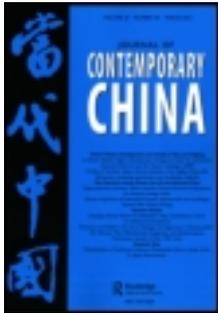


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Nuisance Value: Uyghur activism in Germany and Beijing–Berlin relations

YITZHAK SHICHOR*

While a small number of Uyghur communities had begun to settle in Germany already in the 1950s and 1960s, since the 1990s they have chosen Munich as their center of national and political activism in Europe and worldwide. By that time the Chinese had begun to apply pressure on the German government to restrict Uyghur activities and to monitor and intimidate them and their German supporters, also by using spies and collaborators. As a democratic country Germany rejected the Chinese demands, although refusing to admit former Uyghur Guantanamo inmates. Despite occasional tension, Sino–German relations have not been affected by the presence of Uyghurs, some of them labeled as ‘terrorists’ by Beijing. My conclusion is that the Uyghur ‘threat’ has been deliberately inflated by China as a tool in its relations with other governments and that economic relations and technology import are far too important to spoil by persecuting Uyghurs.

Sometime after midnight on Tuesday, 7 July 2009, two unidentified men threw three petrol-filled Molotov cocktails at the Chinese Consulate-General building in Munich. There were no injuries, the building was slightly damaged on the outside and China’s flag was burned. The incident followed a demonstration by dozens of Uyghurs who protested in front of the Consulate against Beijing’s inaction after two Uyghur workers had been killed in south China and, moreover, its violent suppression of the riots that consequently broke out in Urumqi (乌鲁木齐). Pushed away by the German Police, the demonstration proceeded to Marienplatz, one of Munich’s main squares,

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where it confronted a group of Chinese tourists. A few days later the Chinese Foreign Ministry advised Chinese tourists travelling to Munich to be careful.

Munich is the headquarters of the World Uyghur Congress (WUC) as well as of other East Turkestan organizations, considered by Beijing as separatist and terrorist. Most of the Uyghurs in Germany live in or around Munich. Following the incident, a WUC spokesman said: 'We don't know who threw the petrol bombs, but we know that our people hate the Chinese authorities'.¹ Beijing accused 'supporters of East Turkestan separatists' of starting 'well-orchestrated' and 'violent attacks' on China's embassies and consulates in several countries.² Several German politicians expressed concern over the excessive use of violence by China's security forces. 'That is unacceptable', said German Human Rights Commissioner Günther Nooke, 'no matter what factors may have contributed to it, including the possibility that demonstrators committed acts of violence'.³

Uyghurs are a Muslim–Turkic nationality located mostly in Xinjiang, China, along its Central Asian borderland. Reincorporated into China in the mid-eighteenth century, Uyghurs have never fully accepted Chinese rule. A number of Uyghur rebellions were brutally and mercilessly suppressed and Uyghur attempts to set up an independent homeland, first in the 1930s and then in the 1940s, failed. Shortly after the Communist takeover of Xinjiang in late 1949, several hundred Uyghurs—including some of their leaders—fled China to India. By the early 1950s they had settled in Turkey, but some of them moved on, together with Turkish migrants, to West Germany. Over the years more Uyghur refugees settled in Germany, after China opened its doors to the outside world and, even more so, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union that led to the emergence of independent Central Asian republics along China's borders.

These developments reignited Uyghur nationalism and triggered the establishment of transnational organizations ultimately aiming at independence from China. Turkey, traditionally considered the epicenter of Turkism worldwide, became the first—and natural—host for these organizations. However, as the Chinese began to apply pressure on Ankara to curb Uyghur nationalist activism in Turkey,⁴ Uyghur activists started looking for a substitute base of operations and a new command center for the Uyghur Diaspora. While more Uyghurs live in Central Asia (and in Turkey) and while the United States is far more important and influential, they chose Germany—a democratic country closer to Turkey and to Central Asia—where a solid Uyghur presence had already been established in the 1950s.

Only about 700–800 Uyghurs are estimated to be living in Germany now, including some of their biggest activists. A number of transnational Uyghur organizations have been established in Germany, including the WUC headquarters as well as European associations. They identify themselves not only as 'Uyghur' but also as 'East Turkestani' and regard East Turkestan (rather than Xinjiang, a Chinese term they avoid using) as their homeland (where over ten million Uyghurs live).

1. 'Chinese consulate attacked in Munich', *The Local*, (7 July 2009), available at: <http://www.thelocal.de/national/20090707-20447.html> (accessed 5 September 2009); *Renmin Ribao* [*People's Daily*], (8 July 2009).

2. Available at: <http://www.chinaembassy.org.tr/eng/xwdt/t572684.htm> (accessed 9 April 2009).

3. *Deutsche Welle*, (6 July 2009); *Spiegel Online*, (6 July 2009) (accessed 8 September 2009).

4. Yitzhak Shichor, *Ethno-Diplomacy: The Uyghur Hürch in Sino-Turkish Relations*, Policy Studies 53 (Washington, DC: East–West Center, 2009).

These Uyghur organizations and activists, who the Chinese refer to as ‘separatists’ and ‘terrorists’, have staged demonstrations against China, signed petitions, formed relations with politicians and members of parliament, briefed correspondents and have promoted the vision of Eastern Turkestan independence while strongly criticizing the harsh and often brutal Chinese policy toward Xinjiang’s Uyghurs.

This phenomenon raises a number of questions: why and how have Uyghurs arrived in Germany? Why has Germany been selected as the continental and global base for Uyghur activism? What kind of activities have Uyghurs been undertaking in Germany and how effective are they? What has been the Chinese response, not only toward the Uyghurs but also toward the government, both federal and regional? How have the Germans reacted to the Uyghurs’ settlement in Germany and to their activities? And, finally, how have all these developments affected Sino–German relations, if at all?⁵ These questions are explored in this article.

