sup> The documentary does not specify where he went for his religious studies, but most probably it was Pakistan, an ally of the PRC that the documentary failed to mention by name. See also, Devin T. Hagerty, "China and Pakistan: Strains in the Relationship," *Current History* (September 2002): 284-289.

for one year. Mutalifu Hasimu estimated that Hasan Mahsum may have trained some five-hundred recruits by June 1999, when he returned to China.

Since the 1980s, international terrorist organizations have established more than one hundred training camps in Afghanistan. Captured later, Awuti Mawuti had gone to a base in Huo-Si-Te [probably Khost], in northwest Afghanistan [actually southeast, not far from the border with Pakistan]. The place was heavily guarded and always on alert and ready for combat. Outsiders were not allowed to enter and any strangers spotted were questioned. Anyone missing was found and brought back quickly afterwards. To run this operation a good deal of money was needed but the money did not come from Hasan Mahsum. It came from Arabs' financial support or, to be more precise, mainly from Bin-Laden. The expenses for food, clothes, medicine and other daily necessities were totally covered by Bin-Laden, according to eyewitnesses.

Mutalifu Hasimu was introduced to Bin-Laden in October 1997, when he went to one of his bases with Hasan Mahsum. Hasan Mahsum sent his recruits to be trained in the three bases that were directly under Bin-Laden's command. The two maintained very close relationship. After Bin-Laden had urged him to establish his own training camps in Afghanistan, Hasan Mahsum became his adviser. From the Taleban he received all kinds of weapons, including tanks, and not only for training. Many Xinjiang people – all associated with Hasan Mahsum – fought for the Taleban in the civil war, and about ten had died in battle. Moreover, "Eastern Turkestan" terrorists not only supported the Taleban in the Afghan civil war but also took part in the war in Chechnya.

In August 1997, Apulikemu Kuerban [Abdulkarim Kurban], an "Eastern Turkestan" terrorist, was captured by Russian troops during the Chechen war and then extradited to China. He had fought over twenty battles in the five months he spent in Chechnya before his capture. Apulikemu Kuerban had originally been a worker at the wool mill in Kashgar. He left Xinjiang in 1993 when he was 33, joined the "Eastern Turkestan Liberation Organization" in 1994 and was sent to the Chechen battlefield in 1996 to gain experience in fighting within the framework of a Holy War [Jihad]. The training of some Uyghurs – who identified themselves as Uzbeks – had begun even before the war started.

In addition to China's domestic stability, the actions of "Eastern Turkestan" terrorists also seriously threatened that of neighboring Central Asian countries. In order to raise money, in May 2000 the "Eastern Turkestan Liberation Organization" kidnapped a Xinjiang businessman, and set fire to his ware in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. On May 25 the same year, the terrorists attacked a Chinese working group in Kyrgyzstan, killed one of its members and wounded two more. After the incident they fled to Kazakhstan where they killed three policemen in

Almaty, in September. After 9/11, "Eastern Turkestan" terrorist organizations issued numerous statements, claiming that they had no relations with Bin-Laden and had never agreed with any act of terror or violence. At the time of the interrogation, Hasan Mahsum was in Afghanistan, still alive. He was Bin-Laden's close partner and his determination to carry out his original [Xinjiang] plan was by no means affected by the American offensive in Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup>

*Conclusion: Situation under Control*

Since 1997 "Eastern Turkestan" terrorist organizations have dispatched more than one hundred professionally-trained terrorists back to China and have carried out more than two hundred attacks, including assassinations, explosions, arson and poisoning. These activities have affected the stability, development and normal life in Xinjiang but, in the words of Zhang Xiuming, Director of the XUAR Public Security Office, "we have the capability to control the situation." The religious and cultural variation among the forty-seven different nationalities living there has never caused Xinjiang's separation from China. In fact, Xinjiang's people strongly support, safeguard and uphold China's national unity. In recent years, owing to resolute attacks against the illegal acts of the "Eastern Turkestan" terrorist forces in Xinjiang, the violent incidents are diminishing. Now, Xinjiang's society is stable and people of different nationalities unite. As part of the opening up of western China, the living standards of all nationalities are improving and Xinjiang is becoming a haven for investment and development.

