

The Uighurs: Britain's Double-Edged Razor To Cut Up China and Beyond

by Ramtanu Maitra

On March 7, two Chinese Uighurs, travelling on China Southern airline flight CZ6901, were taken off the plane at Lanzhou and taken into custody for trying to blow up the plane. The incident indicated the activation of disgruntled Uighurs by Britain, to create chaos within China and disrupt its final preparations for the Beijing Olympics. Three days later, demonstrations against China began in Lhasa, Tibet. After three days of relatively peaceful demonstrations, Tibetan rioters took control and set fire to shops owned by ethnic Chinese, burning many of them alive.

Protests spread from Tibet into three neighboring provinces on March 16, as Tibetans continued to defy a Chinese government crackdown. Angry demonstrations broke out in Tibetan communities in Sichuan, Qinghai, and Gansu provinces. Beijing said it had collected enough evidence to state that the demonstrations were planned, and they were planned to be violent.

U.S. intelligence-funded Radio Free Asia reported subsequently that several hundred Uighurs had staged a demonstration in Khotan, in Xinjiang province, to protest against limits on the wearing of headscarves by Muslim women, and to demand the release of political prisoners and an end to the torture of Uighurs. Fu Chao, an official with the Khotan Regional Administrative Office, said that the protest involved people who wanted to establish an Islamic nation and to separate Xinjiang from China. The Uighurs, who are a dominant ethnic group in Xinjiang, are Muslims.

On April 1, the *Washington Post* published an op-ed by Uighur dissident Rebiya Kadeer, based in the United States and president of the Uighur American Association, expressing her desire to show "solidarity with the Tibetan people and support their legitimate aspirations for genuine autonomy." She reminded fellow Uighurs of February 1997, when "thousands of Uighurs demanding equality, religious freedom and an end to repression by the government peacefully protested in the Ghulja region of East Turkestan, an area designated the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region by the Chinese government. Armed paramilitary police confronted the unarmed demonstrators and bystanders, killing dozens on the spot, including women and young children. In the aftermath of the protest, thousands of Uighurs were detained on suspicion of participating in the demon-

stration. Tragically, hundreds of Uighurs were executed."

What emerged from the March 9 incident and the April 1 op-ed by Kadeer, were two sides of the same coin used by the British controllers of many radicalized Muslims, to create chaos and confusion, and even secessionism against nations, for geopolitical reasons. The Uighurs, now caught in that British meat grinder, will be deployed to disrupt the Beijing Olympics and provoke China to take repressive actions.

Uighurs Became British Pawns

Although the Uighurs have been re-activated by the British at a time when the Olympic torch was being brought to China from Athens for the Olympics in August, the plan to use them to contain China and to implode it from inside was conceived a long time ago.

British colonial policy toward the Muslim world has long been formulated by Bernard Lewis. The British-born Lewis, now at Princeton University, started his career as an intelligence officer and has remained in bed with British intelligence ever since. Avowedly anti-Russia and pro-Israel, Lewis reaped a rich harvest among U.S. academia and policymakers. He brought President Jimmy Carter's virulently anti-Russian National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, into his fold in the 1980s, and made the U.S. neo-conservatives, led by Vice President Dick Cheney, dance to his tune on the Middle East in 2001. In between, he penned dozens of books and was taken seriously as a historian. But Lewis is what he always was: a British intelligence officer who is manipulating the Muslims to exert British control over resource-rich Arabia and Central Asia, and undermine sovereign nation-states.

The Uighurs became pawns in the hands of the British, the master chessmen who began re-arranging Arabia, the Maghreb nations in North Africa, and lands situated in the Mesopotamian plain in the early part of the last century. They used one Arabian tribe against another, one Muslim sect against another, and it became evident to Muslim leaders that Britain was the maker and breaker of nations. It was that way when Britain was the powerful colonial power, and it is the same even today when Britain is not. Although Britain is no longer capable of winning any war by itself, it has co-opted the Americans to finance such projects and do the dirty work, while undermining the American purpose and national interest.



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The railroad from Xining to Lhasa (in Tibet) is one of the infrastructure projects launched by China to develop its backward western regions. It crosses the "Roof of the World," the Kunlun Shan mountain ranges. The world's steepest and highest railway, it has more than 960 km of track laid at altitudes over 13,000 feet.

Britain's use of the Uighurs can be understood from that historical perspective alone.