Destination Germany

Uyghurs first emigrated to Germany in the late 1940s and early 1950s, following the Chinese communist occupation of Xinjiang. Some of them went on to other countries (mainly to the United States) but a few remained and became involved in Radio Free Europe (RFE, established in 1950) and Radio Liberty (RL, established in 1953), both in Munich. One of the first was Gulamettin Pahta who arrived in Germany in the early 1950s to work with RFE and in 1967 relocated to the US.⁶ Despite the difficulties of adapting to German society, language, rules and system, many stayed because of the RFE/RL which provided a base, an anchor, legitimacy, recognition and steady income. Needless to say, RFE/RL was by no means a German enterprise. It was initiated, run and funded by the United States but was instrumental in the consolidation of a small yet influential Uyghur community in Germany that was to become the headquarters of Uyghur activism against China not only in Germany but also in the world at large.⁷

Noteworthy among these Uyghurs has been Erkin Alptekin, son of Isa Yusuf Alptekin who, while located in Turkey, was the most respected and well-known Uyghur leader until his death in 1995.⁸ Born in 1939, Erkin was employed by RFE/RL from 1971 to 1995. Starting as a program specialist, assistant director to the nationality services, and senior research analyst, he became senior policy adviser, as well as director of the RFE/RL Uyghur Division until 1979.⁹ Uyghur broadcasts were

5. There is hardly any academic analysis in English of contemporary Sino–German relations. One notable exception is: Kay Möller, ‘Germany and China: a continual temptation’, *The China Quarterly* 147, (1996), pp. 706–725, published well before Beijing began to target Germany’s Uyghurs. See also: Hans Kundnani and Jonas Parellon-Plesner, *China and Germany: Why the Emerging Special Relationship Matters for Europe*, Policy Brief 55 (European Council on Foreign Relations, May 2012).

6. Interview, 16 September 2003.

7. On RFE/RL, see: Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), especially pp. 161–162, 288–291 (on Uyghurs).

8. Ömer Kul, *İsa Yusuf Alptekin’in Mücadele Hatıraları [Memories of Isa Yusuf Alptekin’s Struggle]* (Ankara: Berilkan Yayınevi, 2007).

9. World Uyghur Congress, ‘Biographical note of Erkin Alptekin’, 16 April 2004, available at: <http://www.uyghurcongress.org> (accessed 31 August 2009).

allegedly directed at an estimated 250,000 Central Asian Uyghurs (173,000 according to the Soviet 1970 census). On 17 August 1978, however, the US Board for International Broadcasting (BIB) that was running RFE/RL adopted a recommendation to terminate Uyghur broadcasts. The reasons given were that ‘the bulk of the Uyghur population is in the PRC, which is outside the mandate of BIB’. Sent to Zbigniew Brzezinski—President Carter’s National Security Adviser—the letter went on: ‘it is doubtful that the Uyghurs have much influence in Soviet society. In addition to their small number, they are handicapped by lack of the kind of institutional base enjoyed by the USSR’s “autonomous” nationalities’.¹⁰ A few days later Paul B. Henze sent a memorandum to (Professor) Mike (Michel C.) Oksenberg, both from the US National Security Council, saying that of all US broadcasting efforts ‘Radio Liberty’s Uigur [sic] service must be the least significant ... [though] done by a couple of very bright young Uigurs who came to RL via Turkey’. He raised for the first time the possible gains for US–China relations: ‘Would they [the Chinese] be pleased if we told them we were stopping them [Uyghur broadcasts] because we don’t want to be broadcasting to their minorities?’. In a handwritten reply, Oksenberg said that ‘we might as well take advantage’ of the termination of Uyghur broadcasts in the context of improving Sino–American relations.¹¹ On 15 February 1979, RFE/RL Uyghur broadcasts were discontinued and the division was dismantled. Although originally the decision had had nothing to do with China, or with any Chinese demand, it had undoubtedly helped smooth the ground for the establishment of official PRC–USA diplomatic relations, on 1 January 1979, and for Sino–US (CIA) collaboration against the Soviets in Afghanistan (ironically relying on Xinjiang’s Uyghurs).

By that time, a number of Uyghurs who would later lead their community in Germany, and in the world, had arrived in Germany, years after they had escaped the PRC in the early 1960s. They included Enver Can (pronounced Jan) and his brother Asgar, whose family had fled Xinjiang to Afghanistan in 1960 and in 1965 arrived in Turkey aboard a UN plane. In 1975 Enver Can migrated to Germany and began working for Radio Liberty. Asgar followed him in 1978, aged 24. But most Uyghurs arrived in Germany after the 1990s, especially after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, over 90% through Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan). The rest migrated through other countries (e.g. Turkey, Egypt and Russia). Many of them used fake Kazakh, Kyrgyz or Uzbek passports when they approached German consulates to get a (usually tourist) visa. Some were intercepted at the German airport passport control, but most were permitted to enter the country. Some of those caught were later extradited to China. Occasionally, after Uyghurs had arrived in Germany, a local net collected their passports to be reused.

Most Uyghurs who arrive in Germany are less educated—though some are students—and few have probably been involved in terrorism. Some apply for asylum,

10. Confidential letter, 5 September 1978, declassified 17 November 1998 (Carter Library). See also: *Eastern Turkestan Information Bulletin* (hereafter *ETIB*) 2(2), (March 1992), p. 7.

11. Confidential memorandum, 11 September 1978, declassified 17 November 1998 (Carter Library). Henze had been with RFE from 1951 to 1958 and CIA representative in the NSC from 1977 to 1980. On leave from the University of Michigan, Oksenberg served as a senior staff member in charge of China and East Asia at the NSC, also from 1977 to 1980.

claiming to have been persecuted by the Chinese authorities. Altogether about 200 applications have been submitted. Before 1998 the Federal Office of Migration and Refugees permitted Uyghur asylum seekers to appear before different and independent courts. After 1998 the policy was changed and they could apply only to one court before five judges and in the presence of the Office representative. As a possible outcome of this change (and perhaps of growing Chinese pressure), all applications since then have been rejected and no asylum has been granted to Uyghurs in Germany since 1998. Many of the claimants stay in German detention centers and live in difficult conditions, fearful of being sent back to China.¹² Their situation has worsened following 11 September 2001, after which Uyghur asylum seekers have been interrogated by German immigration officers, occasionally in the presence of official Chinese representatives. Those whose asylum request is rejected have been asked by German immigration authorities to bring proof from the Chinese Embassy that it is dangerous for them to return to China!¹³ Section 60 of the German Residence Act says that foreigners may not be deported to another country where their life and liberty are threatened due to their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political convictions.

Nevertheless, about 100 Uyghur applications for asylum have been rejected so far. German immigration authorities had been warned about Chinese threats against deported Uyghurs, especially political activists, some of whom have disappeared in Chinese jails or been subjected to brutal Chinese interrogation and harassment.¹⁴ Nevertheless, on 13 July 2006, German authorities forcibly deported Muhtar Tiliwaldi, a 42-year-old Uyghur asylum seeker who had been in Germany since 1998 and whose asylum application had been rejected. An (undisclosed) number of Uyghurs had already been deported from Germany, but this was the first, and to the best of my knowledge, probably the last case of a 'violent' German extradition of a Uyghur asylum seeker to China.¹⁵ Still, Uyghurs reacted cautiously. A press release from the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) in Washington said that the

UHRP is confident that the German immigration authorities were rigorous and fair in their handling of Mr. Tiliwaldi's case. The organization is aware that Germany is home to a large and prosperous Uyghur community welcomed by German immigration authorities, and Uyghurs are deeply grateful for the sanctuary they find in Germany.