*[End of Transcript]*

### **Postscript Interpretation**

Apparently, the documentary summarized above provides irrefutable "evidence", verbal as well as visual, of the so-called "Eastern Turkestan" terrorism. Yet a closer and also wider look at it reveals some flaws regarding both its information and its assumptions. There is no doubt that Xinjiang has witnessed some violent acts since the early 1990s, if not before. Many of these acts should be attributed to "terrorism." Yet, and this is spelled out also in the documentary and its language, some of them (e.g. attacks on Han Chinese) could be regarded as ordinary "crimes" (robberies and murders) that, for political purposes, have been later deliberately masked as "terrorism" to justify an increased crackdown on

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<sup>8</sup> According to report from Pakistan, Hasan Mahsum died on October 2, 2003. "Military Confirms Killing Chinese 'Terrorist'," *Dawn*, December 24 2003; "'Eastern Turkestan' Terrorist Killed," *China Daily*, December 24 2003.

Uyghurs not necessarily involved in separatist activities. Many clashes in Xinjiang are not necessarily motivated by separatism. Indeed, during one of my visits to Kashgar in the 1990s I witnessed an incident whereby a car driven by Han Chinese hit an Uyghur bicycle rider. Hundreds of Uyghurs gathered within minutes in a makeshift demonstration that could have easily deteriorated into violent riots that Beijing would term "terrorism." In fact, the Chinese are very vague with regard to this term and adopt wide, flexible and inclusive definitions of "terrorism" not only in the media and in official statements but also in its December 2001 criminal code that lists "terrorist" offenses and their corresponding penalties.<sup>9</sup> In a recent article Pan Guang, Director of the Shanghai Institute of European and Asian Studies and an expert on Central Asia, admitted that in the four decades from the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan "'East Turkestan' separatists rarely undertook armed activities within Chinese borders." Furthermore, until the late 1980s "the Chinese government treated those [violent] activities [...] as ordinary criminal acts rather than terrorist acts." It was only from the early 1990s that Eastern Turkestan activism was regarded as "terrorism."<sup>10</sup> In fact, this term has begun to be used by the Chinese Government mainly since the early 2000s. In March 1998 Wang Lequan, secretary of Xinjiang's CCP committee still said: "Since early 1996, a series of *criminal activities* involving violent attacks have taken place in Xinjiang", carried out by "a handful of *criminals*" (emphasis added).<sup>11</sup> The term "terrorism" was widely used only after 9/11.

#### *Inconsistencies and Generalizations*

The preparation of this documentary, nearly a year after 9/11, betrays a PRC attempt to exploit the new situation and ride on the emerging global wave in the fight against terrorism. However, all the incidents presented

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<sup>9</sup> Andrew Scobell, "Terrorism and Chinese Foreign Policy," in Yong Deng and Fei-Ling Wang, Eds., *China Rising: Power and Motivation in Chinese Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), p. 307. For Chinese academic treatment of terrorism, see Liu Yousheng, "Xiandai kongbuzhuyi de tezheng ji queding woguo bentu anquan zhanlue de jichu," [The Characteristics of Modern Terrorism That Determine the Basis of Our Country's Homeland Security Strategy], *Hunan gongan gaodeng zhuanke xuexiao xuebao* [Hunan Public Security College Journal] 17, 5 (August 2005): 45-48; Wang Xiuying, "Lun kongbuzhuyi de tedian ji guoji fankong de tujing," [Discussing Terrorism's Characteristics and International Anti-Terrorist Ways], *Shenyang gongcheng xueyuan bao (shehui kexue ban)* [Journal of Shenyang Institute of Engineering (Social Science Edition)] 1, 3 (July 2005): 32-33; Zhai Jinpeng, "Kongbuzhuyi xiangguan xingwu yaosu yanjiu," [Research of the Essential Behavioral Factors Related to Terrorism], *Shandong jingcha xueyuan xuebao* [Journal of Shandong Police College] 6, 84 (November 2005): 102-104.