The origins of the Uighur people may be traced back to the Uyghur khanate of the 700s A.D. The khanate broke away from the Turkic Empire and settled across the Tian Shan Mountains, in the area of the modern-day Chinese cities of Urumchi and Tarpan. In 1932, a local Uighur warlord, who turned out to be a downright rascal, reclaimed semi-autonomy during China's Qing dynasty. The mess created by this warlord resulted in widespread rebellion in 1933, and brought into the rebellious group various ethnic varieties of Chinese who lived there at that time. The short-lived and ill-administered rule of the warlord ended with takeover by a military commander. According to some observers, this commander survived with blessing of the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin until 1944, when he was finally replaced by a Kuomintang (KMT) governor for Xinjiang province.

The KMT retained control of the south until the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Liberation of 1949, when the KMT governor surrendered, leaving the Uighur leaders as the CCP's only rival for power in Xinjiang. Following a July 1949 meeting in Ghulja with a representative from the new People's Republic of China (P.R.C.), the Uighur leadership was invited to Beijing for further consultation. Reports indicate that the plane carrying the Uighur leaders crashed en route on Sept. 3, 1949, killing all aboard. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) had already moved in, taking control of northern Xinjiang.

The arrival of the CCP led to the departure of many thousands of Uighurs who had the dream and principal motivation of "pan-Turkism"—re-creation of a band of Turkic-speaking

states, stretching across Central Asia from the homeland of Ankara to Xinjiang. Although many thousands of Uighurs left China, about 8.5 million still live in Xinjiang and elsewhere in China. It is not clear how many live outside China, but most live in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakstan, on China's western borders. Most Uighurs who dream of setting up "Uighuristan" are highly vulnerable to the manipulations by the British, who promise to help realize their hopes, but instead, use them as geopolitical pawns to join hands with other dissident ethnic groups in the area, to weaken China, Central Asian Muslim nations, and countries situated on the southern tier of Russia.

Chinese Development Efforts

One of China's weakest flanks is its western region. Thinly populated and jutting into an area dominated by people who are Muslim by religion and products of an entirely different culture than the Chinese of eastern China, western China remains culturally, politically, and militarily highly vulnerable. It became evident to Chinese policymakers during the 1980s, that to emerge as a global power, the country must first work toward reducing the territorial vulnerability of the western region. With the Soviet Union in its death throes at that time, Beijing had to ensure that China's territorial integrity in the west and southwest were not violated by the new forces emerging in the region.

In 1999, the Chinese government announced its official plan to develop western China. Its goal is to try to achieve a satisfactory level of economic development there in a five- to ten-year time-frame, and to establish a "new western China" by the middle of the 21st Century.

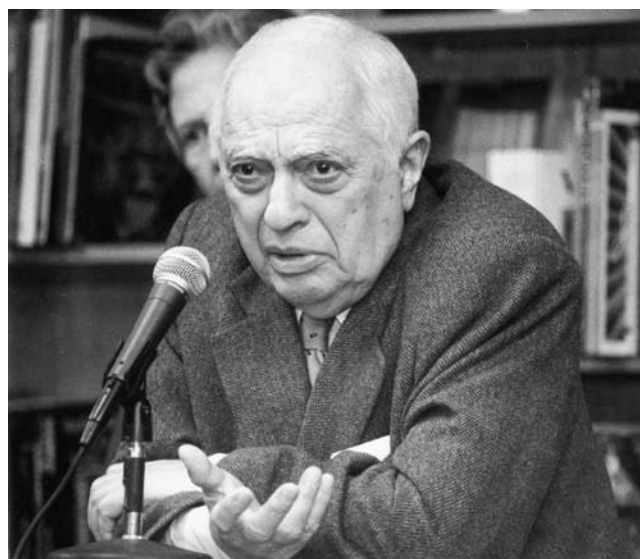
China's western region includes 11 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities under the direct administration of the central government: Shaanxi, Qinghai, Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, Ningxia, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Gansu, Tibet, and Chongqing. The region covers 5.4 million square kilometers, 57% of the country's land area, and has a population of 285 million people, 23% of the total population of the nation. More than half of the country's identified natural resources are in the western region.

The "Go West" strategy was announced at the 16th Party Congress, as Interfax news agency reported in 2005. The policy objective is often simplistically depicted as China's interest to pursue both Russian and Central Asian energy sources. But the strategy is actually more complex. It is to ensure population settlement in the West, and thus reduce the territorial vulnerability of western China, and also build up a long-term base for a productive workforce—a prerequisite for making significant inroads into the region's oil and gas fields, and exploring its other natural resources.