Alim Seytoff, UHRP Director, underlined: the 'UHRP in no way wishes to suggest that the German immigration authorities are being unfair or discriminatory toward

12. Uyghurs constitute a minute group among asylum seekers in Germany. The number of asylum seekers in Germany peaked in 1992 at 438,000 but dropped to under 100,000 in 1998, reaching 19,164 in 2007. Jan Schneider, *The Organisation of Asylum and Migration Policies in Germany*, Working Paper 25 (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2009), p. 29.

13. Dolkun Isa, *Critical Situation of Uyghur Azilum [sic] Seekers*, (1 July 2004), available at: http://ymyt.com/ru/3/62_1.shtml (accessed 9 February 2009).

14. 'Rückkehrgefährdung uigurischer Asylbewerber aus der VR China in der BRD nach exilpolitischer Betätigung' ['The danger in returning asylum seeker Uyghurs from the PRC after political activism in the FDR'], letter to Amnesty International by Albrecht Göring, lawyer and expert on Uyghur issue, Munich, 13 February 2003.

15. 'Uyghur asylum seeker extradited from Germany', *World Uyghur Congress Press Release*, (18 July 2006), available at: <http://www.uyghurcongress.org/En/pressrelease.asp?ItemID=126098019> (accessed 5 September 2009).

Uyghur refugees, and we're confident that the pending and future cases will also be handled with all due care and caution'.¹⁶

Germany does not make a clear distinction between Uyghurs and Chinese migrants or asylum seekers. Thousands of Chinese have been trying to come to Germany over the years, mostly for economic rather than political reasons. One way to do so is to apply for political asylum. The Chinese government does not take them seriously and is not eager to take back illegal migrants or those whose asylum requests have been rejected. According to German estimates, perhaps three quarters of them do not have authentic Chinese documents and official travel permits, without which Beijing is not ready to accept them. To extradite them, the German authorities have to find their real identity through repeated interrogations and verification of this information with the Chinese Embassy. This is a time-consuming procedure that also applies to Uyghurs.¹⁷ Unlike 'regular' illegal Chinese migrants, Beijing is very much interested in getting Uyghur activists back. Still, in the words of Albrecht Göring, a German attorney who has been representing Uyghur asylum applicants since the mid-1990s, '95 percent of the Uyghurs are protected by their right of residence in Germany',¹⁸ including those who are denied asylum and are still politically active.

Uyghur activism in Germany

By the early 1990s, a nucleus of Uyghur activists (though small) had already emerged in Germany, usually in and around Munich where their organizations were established. Formed in 1990, the Eastern Turkestan Union in Europe (ETUE) was the first Uyghur organization outside Turkey, with Erkin Alptekin as chairman until 1998 and Asgar Can since then. The ETUE 27th General Assembly held in Munich in January 2002 changed its name to the Uyghur Cultural and Social Union in Europe, professing its non-political nature. Initially, the Eastern Turkestan Cultural and Social Association (ETCSA), founded on 11 January 1991 in Munich, belonged to the ETUE. It organized the East Turkestan Information Center (ETIC), also in Munich (though later shifted to Duisburg). From May 1991 to February 1996 ETIC published a regular bimonthly, the *Eastern Turkestan Information Bulletin* (27 issues) 'to disseminate objective current information on the people, culture and civilization of Eastern Turkestan and to provide a forum for discussion on a wide range of topics and complex issues'. On 23 June 1996, ETIC began to publish—irregularly—an electronic newsletter, the *World Uyghur Network News* (WUNN). Devoted to the current political, cultural and economic developments in Eastern Turkistan and to issues related to the Uyghurs, it 'brings information on situation in Eastern Turkistan from Uyghur and other sources to the attention of the international community'. By early December 1999, 104 issues had been published.

16. 'Uyghur refugees in Europe vulnerable to being deported under false pretences', *World Uyghur Congress*, (31 July 2006), available at: <http://www.uyghurcongress.org/En/news.asp?ItemID=622423327> (accessed 2 September 2009).

17. Auswärtiges Amt [Foreign Office], *Bericht über die asyl- und abschiebungsrelevante Lage in der Volksrepublik China [Report on the Situation of Political Asylum and the Extradition Policy of the People's Republic of China]*, 514-516.80/3CHN (Bonn, 23 November 1998), pp. 14–15.

18. Interview with Albrecht Göring, Munich, 2009. See also his speech: *World Uyghur Congress, Uyghur Leadership Training Seminar* (Report), Berlin, (21–23 April 2008), p. 45.

Munich has also been used as the headquarters of the Union of East Turkestan Youth (the World Uyghur Youth Congress was held in Munich in 9–13 November 1996).¹⁹ The Union's newsletter, *Doğu Türkistan (Eastern Turkestan)* has been published in Munich since 1993 in Turkish, with separate editions in English, German and Uyghur. Another Uyghur journal, *Tamcha* (or *Tamqa, The Drop*), has been issued in Munich since 1995, as well as an ETUE quarterly (later biannual) begun in 1996, called *Birlik (Unity)*.²⁰ Twelve eight-page issues were published until September 2002 in 2,000–5,000 copies in Uyghur and Cyrillic script.²¹ These, however, were still mostly cultural and local activities of relatively marginal political value. By the late 1990s Germany had become the headquarters of Uyghur national, political and international activism which began to upset the Chinese.

The relocation of the headquarters of Uyghur political and international activism from Turkey to Germany in the late 1990s was triggered by a number of developments. For one, as we have seen, a number of Uyghur organizations had already been created in Germany. For another, following Isa Yusuf Alptekin's death in 1995, Ankara began to submit to China's demands to curb Uyghur activism in Turkey. The ETNC (Eastern Turkestan National Center), whose mission was to coordinate and represent Uyghur Diaspora associations all over the world, was no longer permitted to operate in Turkey. Finally, these associations agreed to join the ETNC on the condition that it relocated to Europe. In October 1998 the old ETNC ceased to exist and was replaced by a new ETNC (Eastern Turkestan National Congress). In October 1999 it shifted to Germany, based in Munich.²² Needless to add, the fact that Germany is a democratic society that upholds human rights, freedom of speech and civil liberties has been an advantage the Uyghurs could not but highly appreciate, compared to Turkey and the Central Asian republics—not to mention China.

