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THE CIVILISING PROJECT BY CHINA STATE: XINJIANG CASE

Key words: Civilising, Social disciplining, Xinjiang, Uyghurs.

From a historical point of view, Chinese state interests in Xinjiang originated out of the need to protect the country from foreign invasion. However, the economic prospects of this westernmost border region, a geographical crossroads of Eurasia, is another reason why the Chinese rulers have never lost sight of the importance of “civilizing” the local ethnicity, integrate them to *Zhonghua mingzu* family.

The veteran sinologist professor Thomas Heberer¹ provides his view of the Chinese way of modernization. In his fundamental work “Social Disciplining and Civilising Processes in China: The Politics of Morality and the Morality of Politics”, Heberer argues that China state is building the developed country by focusing not only on political and economic changes, but also on modernization of minds and behavior of people. This requires disciplining and civilising processes in top-down manner² and any alternative attempts are strictly forbidden by this leadership. He also stressed that modernization could be reached by the different path³. The Chinese path differs from Westernization. China is continuing its progress started by Den Xiaoping’s reform and opening-

¹ Thomas Heberer – the Senior Professor of Chinese Politics and Society at the Institute of Political Science and the Institute of East Asian Studies at the University Duisburg-Essen in Germany. He is specializing on issues such as political, social and institutional change, entrepreneurship, strategic groups, the Chinese developmental state, urban and rural development, political representation, corruption, ethnic minorities and nationalities’ policies, the role of intellectual ideas in politics, fieldwork methodology, and political culture.

² Speaking about top-down process of the state-building in China, Thomas Heberer referred to Philip S. Gorski book “The Disciplinary Revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe”.

³ Thomas Heberer develops the idea of “multi-modernity” referring to the works of Eisenstadt, Tu, Fourie, Meyer and de Sales Marques.

up (改革开放). Xi Jinping expects to achieve the China's modernity till 2049/2050⁴.

Heberer has provided a definition of *social disciplining* as “the implementation of government measures aimed at disciplined behavior and finally self-discipline or self-regulation within a given society in the interests of this larger community”⁵ [Heberer, 2023, p. 19]. Describing the term *civilising* he used the definition by Elias⁶ – “creation of a new societal morality and, on the other hand, in the sense of civilised behavior related to good manners and decency, refinement of life and civilised standards in terms of violence, bodily functions, table manners, social etiquette and internalized self-restraint” [Heberer, 2023, p. 20].

In my previous published papers, I covered the Sinisization of Chinese Muslims through the historical evolution. China state explained this “adaptation to the local conditions” as a political and ideological necessity, as the best course for modernization and unification of the big multiethnic country [Golod, 2023a]. Modern Chinese nationalism serves as a tool for the Chinese Communist Party to maintain control over assimilation of ethnic minorities into Han culture as well as to drive progress in China despite of the foreign criticism [Golod, 2023b]. In the context of Thomas Heberer work, could we consider the Sinisization campaign as a crucial sub-element of larger in scale civilising and social disciplining project by China state, in the interest of a larger community, the Han ethnic majority? The answer is yes.

According to Heberer, China state is civilising and social disciplining through four fields of modernization: the function of the state as a moral state striving to create a new social morality in urban and rural areas; the fight against corruption to discipline officials; the Social Credit System aimed at reinforcing social trust and creating a new moral order and social discipline and disciplining and civilising ethnic minorities [Heberer, 2023, p. 112].

In his book, Heberer showed the case study of civilizing in four minority regions⁷, one of them being Xinjiang Autonomous Region. In term of social

⁴ Xinhua. Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi_Jinping's_report_at_19th_CPC_National_Congress.pdf

⁵ For examining social disciplining efforts of the Chinese government, Thomas Heberer analyzed the works of Max Weber (on rationalising), Norbert Elias (on civilising), Michel Foucault (on disciplining), and Gerhard Oestreich (on social disciplining).

⁶ He referred to the work of German-Jewish sociologist Norbert Elias work “The Civilising Process”, Blackwell Publishing, 2000.

⁷ As examples, Heberer took the Liangshan Autonomous Prefecture of the Yi (Sichuan Province), the Xinjiang Autonomous Region of the Uyghurs, the Tibet

disciplining and civilising, he mentioned several government measures used in the region.

The vocational education and training program, launched in Xinjiang since 2019⁸ has been criticized by western media, numerous human rights defenders as well as academia. The government has not denied the existence of these vocational education and training⁹ explaining that they are designed to counter terrorism, extremism and separatism among people who “deny the concepts and achievements of modern secular civilization”. Education and training in Xinjiang has been also connected to disciplining and civilizing the labor force [Heberer, 2024, 153].