<sup>10</sup> Pan Guang, "China's Anti-Terror Strategy and China's Role in Global Anti-Terror Cooperation," *Asia Europe Journal* 2 (2004): 523-524.

<sup>11</sup> Zhongguo Xinwen She, March 13, 1998, in FBIS-CHI-1998-072.

in the documentary had taken place in the 1990s, the last one in June 1999, well before 9/11. No incident is reported in the documentary for the next three years. In his concluding remarks Zhang Xiuming, Director of the XUAR Public Security Office, proudly says: "in recent years [...] the violent incidents are diminishing." Their numbers as given by the Chinese are also confusing and conflicting. The documentary reports "at least two hundred violent terrorist attacks, in which 162 people [...] died and over 440 wounded" from 1992 to 2001. Precisely the same figures are given by Xinhua a year and a half later, yet covering the period 1990-2001.<sup>12</sup> By implication, in 1990-91 there had been no casualties (which we know is not true). It also means that, by mid-December 2003, the Chinese could not report additional casualties. Moreover, Zhao Yongchen, Deputy Director of the Anti-Terrorism Bureau of the Ministry of Public Security, is quoted repeating the same figures in early September 2005, yet referring to "the past ten years." He added that "the 'East Turkestan' terrorist forces remain to be the great terrorist threat to China at present and in future." The same figures (over 160 dead and 440 wounded) were still circulated by Xinhua as late as February 28 2006!<sup>13</sup> In short, the Chinese data are apparently unreliable, which inevitably casts a shadow over the rest of Beijing's arguments, the documentary included.<sup>14</sup>

One of these arguments is that all Eastern Turkestan organizations by necessity adopt violence and terrorism. The documentary refers to four "terrorist" groups: (1) "The Party of Islamic Reformers", (2) "The Allah Party of East Turkestan", (3) "The Eastern Turkestan Liberation Organization" and (4) "The Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement." The first two are hardly known outside China. At best, they are – or were – small and loosely organized of little operative value. At worst, they may have been a figment of Chinese imagination or even invented by Beijing. When the Chinese issued their list of "East Turkestan terrorist organizations" on December 15, 2003, these two "parties" have not been included.<sup>15</sup> Are these terrorist organizations or not? It seems that Beijing has some doubts, at least. But the 2002 documentary does not. Of these organizations, only one, "The Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement", has been recognized as an international terrorist organization by the United States and then added to the UN list in September 2002. China's

<sup>12</sup> "Terrorist Forces Must Absolutely Not Be Allowed to Disrupt National Security and Social Stability," *Xinhua*, December 15 2003, in FBIS-CHI-2003-1215.

<sup>13</sup> "China's Parliament Ratifies UN Convention Against Terrorism Financing," *Xinhua*, February 28 2006, in FBIS. For Zhao's comments see *Xinhua*, September 6 2005, in FBIS.

<sup>14</sup> The following draws on Yitzhak Shichor, "Blow Up: Internal and External Challenges of Uyghur Separatism and Islamic Radicalism to Chinese Rule in Xinjiang," *Asian Affairs* 32, 2 (Summer 2005): 119-135.

<sup>15</sup> There are four groups on the list: The Eastern Turkestan Liberation Organization, The Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement, The World Uyghur Youth Congress and the East Turkestan Information Center.