Less than five years later, on 16 April 2004, the ETNC and the World Uyghur Youth Congress merged to create the World Uyghur Congress (WUC) still in Munich. Led by Erkin Alptekin, its first President (and a German citizen), it has since become known as the official representative of the Uyghurs worldwide and recognized as a member of UNPO, the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, occasionally referred to as the alternative United Nations. Although the WUC second (and current) president, Rebiya Kadeer, lives in Washington, the headquarters is still in Munich and many of the WUC leaders live in Germany: Asgar Can (Vice-President); Dolkun Isa (Secretary-General); Hemit Hamrayov (Director of Information and Research Center); Abdujelil Emet (Director of Public Relations); Ablikim Idris (Vice-Chairman

19. WUNN 16, (21 November 1996), available at: www.uygur.org/wunn96/wunn112196.htm (accessed 5 December 2002).

20. Also published in Munich: *Türkistan Sesi [Voice of Turkestan]*, 1985–1990 (14 issues) and *Bugünkü Türkistan/Turkestan Today*, 1989–1990 (3 issues). See also: Ali Kılıçarslan, 'Almanya'daki Türkçe Süreli Yayınlarla Genel Bakış' ['A general overview of Turkish periodical publications in Germany'], and Mehmet Tütüncü, 'Avrupa'da Orta Asya Türk Kültürünün Tanıtılması' ['Promotion of central Asian Turkish culture in Europe'], both in: *Avrupa'da Türkçe Yayınlar Sempozyumu Ekim 1996 [Turkish Publications in Europe Symposium October 1996]* (Amsterdam, 1997).

21. Interview with Asgar Can, 25 June 2003.

22. Yitzhak Shichor, 'Virtual transnationalism: Uyghur communities in Europe and the quest for Eastern Turkestan independence', in Jørgen S. Nielsen and Stefano Allievi, eds, *Muslim Networks and Transnational Communities in and Across Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 281–311.

of the Executive Committee); and Turghunjan Alawudun (Director of Religious Affairs). ETIC Director and founder Abdujelil Karakash, who in late 2004 joined the competitor organization and short-lived Eastern Turkestan Government in Exile as a ‘Minister of Civil Affairs’ and ‘Minister of Information, Communications and Media Relations’, has lived in Germany since 1987, when he was 27. Munich also hosted the WUC Second General Assembly on 24–27 November 2006 (The Third General Assembly of the WUC was convened in Washington, on 21–25 May 2009). Moreover, the WUC website domain—that had originally been located in Canada and was targeted by hackers, most likely Chinese—was later moved to Germany for security reasons.²³ Rebiya Kadeer’s autobiography, *Die Himmelsstürmerin [The Heavenly Striker]*, was first published in Germany in 2007.

Since the 1990s these Uyghur organizations and activists have been engaged in a wide variety of activities including demonstrations, petitions, publications, briefing German politicians, parliament members, officials and leaders both in the federal government and in Bavaria, and informing the media and the public on Beijing’s persecution of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang as well as abroad. About to be elected WUC second president at the Second WUC General Assembly to be held in Munich, Rebiya Kadeer arrived in Berlin. A thorn in China’s flesh, during 21–23 November 2006 she managed to meet with members of parliament (though mostly from the opposition Green Party) and Foreign Ministry China Desk officials. More than 50 congratulation letters from dignitaries, led by Chancellor Angela Merkel (who had visited China precisely six months earlier) and including several federal government ministers, top Bavarian officials and members of parliament, were delivered to the WUC Second General Assembly. Following Kadeer’s visit to Berlin, Green Party General Secretary Volker Beck raised the Uyghur human rights issue in the Bundestag on 30 November 2006 and demanded the German Foreign Ministry press China to release Kadeer’s sons from Chinese prison. He urged the Bundestag to debate Uyghur issues a number of times, calling the German government—also bearing in mind the forthcoming China-hosted Olympic Games—to intervene in Beijing on behalf of the Uyghurs.²⁴ On 21–23 April 2008, a Uyghur leadership-training seminar was held in Berlin and in October 2009 Rebiya Kadeer, who was visiting the Frankfurt Book Fair, sharply criticized the organizers’ decision to invite China as its Guest of Honor.²⁵ Undoubtedly upset by these activities, China tried not only to react but also to preempt, and not only by words but also by deeds.

Chinese countermeasures

On 15 December 2003, the Chinese Ministry of Public Security released, for the first time, a list of four Eastern Turkestan organizations and 11 ethnic Uyghurs, all of them allegedly engaged in terrorism and linked to al-Qaeda. Of the four organizations on the list, two are located in Germany: the World Uyghur Youth Congress (WUYC) and the

23. Yu-Wen Chen, *Who Made Uyghurs Visible in the International Arena? A Hyperlink Analysis*, Global Migration and Transnational Politics, Working Paper 12 (George Mason University, June 2010), p. 7.

24. For more details, see: <http://www.volkerbeck.de> (accessed 3 January 2010).

25. Didi Kirsten Tatlow, ‘Throwing the book at China’, *The Wall Street Journal*, (16 October 2009); *Reuters* (Frankfurt), (19 October 2009).

East Turkestan Information Center (ETIC). Of the 11 ‘terrorists’ on the list, two live in Germany: Dolkun Isa and Abdujelil Karakash.²⁶ Both organizations have been stigmatized by the Chinese as designers and operators of terrorist acts in and outside China and also via the Internet. Dolkun Isa, former WUYC Chairman, is also named as ‘Vice-President’ of the Eastern Turkestan Liberation Organization (ETLO, likewise on the list), ‘overseeing’ ETLO’s ‘German branch operations’. Abdujelil Karakash has been blamed for raising funds, financing secret agents and playing ‘an active role’ in ETLO’s ‘terrorist activities targeted at Xinjiang’. Beijing also holds the WUC, headquartered in Munich, responsible for ‘terrorist’ acts in China—including the July 2009 riots in Urumqi. On 23 July 2009, China’s *Global Times* said that the WUC, the ETUE and the ETIC ‘have proved to have close links with terrorism’.²⁷ Offering little or no evidence for their allegations, the Chinese appear to be intimately and extensively informed about Uyghur activities in Germany, having substantially increased their intelligence efforts and presence since the mid-1990s—especially in Munich.²⁸