Among other measures, Heberer mentioned some social requirements by China state: Uyghur language limitation at school and at home: the government promotes the nationwide use of *Putonghua* (普通话); female students were prohibited from wearing headscarves at school; Han teachers required them to “behave like Han, discipline the Uyghur students with verbal or physical violence”¹⁰. Also, despite of special facilitation for business hiring minority workers in Xinjiang, Han entrepreneurs mostly refuse to employ Uyghurs, explaining by their low qualification, lack of discipline and other reasons. The disciplining and civilising programs focus on poverty-stricken areas like agricultural Kashgar, where Uyghurs live. The civilising initiative included not only education and training, but also improving hygiene standards. The government has sent special “Development and Reform Commissions” of a military unit for propagating rules of hygiene such as drinking boiled water, washing feet, and brushing teeth etc. The worst part of these government’s civilising efforts was the elimination of traditional and religious symbols of Islam, ruining of architecture, affecting Uyghurs lifestyle and belief, erasing their identity with a purpose of reaching Chinese standard of “civilized living” and achieving ethnic integration.

Autonomous Region and the Nujiang/2020 Autonomous Prefecture of the Lisu (Yunnan Province).

⁸ The State Council of the PRC, Vocational Education and Training in Xinjiang http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/whitepaper/201908/17/content_WS5d57573cc6d0c6695ff7ed6c.html

⁹ Xinhua. Interview with Xinjiang government chief on counterterrorism, vocational education and training in Xinjiang http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-10/16/c_137535821.htm

¹⁰ Heberer referred to the researches of Yi, Lin “A Failure in ‘Designed Citizenship’: A Case Study in a Minority-Han Merger School in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region” and Sun, Yan “From Empire to Nation State: Ethnic Politics in China.”

Adrian Zenz¹¹ focuses on China's ethnic policy in Xinjiang. After he published his paper on forced labor in cotton picking in this region, the U.S. government banned the import of goods made with cotton from Xinjiang¹². However, in his latest article he argued that the sanctions don't really work [The Hill], because Xinjiang's exports are booming. He mentioned the region's new party secretary, Ma Xingrui (马兴瑞)¹³, who, on the one hand, reduced the number of Uyghurs in the internment camps, and on the other, changed the tactics of forced labor programs in order to better hide them from western observers. However, according to Zenz, forced migration and labor abuses continue to expand. In his article, Zenz gave the data of forced labor transfers of Uyghurs, which are still increasing¹⁴.

As per Heberer, the nation-building remains unfinished as long as any ethnic minorities don't see themselves as Chinese citizens. The nation-building process requires time, efforts and involvement of the whole nation. Social disciplining and civilising project could succeed, if the China state finds a balance between consolidating the Chinese nation and preserving the ethnical identities of minority groups.

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¹¹ Dr. Adrian Zenz is Senior Fellow and Director in China Studies at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, Washington, D.C. His profile: <https://victimsofcommunism.org/leader/adrian-zenz-phd/>

¹² Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act <https://www.cbp.gov/trade/forced-labor/UFLPA>

¹³ Ma Xingrui is a Chinese politician and aerospace engineer who is the Communist Party secretary of Xinjiang. Prior to that, he had served as the Vice Minister of Industry and Information Technology, Head of the Political and Legal Affairs Commission of Guangdong. Ma is recognized as one of China's top scientists.

¹⁴ Heberer also provided with statistics, “according to the Information Bureau of the Chinese State Council in September 2020, there is an annual average transfer of a surplus labour force of 2.763 million people, including 1.678 million from the poorer southern part of the Autonomous Region”.

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4. Zenz. A. 2023. “Forced Uyghur labor undergirds Xinjiang’s export boom”. Access: <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/4300097-forced-uyghur-labor-undergirds-xinjiangs-export-boom/>

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СЕРЕДНІЙ СХІД У ГЕОСТРАТЕГІЇ УКРАЇНИ

Ключові слова: Середній Схід, українська геостратегія, геостратегія співпраці, геостратегія конфронтації, “стримування”.

Сучасній Україні потрібно визначитися із власними національними інтересами (геополітичними та гео економічними) в різних регіонах світу. Ці інтереси не мають суперечити глобальним інтересам “колективного” Заходу. Особливо важливим та складним завданням постає формулювання своїх геостратегічних цілей, завдань і конкретних геополітичних векторів (та напрямів) щодо країн Азії, зокрема Середнього Сходу. Названий регіон охоплює територію Південно-Західної Азії, включно з Іраном. На теренах Середнього Сходу розташовані країни, що дуже суттєво різняться між собою за політичним устроєм, соціально-економічним розвитком, геополітичними інтересами на міжнародній арені. У регіоні зберігаються ареали та вогнища внутрішньодержавних та міжнародних конфліктів.

У період 1990-х рр. українська влада реалізовувала “азійський” напрям своєї зовнішньої політики переважно в гео економічному сенсі. Йшлося передусім про досягнення економічних вигід від співпраці із зацікавленими в українській продукції країнами Південно-Західної Азії. Але протягом близько трьох десятиліть можливості взаємовигідного економічного співробітництва з переважною більшістю середньосхідних країн залишалися недостатньо реалізованими. Успішна реалізація