Broadly speaking, China projected three infrastructural requirements in its process of strengthening western China and integrating it with the neighboring regions. First is the Karakoram Highway (KKH), built to link China to Pakistan; second, the Gwadar port, to link China-Pakistan to the Persian Gulf and Central Asia; and third, a road across the Kulma Pass, to link southwest Xinjiang with the old Soviet trans-Pamir military highway. The first two projects were elaborated and pursued in the context of China's Pakistan policy. Though not as directly relevant to the present discussion, linking up Tajikistan and China by means of a road through the Kulma Pass is an important Chinese initiative in its own right.

The border between China and Tajikistan, then a part of the Soviet Union, had been sealed tightly for almost a century during the Soviet era. But now, trade is growing, and the opening of the Kulma Pass brings real possibilities to a remote and undeveloped region. The Kulma Pass must be one of the highest trading routes on Earth, set as it is among the towering peaks of the Pamir Mountains, more than 4,000 meters high. The effect of opening the Kulma Pass in 2004 was visible almost immediately. Within days, the bazaars of Tajikistan were full of Chinese-made clothes, shoes, and household goods. Before the pass was opened, these wares had to be trucked into Tajikistan via neighboring Kyrgyzstan. The pass also opens up the opportunity to the Tajiks to reach the Karakoram highway, which winds down to Pakistan, and to the ports on its southern coast.

The success of Beijing's plan to develop the western part of the country is evident now. The Russians, for instance, have concluded that western China is now a place worthy of investment. The Russian oil-giant Gazprom announced in 2007 that it would begin planning for two oil and gas pipelines to western China. In addition, China has begun looking at the Caspian basin area for procuring supplementary energy supplies.



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

British intelligence hand Bernard Lewis shaped the strategy of manipulating Muslims to exert British control over Southwest and Central Asia.

But, piping oil and gas from the Caspian Sea area, and Central Asia as a whole, is only one aspect of China's western strategy. Central Asia allegedly possesses considerable mineral reserves. Besides gold, uranium, and silver, reserves of such important minerals as aluminum, copper, zinc, and lead are reported. It also has small reserves of rare minerals such as tungsten and molybdenum. All these minerals, and more, are crucial for China's fast-developing industrial sector, which also includes its military hardware.

How Britain Strikes Back

These developments posed a "serious problem" to Britain, which wanted to contain China in the west and Russia in the north, and maintain control over the Muslim nations that own the oil and gas fields of Middle East and Central Asia. The Uighurs were uneasy about China's western development plan, since it would disrupt their "way of life" and lead to their integration with the Han and other Chinese ethnic groups who would be involved in the western China development plan. This is the hook used by the British to create a militant Uighur community, ready to pick up arms against China.

The way the British work the dissident Uighurs against the Chinese is like a two-edged razor. What is visible to one and all is the gentle face of Uighur individuals such as businesswoman *cum* human rights activist Rebiya Kadeer, or the humane pleas of Uighur individuals such as Enver Tohti in the U.K. These individuals "point out" that human right violations against the Uighurs in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) by Beijing were committed in China's drive to develop and "occupy" western China, and settle the area with Han Chinese. The key in this part of the British modus operandi is to keep the ethnic identity of Uighurs intact, by ap-

FIGURE 1



peeling to the world against “sinofication” of the XUAR. It is not much different than London’s strategy in directing the Tibetans against China in Tibet, Gansu, and a few other provinces where Chinese-Tibetans reside.

This side of the razor is provided by Amnesty International, which is infested by British intelligence-MI6, in particular. Amnesty International issued a 24-page report in 2007 on the “policies of the Chinese government” towards the Uighurs in the XUAR. The document dwelt on China’s “crack-down” against organized religion as part of Beijing’s communist ethos, and tried to establish its view that China has seized upon the 9/11 events to persecute the Uighur Muslims and label them as “terrorists.” The report stressed that the Uighurs are a persecuted Muslim community that has been ignored far too long.

However, Amnesty’s authors chose to ignore the fact that the Uighurs are not the only Muslims in China; the Hui Muslims are also a recognized minority of several millions, and minorities of Tajiks, Kyrgyz, and Kazaks are to be found in Xinjiang. Two percent of China’s population is Muslim—a deceptively small statistic, until one realizes that in a country of 1.2 billion, that amounts to a total of 24 million, of which the Uighurs constitute about 8.5 million

British intelligence’s promotion of the “Uighur cause” has intensified animosity between the Uighurs and Beijing. Tensions are also exacerbated by the fact that much wealthier Han enterprises exercise a monopoly on most of the area’s scarce resources. In other words, China’s plan to develop western China has created a new situation in Xinjiang, to which some Uighurs find it difficult to adjust. British intelligence is using Uighurs inside Xinjiang, with the help of Uighur dissidents abroad, to keep the pot boiling. Britain is hoping that China will come down on the Uighurs with a hammer, providing London an opportunity to organize internationally to move ahead with censure against Beijing, or to extract concessions

from Beijing elsewhere.