In addition to its general consulates in Hamburg and Frankfurt, China had considered Munich important enough, primarily economically, to open another one. Agreement on its opening had been reached on 13 July 1995, and the first Consul-General, Liu Guangyao (刘光耀), took office in November 1996. The Consulate was officially opened on 7 June 1997, to represent the PRC interests in Bavaria. Yao Yazhen (姚雅珍), the second Consul-General, was appointed in July 2001. She was succeeded by Yang Huiqun (杨惠群) in January 2005. The fourth Consul-General, Ma Jinsheng (马晋生), took office in late 2009 after serving as Consul-General in Hamburg (from 2003) and before that at the PRC Berlin Embassy and at the European Affairs Department of the Foreign Ministry in Beijing. Educated at the University of Bonn, he was intimately familiar with Germany. By December 2011 he had been replaced by Wang Shunqing (王顺卿), former director of the European Affairs Department (until 2006) and then Counselor and Chargé d’Affaires in Vienna.²⁹

Since its opening, the Consulate has been consistently trying to stifle the activities of Uyghur/East Turkestani organizations, and to prevent their meetings. For example, German officials and politicians who had invited Rebiya Kadeer or had been invited to attend Uyghur meetings were frequented by Chinese ‘diplomats’ who attempted to block the visits, presenting lists of names of those invited. They also approached the federal and Bavarian secret services and security authorities to warn them against Uyghur ‘terrorism’ and to convince them to curtail Uyghur activities in Germany. According to intelligence sources, the Chinese are well-informed about the ETEU and its members.³⁰ The issue was raised in the European Parliament on 25 March 2004.

26. ‘Terror list with links to al-Qaeda unveiled’, *China Daily*, (16 December 2003).

27. Available at: <http://www.globaltimes.cn/www/english/china/chinanews/2009-07/450525.html> (accessed 4 February 2011).

28. On the Chinese attitude toward Uyghur in Germany, see: Berndt Georg Thamm, *Der Dschihad in Asien: Die Islamische Gefahr in Russland und China [Jihad in Asia: The Islamic Danger in Russia and China]* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2008), especially pp. 211–220 (interview with Colonel Chen Chuan, Acting Defence Attaché, PRC Embassy in Berlin).

29. Department of Policy Planning, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC, *China’s Foreign Affairs 2004 Edition* (Beijing: Foreign Affairs Press, 2004), p. 547; PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs data.

30. Bayerisches Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz [Bavarian Office for the Protection of the Constitution], Document 53004-201-S-080001-47/99, 14 December 1999. See also: Auswärtiges Amt [Foreign Office], ‘Bericht’ [Report], pp. 24–25.

It said that ‘according to usually reliable sources the German counter-espionage service, the “Bundesverfassungsschutz” (BfV)³¹ is concerned about actions by the Chinese secret service against dissidents resident in Germany’. It confessed that the BfV feared that the PRC State Security Service was planning to assassinate resident Uyghur leaders in Germany whom it claimed to be terrorists, separatists and killers.³² In a letter dated 16 May 2007, the BfV elaborated on Beijing’s attitude toward Uyghurs in Germany.

The letter said that China’s national authorities and especially its secret services had made great efforts to obtain information on Uyghur organizations and personalities. They had been watching not only Uyghurs who were activists in these organizations but also Uyghurs who were not associated with them—and well before 11 September 2001. These official Chinese authorities were trying as hard as they could to prevent the holding of Uyghur events, including demonstrations, meetings and press conferences. They were using information collected about these events and had prepared lists of names. Claiming that these events had a ‘terrorist’ background, they were appealing to the local German authorities and also personally contacting local German politicians and guests invited to these events in an attempt to convince them not to attend. In conclusion the letter underlined:

The FOPC *does not have any information* about Uyghurs’ extreme attempts on German land. Over and above that, until now *there is no knowledge* of any support for using force in the Chinese Xinjiang Province by Uyghur organizations or persons resident in Germany.³³ (Emphasis added.)

Allegations against Chinese interference in Germany’s Uyghur communities also appeared in a letter prepared by the Bayerisches Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz (the Bavarian Office for the Protection of the Constitution, or the Secret Service). Dated 14 December 1999, the letter confirmed that the Chinese General Consulate in Munich had been greatly interested in the activities of the ETUE. China’s Consul-General (Liu Guangyao) presented himself again and again before the Bavarian security authorities to interfere in ETUE activities. Intelligence findings suggest that the names of ETUE members were reported to the Chinese authorities.³⁴

Needless to say, Beijing also spies on the Falun Gong movement in Germany.³⁵ This activity is coordinated and managed by a ‘Chinese Deputy Minister’ who is in charge of Office 610 that fights Falun Gong and Uyghur organizations and activities all over the world. Established on 10 June 1999 (hence its name), under the Foreign

31. This is Germany’s domestic intelligence agency (or secret service), also known as the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (FOPC), the equivalent of the FBI in the United States and MI5 in Britain. Its main function is the surveillance of anti-constitutional activities that may threaten the public order.

32. Parliamentary Questions, European Parliament document E-1049/04.

33. Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz [Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution], letter 4C5-201-S-430005-24/07, Köln, 16 May 2007. ‘Dem BfV liegen keine Information über extremistische Bestrebungen von Uiguren auf dem Gebiet der Bundesrepublik Deutschland vor. Darüber hinaus gibt es bislang keine Erkenntnisse über die Unterstützung von Gewalttaten in der chinesischen Provinz Xinjiang durch in Deutschland ansässige uigurische Organisationen oder Personen’.

34. Letter No. 53004-201-S-080001-47/99.

35. A German citizen was accused of reporting activities and confidential data (including email lists, meetings and conferences) of the Falun Gong German section to China’s intelligence services from 2006 to 2010. ‘German prosecutors indict alleged Chinese spy for observing Falun Gong movement’, *Associated Press*, (31 January 2011).

Ministry General Office, 610 Offices are an extra-legal police force formed to suppress Falun Gong practitioners not only at home but also abroad. Reacting to human rights critics, on 6 July 2004, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' 610 Office (an arm of the Ministry of State Security) was renamed 'The Department of External Security Affairs' (*Shewai anquan shiwu si* 涉外安全事務司, or *guanli si* 管理司—literally the Department of Managing Foreign-Related Security or Supervision Administration). It 'aimed at coping with increasing non-traditional security factors' (mainly terrorism) and the safety of Chinese citizens abroad, as well as 'dealing with Eastern Turkistan groups'.³⁶

It is conceivable that Beijing has been using informers and planted moles inside the Uyghur organizations, probably like in Sweden. In June 2009 it was reported that the Swedish government had expelled a PRC diplomat for allegedly spying on members of the Uyghur community in Sweden. He reportedly received information from a 62-year-old Uyghur, a Swedish citizen since 2002, who had been accepted in Sweden as a political refugee in 1997 and had spied on the Swedish Uyghur community passing information to a 'diplomat', in fact a Chinese intelligence officer, from January 2008 to June 2009. On 10 March 2010, he was sentenced to 16 months in prison and on 18 September 2010 his sentence was extended by six months. The court said that 'significant damage' could have been caused to Uyghurs inside and outside China, not to mention the danger that Beijing could use the network in the future for other kinds of espionage: 'The crime is especially egregious due to the fact that the espionage served a big power that does not fully respect human rights'.³⁷ By the end of 2009 Germany's FOPC (the Secret Service) estimated the number of Chinese intelligence personnel in Germany at between 20 and 50.³⁸