list includes "The Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement" and the "Eastern Turkestan Liberation Organization", both mentioned in the documentary. Yet, while some evidence is available that these two organizations have most probably been involved in terrorist acts, Beijing has not provided a shred of evidence, least of all publicly, for any terrorist involvement of the other two organizations on its list: The World Uyghur Youth Congress (that has been organizing conferences from time to time) and The East Turkestan Information Center (that has been used to provide reports and data on the Internet and hardly has an office of its own).<sup>16</sup> Not mentioned at all in the documentary, both have been active in Germany since the early 1990s. The Chinese have repeatedly urged the German authorities to ban their activities and arrest their leading functionaries. Still, by December 2004, a year after the list was issued, "the Chinese have not presented any reasons for arrest that would hold during a trial."<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the Germans said that "over the past four years, no attacks by the Uyghurs in China have become known." Two terrorism experts of the German Federal Office of Criminal Investigations were supposed to visit Xinjiang to look at materials collected by China's Public Security Ministry against suspected Uyghur terrorist organizations.<sup>18</sup> Nothing has been heard about it ever since. Of the eleven "East Turkestan terrorists" identified by the Chinese in the December 2003 list, only two are mentioned in the documentary: Mehmet Emin Hazret and Hasan Mahsum. In short, Beijing has not come up with any evidence that connects the two organizations mentioned in the documentary, The Party of Islamic Reformers and The Allah Party of East Turkestan, as well as the two organizations on its December 2003 list (The World Uyghur Youth Congress and the East Turkestan Information Center) and most of the names on its list—to terrorism.

China's efforts to combine all Uyghur groups under one "Eastern Turkestan" umbrella that promotes terrorism do not reflect the reality. To be sure, a small minority of these organizations do endorse terrorism but they are small, marginal and – to judge by the outcome – not terribly effective. Moreover, they have been disregarded and excluded by the mainstream Uyghur organizations that have never promoted terrorism. This is especially true of the new organizations set up in 2004: the World Uyghur Congress and the East Turkestan Government-in-Exile.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> "China Seeks International Support in Counter-Terrorism," *Xinhua*, December 15 2003.

<sup>17</sup> "German Terror Investigators in China," *Der Spiegel*, December 13 2004.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Yitzhak Shichor, "Walking on Two Legs: Uyghur Diaspora Organizations and the Prospects of Eastern Turkestan Independence," *Toronto Studies in Central and Inner Asia* 8 (2006), forthcoming.

Beyond the fact that these two oppose terrorism,<sup>20</sup> the emergence of *two* competitive umbrella organizations underlines what has become the nature of the Uyghur national liberation movement all along, namely, ongoing splits and disunity. To a great extent, it is China's repeated attempts to "unite" these diverse groups under one "Eastern Turkestan" organization and to accuse them of terrorism, separatism and radicalism that contributed more than anything else to the improvement of their international and public image.

*The Myth of Islamic Radicalism*

Similarly, Beijing has consistently and probably deliberately inflated and exaggerated the role of religious "extremism" in Xinjiang, and its involvement in terrorism.<sup>21</sup> Such a view is often shared by the media and even non-Chinese scholars.<sup>22</sup> While the documentary avoids an explicit use of the term "religious extremism", it is frequently using the term *Jihad* (Holy War) and the establishment of an Islamic emirate as the goal of the terrorists.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> "The WUC declares a nonviolent and peaceful opposition movement against Chinese occupation of East Turkestan and an unconditional (...) rejection of totalitarianism, religious intolerance and terrorism as an instrument of policy." "Introducing the World Uyghur Congress," <[www.uyghurcongress.org](http://www.uyghurcongress.org)> (May 1 2006). See also "Declaration of the Formation of the Government-in-Exile of the Republic of East Turkestan," <[www.eastturkestangovernmentinexile.os/about\\_us.html](http://www.eastturkestangovernmentinexile.os/about_us.html)> (May 1 2006).

<sup>21</sup> For example, Ma Ting, "Yisilan shiye lide kongbuzhuyi." [Terrorism in Inner Islamic Perspective], *Xibei dier minzu xueyuan xuebao* [Journal of the Second Northwest Institute for Nationalities] 3 (2004): 96-99; Jiao Pei and Xia Lu, "Yisilan shijie: guoji kongbuzhuyi de zongjiao minzu yinsu fenxi [The Islamic World: an Analysis of the Religious and National Causes of International Terrorism], *Yinshan xuekan* [Yinshan Academic Journal] 17, 3 (May 2004): 81-84.