The other edge of London’s razor is provided by the Uighur terrorists operating from the undefined borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the rocky terrains of Central Asia. High-level Indian and Pakistani security analysts have pointed out from time to time the presence of Uighur terrorists in Pakistan’s Pushtun tribal belt. Now and then one comes across references to the finding of bodies of Uighurs and Tajiks, in addition to bodies of Uzbeks and Pushuns. There was at least one identification of a Uighur who was killed, and there are refer-

ences to some Uighurs and Tajiks acting as the junior partners of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Islamic Jihad Union. Uighurs could be found working for the CIA-funded Radio Liberty in Germany, organizing against China on Tibet.

During the 1980s, the Pakistani military’s training of Uighurs from Xinjiang, to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan, became an irritant in Sino-Pakistani relations. When the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s, with the full backing of Pakistan’s military, China became apprehensive about Pakistan turning into a catalyst for an Islamic revival in its troubled western region.

Since the centerpiece of China’s western China development plan is to connect the Karakoram Highway in the north to the Persian Gulf in the south, through Pakistan’s Pushtun belt and Balochistan, Britain has succeeded in evoking anti-Chinese anger among the Balochs. In this context, an Indian analyst pointed out that there are two groups of Uighur militants. One group, like the Balochs, is fighting for independence for the Uighur homeland. It is not pan-Islamic and does not accept the ideology of al-Qaeda. Another group is pan-Islamic and has accepted the leadership of al-Qaeda in the International Islamic Front (IIF). The move is for cooperation between the Balochs and those Uighurs who are fighting for independence but reject al-Qaeda. Both these underground groups have been infiltrated by British intelligence, among others.

British Foot-Soldiers in Central Asia

Writing for the *Jamestown Foundation Journal* (Vol. 2, No. 4), analyst Stephen Ulph, in his article “Londonistan,” seemed intrigued by that fact that scores of violent Islamic movements remain anchored in London. He wrote: London “is also a center for Islamist politics. You could say that London has become, for the exponents of radical Islam, the

most important city in the Middle East. A framework of lenient asylum laws has allowed the development of the largest and most overt concentration of Islamist political activists since Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. Just ask the French, whose exasperation with the indulgent toleration afforded to Algerian Islamic activists led them to dub the city dismissively as *l'antechambre de l'Afghanistan*.¹ They certainly have a point. Many of bin Laden's fatwas [religious edicts] were actually first publicized in London. In fact, the United Kingdom in general seems to differ from other European states in the degree to which it became a spiritual and communications hub for the jihad movement. . . ."¹

Ulph does not, however, ask why it is that London remains an "Aladdin's Cave," chock-full of Islamic radical dissidents. Britain is no longer a military power of substance. To be an almost-equal partner in the Atlantic Alliance, Britain has two important ingredients to offer to the United States: first, its ability to undo the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, and parts of the Indian subcontinent through the use of people living in London's Aladdin's Cave; and second, its control of world currency movements through the City of London.

The old British colonial establishment, with Bernard Lewis as its mentor to manipulate the aggressively stupid American elite and bickering Muslims, appears to have set in motion events that would unleash endless bloodshed in Central Asia. The Uighur militants, now full-fledged terrorists, fit into this scene like fish in water. London's objective is to keep both China and Russia under an open-ended threat. At this point, there is no one who can better serve this "Lewis Doctrine" than Muslims nurtured in Britain—the Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Banned in parts of Europe and in many Muslim countries, Hizb ut-Tahrir quickly worked out where to set up its home. It is headquartered in London, but also has a strong organizational presence in Birmingham, Liverpool, and Bradford.

Multicultural Britain welcomed Syrian-born cleric Omar Bakri Mohammed, who had been expelled from Saudi Arabia. Although portrayed as non-violent by British authorities, Bakri's links to Osama bin Laden are widely known. Excerpts of a letter to Bakri from bin Laden, sent by fax from Afghanistan in the Summer of 1998, were published in the *Los Angeles Times*. Bakri later released what he called bin Laden's four specific objectives for a jihad against the United States: "Bring down their airliners. Prevent the safe passage of their ships. Occupy their embassies. Force the closure of their companies and banks." In Britain, under the umbrellas provided by British intelligence, Hizb ut-Tahrir preaches its extremist ideology to huge crowds. The *Guardian* reported on the group's 2003 annual conference in Birmingham, which attracted 8,000 people—"by far the most for a Muslim organization."