A considerable part of China's intelligence effort in Germany is carried out by cyber-spying. By mid-2007 hackers, most likely Chinese reportedly working for the People's Liberation Army (PLA), managed to penetrate German government computers (including in Chancellor Angela Merkel's office), to disrupt their operations, to steal information and to infect them with spyware and Trojan horse programs. While officials are concerned about the Chinese threat to German infrastructure, especially the power grid, Beijing appears to be primarily interested in scientific and technological enterprises, research and development and manufacturing facilities, as well as government agencies. Still, much of China's efforts are directed against the 'Five Poisons', especially Falun Gong and Uyghur communities.³⁹ Fake emails and planted viruses are constantly used by the Chinese

36. *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily], (6 July 2004); see also the testimony of Chen Yonglin, former diplomat in China's Consulate in Sydney, in: *Falun Gong and China's Continuing War on Human Rights*, Joint Hearing, US Congress, 21 July 2005 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2005), pp. 34–36.

37. *The Local: Sweden's News in English*, (6 June 2009; 22 June 2009; 18 September 2010); 'Uyghur charged with spying', *Radio Free Asia* (24 June 2009), available at: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/chinese-spy-06242009112255.html> (accessed 25 December 2009); *Uyghur Human Rights Project*, available at: <http://uhrp.org/articles/3633/1/Uyghur-Sentenced-for-Spying-/index.html> (accessed 18 March 2011).

38. 'Observation: will China ever become a spy power?', *China View*, (11 October 2009), available at: <http://chinaview.wordpress.com/2009/10/11> (accessed 18 March 2011). For a detailed survey of China's spying in Germany, see: Sven Röbel and Holger Stark, 'Espionage probe casts shadow on ties with China', *Spiegel Online*, (30 June 2010), available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,druck-703411,00.html> (accessed 18 March 2011).

39. Holger von Stark, 'Fünf Gifte' ['Five poisons'], *Spiegel Online*, (13 July 2009), available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-6605542.html> (accessed 18 March 2011).

to compromise Uyghur (as well as Tibetan and Falun Gong) computers as well as those that are in correspondence with them—like my own. To ward off cyber attacks and combat the menace of hackers, primarily originating in China, the German government decided to establish a national Cyber Defense Center to be located at the Federal Office for Information Technology Security.⁴⁰ Intended to protect government agencies rather than NGOs, this new center would also and inevitably undermine and complicate Beijing's orchestrated cyber attacks against the Uyghurs. It is interesting that Xiong Guangkai (熊光楷), former PLA Deputy Chief of Staff for intelligence and later Chairman of the China Institute for International Strategic Studies, had spent 22 years at the PLA Military Attaché's Office in Berlin (at that time, East Germany), from 1960 to 1982.⁴¹

German reactions

For some time, the German Federal Prosecutor's Office had been carefully watching attempts by the Chinese Consulate's staff to penetrate Munich Uyghur communities. In 2007 a Munich Consulate 'diplomat', Ji Wumin, had to leave Germany after investigators observed him meeting with spies who provided him with information about Uyghurs. Beijing's wish to send him back to Germany was blocked by Berlin. In 2008, Federal Prosecutor officials began to collate systematically evidence regarding suspected Chinese spying activities in Germany, yet no searches or arrests were undertaken, but on 11 November 2009, officers from Germany's Federal Criminal Police Office and the Bavarian Police searched the residences of four Chinese people in the Munich area, suspected of spying on the local Uyghur community on behalf of China's intelligence services. According to the German Federal Prosecutor's Office, these agents had been controlled by a PRC Consul in Munich (known as Mr Wang) who had been observed meeting them secretly, and who reported directly to Beijing. The German Foreign Ministry quietly demanded that the so-called diplomat leave the country. In December 2009 he left, having been recalled by the Chinese authorities.⁴² This, however, does not imply that Berlin identifies with Uyghur separatism or nationalist activism.

40. *Ibid.*; Roger Boyes, 'China accused of hacking into heart of Merkel administration', *The Times* (London), (27 August 2007); 'Chinesische Trojaner auf PCs im Kanzleramt' ['Chinese Trojan (horses) in the Kanzler's PCs'], *Spiegel Online*, (25 August 2007), available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/tech/0,1518,501954,00.html> (accessed 4 September 2009). On 27 August 2007, the main cover story of *Der Spiegel* was titled 'Die Gelbe Spione: Wie China Deutsche Technologie Ausspaht' ['The yellow spies: how China steals German technology']; see also: 'Cyber spies: "ghostnet" and the new world of espionage', *Spiegel Online*, (4 October 2009), available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,druck-618478,00.html> (accessed 26 December 2009); 'Chinese hackers target German government computers', *EU Times*, (29 December 2010); 'Germany to set up Cyber Defence Center against Chinese hackers', 28 December 2010, available at: <http://news.in.msn.com/international/article.aspx?cp-documentid=4746951> (accessed 18 March 2011); Christopher Szabo, 'The case of the Uyghur email attacks', *Digital Journal*, (18 July 2009), available at: <http://www.digitaljournal.com/article/276144> (accessed 18 March 2011). On China's overall attempts to use cyber means against the Uyghurs, see: Yitzhak Shichor, 'Net nationalism: the digitalisation of the Uyghur Diaspora', in Andoni Alonso and Pedro J. Oiarzabal, eds, *Diasporas in the New Media Age: Identity, Politics, and Community* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2010), pp. 291–316.

41. See: http://www.chinavivae.com/biography/Xiong_Guangkai/career (accessed 18 March 2011). Beijing established diplomatic relations with the Democratic Republic of Germany (East Germany) on 10 October 1949, and with the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) on 11 October 1972.

