

The relevance of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region to the China Dream

The Belt and Road Initiative as a case study

Research puzzle

Over the last years, policies implemented by the Chinese Government in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) have become stricter. Claims of forced labor and re-education camps are raising concern amongst the International Community. Not long ago, Beijing declared that said accusations are false and that the government is trying to deal with "terrorist threats" through education to eradicate extremism. Beijing is seeking stability to open the region for the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Xinjiang's strategic geographic location is becoming more vital for the Chinese Government to achieve its political agenda in the region.



Research question

How relevant is the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region to the completion of the China Dream?



Objectives

Analyze the relevance of the XUAR to the China Dream, studying the BRI as a vehicle to advance in said endeavor.



Case-oriented research question

To what extent does the BRI in the XUAR constitute a foreign policy instrument to fulfill the China Dream?



Hypothesis

Exerting control over the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is decisive to the Chinese leadership to fulfill the China Dream due to economic, political, and security factors.



Methodology

Study from a Neoclassical Realism perspective on foreign policy

Scholarly work

Analysis of qualitative data

Official government documents

Qualitative case study

The XUAR

Strategic Location

Only border China Shares with Central Asia

- Ethnic minorities and separatist sentiments due to specific policies implemented by the CCP to 'maintain' stability.

Analysis

- Foreign policy instrument to achieve a series of objectives that would lead the CCP closer to fulfilling China's Dream.
- The Chinese Government uses the BRI as a tool to attain Xinjiang's integration into China while consolidating its power in the region.
- Behind the BRI (fleche) "double-opening- approach" of the initiative to integrate and develop the Xinjiang are with Central Asia while establishing stability, security, and cooperation in the zone

The China Dream

- Parts from an idea of rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through some concrete goals to be fulfilled in "two centennials".
- Highlights the importance of **reunification** of the motherland and the role this concept plays in the CCP's legitimacy

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the XUAR

Conclusions

- The China Dream would be completed when China is modern, strong, wealthy and a global power. Unification under the "One-China Policy" is key.
- The BRI is a linchpin for China, both economically and strategically. Therefore, given Xinjiang's strategic location, the BRI's success cannot be possible without total control over the Region. Xinjiang is a central hub for the BRI to connect with other countries.
- The BRI is an instrument to strengthen material power capabilities, therefore shaping China's foreign policy. Neoclassical realism stresses the role of both independent (systemic) and intervening (domestic) variables. The BRI in Xinjiang plays both roles since its used to obtain economic advancement and to establish security and stability in the region.

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