In the early 1990s in Britain, the National Union of Students tried to ban the group from campuses, describing it as

FIGURE 2

Insurgents' Destination: The Fergana Valley



"the single biggest extremist threat in the U.K." Today, Hizb ut-Tahrir is stronger than ever, recruiting new members from among middle class Muslims attending university.

The Fergana Valley

For years, Central Asian governments have pointed to the Fergana Valley [Figure 2] as a hotbed of Muslim extremists aiming to set up an Islamic state in the region. Largely ethnically Uzbek, the valley is split among Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, in a confused patchwork of Soviet-era borders that often leaves enclaves of one country surrounded by the territory of another. In general, Uzbekistan holds the valley floor, Tajikistan holds its narrow mouth, and Kyrgyzstan holds the high ground. Though the valley mouth is narrow, the valley itself is vast, at 22,000 square kilometers (8,500 square miles). The Pamir and Tian Shan mountains that rise above it are only dimly visible, but they are the main source of the water for the valley.

During the Soviet era, the valley was a major center of cotton and silk production, and the hills above are covered by walnut forests. The valley also has some oil and gas. That scene today has not changed much. What has changed significantly since the 1990s, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, is the former Soviet Union's integration with the "free world"; and that process has made Central Asia economically decrepit and turned it into a hotbed of transnational Islamic militants, controlled and funded by outside forces. Recently, the Kyrgyz media reported that personnel of the country's border control services said that the illegal entry of foreign nationals and individuals without any citizenship into Kyrgyzstan was on the rise. What is important to note is that these militants were not parachuted out of airplanes: They are coming through Afghanistan and Pakistan.

1. *EIR* exposed this years ago. See, for example, Jeffrey Steinberg et al., "Levy Sanctions on Britain for Harboring Terrorists!" *EIR*, April 4, 1997.

It could very well be a ticking time bomb for India, China, and Russia.

Apart from various Islamic preachers, two major Islamic groups function in the fertile Ferghana Valley. The common objective of these groups is to change the regimes in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan. These are the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Hizb ut-Tehrir. Many trained terrorists among the Uighurs, Chechens, Uzbeks, and other ethnic militias work directly under these two main groups.

While the IMU openly thrives on violence, the Hizb ut-Tehrir is strongly promoted by the United Kingdom as peaceful. But records indicate that the IMU and the Hizb ut-Tehrir work hand-in-hand. Most of the IMU recruits are from the Hizb ut-Tehrir, according to Rohan Gunaratna, an expert on world terrorist outfits. Gunaratna claims that Khaled Sheikh Muhammad, the alleged mastermind of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks in the United States, and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the Jordanian who was active until he was killed last year, in the Iraqi insurgency against U.S. occupying forces, were both once members of the Hizb ut-Tehrir.

The relationship between the Taliban and the IMU predates Sept. 11. In September 1996, after the Taliban had captured the Afghan capital, Kabul, Juma Namangani and Tahir Yuldashev—long-time adversaries of President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan—held a press conference in the city to announce the formation of the IMU. Namangani, who had served as a Soviet paratrooper in Afghanistan in the 1980s, became the group's leader (or amir), and Yuldashev its military commander. Their aim was to topple Karimov and turn Uzbekistan, and ultimately the whole of Central Asia, into an Islamic state. The Taliban provided them with a place for shelter, and training and plotting against Karimov. It is also said that Yuldashev developed contact with Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, and the two became supportive of each other. Namangani was killed in an explosion in 2001, but Yuldashev is still very much around the Pushtun belt in Pakistan.

As one Indian analyst pointed out, Osh and Jalalabad, the cities that spearheaded the regime change in Kyrgyzstan, are Hizb ut-Tehrir strongholds. The Hizb ut-Tehrir is making huge gains in a belt stretching from the Ferghana provinces of Namangan, Andijan, and Kokand (contiguous to Osh and Jalalabad) to the adjacent Penjekent Valley (Uzbekistan) and Khojent (Tajikistan).

Ria Novosti quoted Russia's Federal Security Service director, Nikolai Patrushev, on March 31, 2008: "There have been repeated attempts by the international terrorist organizations Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan to move their operations to the territory of the Russian Federation, including the Urals region."

Russia had earlier identified Hizb ut-Tehrir links to radical Islamist groups in Chechnya. And the Hizb ut-Tehrir has been placed on a list of banned organizations by the country's Supreme Court.