42. 'Bundesanwaltschaft ermittelte gegen chinesische Beamte wegen Spionagegeverdachts' ['The Federal Prosecutor's Office conducts an inquest against Chinese officials suspected of espionage'], (26 June 2010), available

Germany by no means supports the Uyghur or Eastern Turkestan organizations but still offers them security and does not consider them a threat.⁴³ Occasional meetings with Uyghur representatives are held periodically for the exchange of information (e.g. after 11 September 2001). Responding to Chinese protests, the Germans underline that this is the nature of democracy. Nevertheless, the German authorities monitor Uyghur activities carefully. Once the Eastern Turkestan Government in Exile (ETGE) was established (in Washington in late 2004), the Germans became concerned about its relations with the WUC. The WUC explained that there were no relations, but there was a dialogue, and the Germans warned that if there should be relations with the ETGE, the WUC would be closed down. Berlin does not approve of separatist organizations that promote ‘independence’ from states that maintain diplomatic relations with Germany, and this is why the WUC mission statement preferred the terms ‘self-determination’, ‘democracy’, ‘referendum’, ‘human rights’, ‘non-violence’ and ‘peaceful opposition’—terms that are acceptable to European governments and parliaments.

Uyghur issues had hardly been raised in German parliamentary debates before 2003. Apparently, debates on Uyghur issues were triggered by Margarete Bause, leader of the Green Party in the Bayerischer Landtag (Bavaria’s Parliament)—not as a result of local Uyghur pressure or lobbying but mainly in response to China’s spying on those who maintained relations with Uyghurs and to Chinese attempts to intimidate German members of parliament.⁴⁴ Debates on Uyghur issues in Germany had been promoted mainly by the Green Party (Die Grünen) in the Bundestag. They put forward appeals focusing on China’s maltreatment of Uyghurs including human rights abuse, religious and social persecution, economic deprivation and political discrimination.⁴⁵ Most if not all of these motions have systematically failed, but the debates gathered momentum only after the possibility of accepting Uyghur inmates from Guantanamo was put on the public agenda. The German response to this possibility reflected its dilemmas and reservations regarding Uyghurs in general and its Uyghur community in particular.

Germany’s qualified attitude toward the Uyghurs is evident in its response to the US request to admit former Uyghur Guantanamo inmates. As soon as President Obama assumed office he announced his determination to close down the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay within a year. He expected Germany, among others, to offer a haven for Uyghurs who had been detained at Guantanamo without trial, presumed innocent. Germany’s response was divided along political lines. Shortly after Obama’s election, Günther Nooke, former Member of Parliament and Commissioner for Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Aid of the Federal

Footnote 42 continued

at: FinanzNachrichten.de (accessed 15 February 2011); Holger Stark, ‘Police raid in Munich: Germany suspects China of spying on Uyghur expatriates’, *Spiegel Online*, (24 November 2009), available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,druck-663090,00.html> (accessed 26 December 2009).

43. Interview at the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 October 2010.

44. Yu-Wen Chen and Delia A. Pop, ‘The emergence of the Uyghur issue in the American and German legislative debate: a research note’, p. 7, 2011, available at: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/humansecurity/assets/downloads/Uyghur%20research%20Note.pdf>.

45. For example: Antrag [Motion]: ‘Die Menschenrechte der Uiguren Schützen’ [‘Protection of Uyghur human rights’], Deutsche Bundestag, No. 16/7411, 5 December 2007. See also: ‘German Parliament condemns Chinese labour camps’, *The Epoch Times*, (15 May 2007).

Government, stated that Germany should consider taking some of the Uyghurs held at Guantanamo since they could be easily absorbed into the Uyghur community in Munich. The head of Amnesty International Germany's Chapter, Barbara Lochbiler, also urged the German government to accept the Uyghurs saying that there had been no evidence of their involvement in terrorist activities: 'The Uyghurs have a network in Germany. That's why it would be easier for them to start a new life here'. Claudia Roth, head of Germany's opposition Green Party, also encouraged Chancellor Angela Merkel to take in Guantanamo inmates.⁴⁶

Indeed, on 5 February 2009, the Munich Municipal Council adopted a resolution put forward by the Green Party welcoming the Guantanamo Uyghurs: 'The Reception of the Uyghur refugees will be carried out in line with common procedures for taking in refugees'. All parties represented in the City Council agreed on this. Munich's Social Democrat Mayor, Christian Ueda, said his city wanted to send 'an early signal' to the US in case Berlin gets a formal request from Washington to take the Uyghurs.⁴⁷ His call was supported by human rights groups as well as other politicians. Christoph Strässer, human rights spokesman for Germany's Social Democratic Party, said: 'It's a humanitarian duty to allow these people to live freely'. Asgar Can, a Munich resident for many years and Vice-President of the WUC, whose headquarters is located in Munich, welcomed the decision: 'Our community is very well integrated. That's our trump card when it comes to taking in the Guantanamo Uyghurs'.⁴⁸ Justice Minister Brigitte Zypries, a Social Democrat as well and an outspoken liberal, also supported the acceptance of Uyghurs by Germany.

Still, such a decision should have been made by the leaders of the federal states involved, primarily Bavaria where the majority of Uyghurs live. To be sure, a motion calling the Bavarian government to admit the Guantanamo inmates was put forward by a number of parties, including the Socialist Party (SPD) and the Grünen.⁴⁹ Yet, Bavarian officials, led by Interior Minister Joachim Herrmann (of the Christian Socialist Union), all along rejected the idea: 'From the Bavarian point of view it isn't clear yet why people who have been held in Guantanamo because of their supposed danger to the public should simply be allowed into Bavaria'.⁵⁰ He insisted that 'We are certainly not going to offer our candidacy to welcome these people',⁵¹ and added: 'It must be clearly established beyond any doubt that the Uighur detainees ... do not pose the slightest terrorist danger. This continues to be the responsibility of the United States'.⁵² Later he elaborated: 'These are people

46. 'German official urges Berlin to accept Guantanamo inmates', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, (20 December 2008); *Deutsche Welle*, (21 December 2008); 'Guantanamo prisoners: resettlement in Germany could work, say ministers', *Spiegel Online*, (23 December 2008), available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,158,druck-598144,00.html> (accessed 19 February 2009). See also: 'Germany has a "responsibility" to help Guantanamo inmates', *Spiegel Online*, (23 December 2008), available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,druck-598164,00.html> (accessed 19 February 2009).

47. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, (6 February 2009); 'Munich welcomes Guantanamo Uighurs', *The Local: Germany's News in English*, (6 February 2009), available at: <http://www.thelocal.de/national/20090206-17269.html> (accessed 5 September 2009).

48. 'Munich fights to welcome the Uighurs of Guantanamo', *AFP*, (20 March 2009); 'Munich willing to accept Guantanamo Uighurs', *Deutsche Welle*, (6 February 2009).

49. For example, motion 16/340 of 3 February 2009 and motion 16/1264 of 6 May 2009.

50. *Spiegel Online*, (23 December 2008) (accessed 5 September 2009).

51. 'Berlin given US request on Guantanamo inmates', *AFP* (Berlin), (3 May 2009).

