

***Xinjiang - China's Northwest Frontier.*** K. Warikoo. Taylor & Francis. 2016. 211 pp. (ISBN13: 9781317290292)

Xinjiang is one of the People's Republic of China's ethnic "autonomous" regions; a province that officially allows special social, religious and even political rights for the ethnic minorities native to the region. However, in the region, these privileges are not always applied. There is no doubt that China has strategic issues at stake in Xinjiang. Throughout Chinese history, this province has been one of the vast buffer zones shielding the core of China from foreign attacks and influences. But, equally, Xinjiang has long served as a key trade route for Chinese commerce through the notorious Silk Road, connecting mainland China to Central Asia, the Middle East and Europe. Today, Chinese strategists are looking back to the old Silk Road routes, as a way to safeguard economic security. Central Asia possesses vast energy resources, which are indispensable for future Chinese economic development. In that sense, Xinjiang offers an essential passageway to Central Asia. This geopolitical aspect reinforces Beijing's perceptions about the need to keep the Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities under control.

This edited volume, put together by academics and areas specialists from India, the People's Republic of China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Russia and Taiwan, provides detailed analysis of ethnic relations, Uyghur resistance, China's policy vis-à-vis Xinjiang and the emerging trade dynamics at the heart of Eurasia. The introductory chapter by K. Warikoo certainly helps the reader understand the historical, social, economic, political and geographical parameters of the Xinjiang *problematique*.

The author rightfully pinpoints the fact that Xinjiang is the pivot of Asia, where the frontiers of China, Tibet, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia intersect with each other. Warikoo provides three more chapters to this volume, mainly exploring the indigenous cultural heritage of Xinjiang and Qing policy in the region, luminous insights into military conquest, demographic transformations, political maneuvering and trade concessions as a way of maintaining territorial integrity, all from a historical perspective.

A number of authors in this edited volume approach the Xinjiang question by highlighting peculiar aspects of Xinjiang's historical and contemporary dynamics. The chapter by Ji Zhen Tu examines the main features and importance of Xinjiang's industrial system, based on fossil fuels, steel and non-ferrous metals. The part by Qiu Yonghui gives insight into the new Chinese disposition vis-à-vis the nationalities policy towards minorities. China has pursued a policy of internal migration by moving the majority Han Chinese into Xinjiang through economic incentives, in order to dilute the population.

Consequently, the demographic and ethnic balance of the region started to change over time, which in turn created its own tensions, as the Uyghurs feel discriminated against in their own homeland. The chapter by K. R. Sharma analyzes the ethnic problem in China, focusing on Uyghur demands for genuine autonomy. Debasish Chaudhuri's chapter investigates the state-driven process of territorial, political and economic integration of Xinjiang into mainstream China, covering the period from the early 20th century to the present. The chapters by Chen Xi, Wang Jianming and Wang Qinji provide more local Chinese perspectives on the ongoing social and economic development processes in Xinjiang.

The remaining chapters focus more on the international dimension of the Xinjiang question. The chapter by Natalia Ablazhey focuses on the issue of Kazakh diaspora in Xinjiang by providing a historical perspective on the process of migration from Kazakhstan to Xinjiang and vice versa. The chapter by Umarov presents Central Asian perspectives in the domain of economic cooperation between Xinjiang and the neighboring newly independent former Soviet Central Asian countries. The part by A. M. Yessengaliyeva and S. B. Kozhirova lays forward the fundamentals of the fast growing cross-border trade between China and Kazakhstan, which in turn plays a pivotal role in terms of the economic development in Xinjiang. Evgeny Vodichev, in his chapter, extends this international dimension into Russia by scrutinizing the potentiality of cross-border interaction between Xinjiang and South Siberia.

Finally, the two closing chapters, by Warikoo and Fu Jen-Kun, determine the scope and magnitude of ethnic-religious separatism in Xinjiang and China's policy response. China's 'One Belt, One Road' initiative, which has become the centerpiece of China's economic diplomacy in Eurasia, has already started to transform the outlook of the region. Xinjiang and Central Asia play a crucial role in the success of this initiative. On the other hand, the growing Uyghur demand for a separate homeland and continuing ethnic tension in Xinjiang pose serious challenges to China's authority in the region.

This edited book is most certainly a great addition to Chinese and Silk Road studies. Moreover, the volume is valuable in a sense that it offers a non-western analysis of Xinjiang. It provides a new perspective, with a focus on social, economic and political developments of the region in modern and contemporary times. It would certainly benefit immensely scholars and researchers of International Relations, Security Studies, and Central Asian/Chinese studies.

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