<sup>22</sup> For example, June Teufel Dreyer, "China's Islamic Challenge," *China Brief* 1, 6 (September 27 2001). Ahmad Lutfi, "China's Islamic Awakening," *China Brief* 4, 10 (May 13 2004), mentions "the radicalization of Islamic identity" and "Islamic insurgency" in Xinjiang. See also Ahmad Lutfi, "Seek Jihad as Far as China," in K. Santhanam and Srikanth Kondapalli, Eds., *Asian Security and China 2000-2010* (New Delhi: IDSA, 2004), pp. 506-515, and Matthew Oresman and Daniel Steingart, "Radical Islamization in Xinjiang – Lessons from Chechnya?" *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, July 30 2003.

<sup>23</sup> See Yitzhak Shichor, "Virtual Jihad: The Islamic Dimension in Uyghur National Separatism in Xinjiang," an unpublished paper delivered at the Annual Convention of the Israel Association for East Asian Studies, the University of Haifa, February 2 2004. For Chinese academic treatments of this topic, see Wu Yungui, "Shixi yisilan shengzhan guan de fazhan yanbian," [A Preliminary Analysis of the Development and Change in the Islamic Concept of Holy War (*Jihad*)], *Xiya Feizhou* [West Asia and Africa] 4 (July-August 1999): 1-7; Shang Quanyu, "Yisilan shengzhan de lilun yuanyuan yu shizhi," [Islamic Holy War (*Jihad*): Theoretical Origin and Real Substance], *Xiya Feizhou* 2 (March-April 2003): 9-12. Wu Yungui is the director of the Institute of World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.



Yet, *Jihad* has been used in Xinjiang mainly as a political rather than a religious term, as it had been used throughout history.<sup>24</sup> Quoted above, Zhang Xiuming, Director of the XUAR Police Office confirmed that "the terrorists themselves do not have much knowledge of religion. (...) They just use the religion to achieve their political aims." Indeed, during my visit my hosts admitted that, since the late 1980s, the government had lost control over Islam. They often complained that there are too many mosques, *imams* and *talips* (religious students), literature and cassettes and widespread ideas of sacrifice and suicide. But this by no means implies that Islam in Xinjiang had become more radical. Presented in the documentary, the Hotan conference was meant to show the "evidence" but it could have easily been fabricated: there has been no mention of this conference anywhere, anytime, as far as the author is aware of. Similarly, Chinese *Hajj* (pilgrimage) missions to Mecca, resumed in 1979 after a fifteen-year break, or the awakening phenomenon of militant-fundamentalist Islam abroad do not automatically feed Islamic extremism at home. Beijing has no doubt about the link between the "three evil forces" (*san gu shili*: separatism, terrorism and religious extremism),<sup>25</sup> but its arguments are unconvincing.

Islam is a very sensitive and elusive topic in Xinjiang. Ordinary people and even most academics, not to mention Uyghurs, are reluctant (at best) to talk about it. Books published in China that briefly deal with Islam in post-1949 Xinjiang generally overstate the link between Islamic radicalism and Uyghur national-separatism, while Uyghur publications tend to understate this link, especially after 9/11. Indeed, though Islam is an integral part of Uyghur collective identity, it is neither dominant nor homogenous – and by no means fundamentalist. An essentially eclectic religion that over generations absorbed local beliefs, it had been affected since the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Ottoman (later Turkish) secular policies. To be sure, southern Xinjiang is evidently and visibly more orthodox than the north or the center but not necessarily more radical. Radical Islam is not a product of Xinjiang – it has been imported from outside, mainly from China's allies, primarily Pakistan. Yet external support for Islamic terrorism and radicalism has diminished considerably ever since the mid-1990s after Beijing warned Muslim countries – including Iran and Saudi Arabia – not to interfere in China's internal

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<sup>24</sup> Kim Hodung, *Holy War in China: the Muslim Rebellion and State in Chinese Central Asia, 1864-1877* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> Bao Lisheng, "Three Evil Forces Threatening Xinjiang's Stability – Interviewing Pan Zhiping, Director of the Central Asia Research Institute of Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences," *Ta Kung Pao*, August 10 2001, in FBIS-CHI-2001-0810. See also Hao Shiyuan, "Minzu fenliezhuyi yu kongbuzhuyi," [Ethno-separatism and Terrorism], *Minzu yanjiu* [Ethnonational Studies] 1 (2002): 1-11; Liu Fengqi, "Kongbuzhuyi yu minzu fenliezhuyi," [Terrorism and National Separatism], *Hebei sheng shehuizhuyi xueyuan xuebao* [Hebei Province Journal of the Socialist College] 1 (October 2003): 41-45.

affairs. Security checks at the border stations (as I experienced a number of times in Turugart Pass) are tight and the guards are looking primarily for religious literature. Likewise, Muslim *Hajj* missions to Mecca are carefully selected and closely monitored and supervised by the Chinese authorities.

However, while Uyghur unrest in Xinjiang has undoubtedly also been fed by religious persecution, it is primarily related to social and economic discrimination. Nationalist aspirations, political demands or a quest for independence are beyond the horizon for most Uighurs in Xinjiang. Invented by the Chinese, the impression that radical Islam has become more influential in Xinjiang can hardly be substantiated. Notwithstanding the Chinese (probably deliberate) admission that the government has failed to control religion, Islam in the PRC has always been under firm state watch. Religious training and leadership have been consistently limited and co-opted.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, the newly opened economic and social mobility opportunities lead the younger generation far away from religion. In fact, though identified as Muslims, most Uyghur Diaspora leaders are very lenient as to maintaining religious prescriptions and prohibitions. In sum, Islamic radicalism in Xinjiang is a relatively rare phenomenon grossly played up by the Chinese authorities, the media and some academics.

## Conclusions

Contrary to the documentary's intention to demonstrate an intensification of "Eastern Turkestan" terrorism that affects not only China's national security but also that of its Central Asia neighbors, the facts show that "terrorism" in Xinjiang has been subsiding significantly since the late 1990s.<sup>27</sup> Beijing itself had downplayed Uyghur "terrorist" threats before 9/11 or when it has been trying to raise foreign investments in Xinjiang: only "an extremely small number of ethnic splittist elements" are engaged in "a handful of violent and terrorist activities. (...) Xinjiang's public order is there for all to see. Facts prove that Xinjiang is stable, security problems do not exist at all, and personal safety is completely guaranteed" (emphasis added).<sup>28</sup> To be sure, just a few days

<sup>26</sup> "At Xinjiang Islamic Religion Institution, Abdulahat Abdurixit Urges Cultivation of Quality Patriotic Religious Personnel," *Xinjiang Ribao* [Xinjiang Daily], August 4 2001, in FBIS-CHI-2001-0827.

<sup>27</sup> Colin Mackerras, "Why Terrorism Bypasses China's Far West," *Asia Times*, April 23 2004. See also: James Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment*. Policy Studies 6 (Washington: East-West Center, 2004).

<sup>28</sup> Chen Guohua, "Wang Lequan and Abulahat Abdurixit Say That Xinjiang's Social Stability Is There for All To See," *Zhongguo Xinwen She*, May 29 2001, in FBIS-CHI-2001-0529. Also a Poliburo member, Wang is secretary of Xinjiang's CCP Committee, and Abdurixit was chairman of the regional government.

before 9/11 Wang Lequan, Xinjiang's CCP secretary said that the destructive activities of "national separatists" and "religious extremists" and their efforts "never affect Xinjiang's stability." In addition Abulahat Abdurixit, chairman of the regional government, stressed: "By no means is Xinjiang a place where violence and terrorist accidents take place" (emphasis added).<sup>29</sup> A few months later he said: "It is fair to say that Xinjiang has been victimized by terrorism."<sup>30</sup> In short, underscoring Eastern Turkestan Terrorism does not necessarily reflect the reality but it does reflect China's changing interests (such as winning U.S. support in the worldwide fight against terrorism).

Because, in spite of its repeated statements, Beijing firmly controls Xinjiang and does not perceive any real, serious or immediate "terrorist" threat to its national security in the northwest. This is evident by the relatively shallow military presence in Xinjiang, both in quantity and definitely in quality – unlike what outsiders believe.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Islamic radicalism in Xinjiang appears to be marginal at best and does not propagate terrorism. Thus, of the "hundreds" Uyghur "terrorists" who had, according to Beijing, collaborated with the Taliban or Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, only twenty-two have been detained by the U.S. at Guantanamo Bay. Washington was ready to release fifteen, some two thirds of them: one third who are totally innocent of collaborating with Al-Qaeda and one third whose case is unclear but who are definitely not terrorists. A U.S. military tribunal had ruled already in spring 2004 that they are not enemy combatants: "They had just been in the wrong place at the wrong time", and ordered them released from Guantanamo. Indeed, on May 5, 2006, it was reported that five Uyghurs had been released to be settled in Albania.<sup>32</sup> Only about one third – seven altogether that had been caught fighting – have been identified as terrorists.<sup>33</sup>

The bottom line is that Beijing has been trying to manipulate public opinion – at home and abroad – by exploiting the remoteness of Xinjiang as well as the cultural distance and the restricted information, to

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<sup>29</sup> Bao Lisheng, "Wang Lequan Says That Xinjiang Is Not a Place of Terror," *Ta Kung Pao* (Hong Kong), September 3 2001, in FBIS-CHI-2001-0903.

<sup>30</sup> *AFP* (Hong Kong), March 8 2002, in FBIS-CHI-2002-0308.

<sup>31</sup> Yitzhak Shichor, "The Great Wall of Steel: Military and Strategy in Xinjiang," in S. Frederick Starr, Ed., *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), pp. 120-160.

<sup>32</sup> "Detainee Release Announced," U.S. Department of Defense, News Release No. 406-06, May 5 2006, <[www.defenselink.mil/releases/2006/nr20060505-12980.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/releases/2006/nr20060505-12980.html)> (May 1 2006).

<sup>33</sup> *The Globe*, December 13 2005. See also *Washington Post*, December 13 2005 and "Uyghur Guantanamo Detainees' Future Uncertain," Uyghur American Association Release, December 22 2005. See also *Washington Post*, January 17 2006 and a transcript of a January 17, 2006 Australian Broadcast Corporation TV program: <[www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2006/s1549632.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2006/s1549632.htm)> (May 1 2006).

influence foreign governments (primarily the United States), international organizations (primarily the United Nations), various NGOs, the media and even some academics using the emerging and fashionable unity in the fight against "terrorist threats."<sup>34</sup> The documentary discussed above is one of the means used, but it missed the target.

Having monopolized political and military power in Xinjiang, Beijing must be aware that Uyghur activism and Islamic radicalism, either endogenous or exogenous, do not constitute a real threat to China's social cohesion and economic stability, let alone to its national security and territorial integrity. Yet, the Chinese have underlined Uyghur activism and Islamic radicalism and have frequently exaggerated their threat. For one reason, they want to forestall and preempt a likely deterioration in the ethno-religious power balance in Xinjiang and thereby prevent a negative outcome that could happen if nothing or little would be done. For another, the perception it creates is then used to justify and legitimize a further crackdown campaign – ultimately aimed at integrating China's restive nationalities into the 'people' (on behalf of modern socialist values) or to educate and at the same time warn other nationalities (and social groups) about the consequences (on behalf of traditional Chinese values). Finally, by depicting national separatism and religious radicalism as a threat linked to global "terrorism", and not just to China, Beijing can (and does) scare potential external supporters (in the West, in Central Asia and in the Middle East). This has opened the door for the PRC to join the U.S.-led international crusade against terrorism and, moreover, to gain unexpected sympathy and actual support.

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<sup>34</sup> Joshua Kurlantzick, "China's Dubious Role in the War on Terror," *Current History* (December 2003): 432-438.