52. *Spiegel Online*, (5 May 2009) (accessed 9 August 2009).

who participated in terror camps, who had military training, who are radicalized, who do not follow democratic principles, who follow radical goals, and we do not want to accept such people'.⁵³ A few in Bavaria supported his attitudes. Thomas Silberhorn, member of the regional parliament argued: 'If the US refuses to take these people, why should we?'.⁵⁴ Actually, this is exactly what a number of Americans said: 'You can't argue these people are too dangerous to be released in the United States and then ask Germany to take them, that doesn't work'.⁵⁵

But the ultimate decision rested with the federal government in Berlin. At the end of April 2009 it received Washington's official request listing nine Uyghurs to be handed over. Berlin set out a number of conditions such as the admittance of Uyghur detainees also by the United States and other European countries so that possible diplomatic protests by China would be shared. Obviously, admitted detainees should not pose any risk.⁵⁶ While Germany promised the US to consider the request 'case by case', some leaders had initially favored the idea. For example, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (a Social Democrat) stated that Germany would be willing to accept former inmates—including Uyghurs. Still, he kept relatively quiet on the subject and was apparently concerned not just about the security implications but also about the effects on Sino–German relations.⁵⁷ In fact, Berlin had already agreed to accept one of Guantanamo's Uyghurs who had relatives in Munich (the US refused),⁵⁸ but the wind was blowing in an opposite direction, inflated by Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble. A Christian Democrat in charge of Germany's secret services, he argued that Guantanamo was an American problem to be solved by the US on its own that should resettle the Uyghurs first. Guantanamo's Uyghurs, he added, are now being considered 'a potential threat' to German domestic security as well as an economic burden.⁵⁹ He made it clear that 'in no single case is the documentation that we have received from Washington so far sufficient for us to be able to make a decision'.⁶⁰ The objections of those who rejected the US request primarily reflected their view that the resettled Uyghurs would have to be watched 24 hours a day. They instinctively associated Uyghurs with al-Qaeda and other radical Islamic groups and did not receive assurances that Guantanamo Uyghurs would not 'return to terrorism'.⁶¹

Other leaders' objections reflected diplomatic rather than security considerations. For example, former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder also warned against

53. Craig Whitlock and Karen DeYoung, '[European] officials demand US accept some Guantanamo before they do', *Washington Post*, (29 May 2009).

54. *Ibid.* See also Yu-Wen Chen, 'The German debate over the intake of Uyghur Guantanamo inmates: a research note', *Asian Ethnicity* 13 (2), (March 2012), pp. 153–160.

55. Quoted in Peter Lee, 'Uyghurs sold out in the US', *Asia Times*, (28 May 2009).

56. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, (5 May 2009).

57. *Spiegel Online*, (12 May 2009).

58. Interview, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 October 2010.

59. 'Guantanamo Bay—should Germany accept prisoners when the US detention camp closes?', (1 February 2009), available at: <http://www.uyghurcongress.com/En/PrintNews.asp?ItemID=1233779751> (accessed 5 September 2009); Emerson Vermaat, 'German Interior Minister Schäuble opposes taking detainees from Guantanamo', (18 May 2009), available at: <http://www.militantislammonitor.org/pf.php?id=3955> (accessed 5 September 2009).

60. *Bild am Sonntag*, (10 May 2009).

61. 'Guantanamo: 24 Stunden überwachen' ['Guantanamo: 24 hours monitor'], *Focus*, (11 May 2009); Vermaat, 'German Interior Minister Schäuble opposes taking detainees from Guantanamo'.

accepting former Uyghur inmates. ‘Such a decision’, he stressed, ‘would put a serious strain on German–Chinese relations’. He added that ‘Only the US itself can take in the Uighurs without causing serious diplomatic damage’.⁶² Foreign Minister Steinmeier, who had earlier favored the transfer of Guantanamo Uyghurs to Germany, changed his mind—apparently following his mentor Schröder. A number of Chinese diplomats visited his offices and, according to released WikiLeaks documents, the Germans said they had been threatened by China with consequences to the bilateral relations if they accepted any Uyghurs from Guantanamo Bay.⁶³ A second US request to admit just *two* former *non-Uyghur* Guantanamo inmates was also turned down.⁶⁴

Ultimately, however, this debate had little to do either with security considerations or with Beijing’s anticipated response, and more to do with domestic politics. Steinmeier was running for chancellor in the coming election and, given occasional ethnic unrest in Germany, preferred to adopt a more careful attitude. Siegfried Benker, Green Party member of the Munich Municipal Council who had welcomed Guantanamo Uyghurs, said that there was no proof of Uyghurs’ guilt, ‘but the opponents [to their admission] act like anyone who comes from Guantanamo has to be a terrorist. They do not allow for innocence. Apparently, they hope for votes’. Officials like Herrmann were trying to stir fears by portraying the Uyghurs as sinister.⁶⁵

This is exactly what the Chinese have been trying to do and, as far as the Guantanamo Uyghurs are concerned, they won. Germany refused to admit them—but has managed at the same time to reject China’s accusations against Uyghur leaders in Germany and attempts to discredit them. Apparently, this has not been so easy given the prospering Sino–German economic relations. In 2007 China became the third economy in the world at the expense of Germany. Germany’s trade turnover with China reached US\$185 billion in 2010, up 38.5% compared to 2009, one third of China’s trade with the European Union. Germany is China’s first trading partner in Europe and sixth in the world. By 2009, China had overtaken Germany as the leading world exporter. Most of Germany’s imported goods now originate in China. China is now Germany’s leading export market outside Europe, overtaking the US. Germany is also China’s number one market in Western Europe for labor services. At the end of 2004 over 5,000 Chinese were working in Germany, some of them probably serving political and intelligence rather than economic interests.⁶⁶ Bavaria, where most Uyghurs live, is China’s leading trade partner in Germany, accounting for about one-fifth of all Sino–German trade; China is Bavaria’s fifth largest trade partner and its biggest trade partner in Asia; some 1,800 Bavarian companies do business with

62. ‘Fears of angering China: German Foreign Minister opposes taking Uighur Guantanamo inmates’, *Spiegel Online*, (18 May 2009), available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,druck-625453,00.html> (accessed 5 September 2009).

63. Peter Foster, ‘Wikileaks files may put ideas in the heads of Chinese hackers: analysis’, *The Telegraph*, (29 November 2010).

64. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, (6 June 2009); *AFP*, (11 June 2009); *Spiegel Online*, (15 June 2009) (accessed 8 September 2009).

65. *Spiegel Online*, (18 May 2009). See also: Lee, ‘Uyghurs sold out in the US’; Whitlock and DeYoung, ‘[European] officials demand US accept some Guantanamo before they do’.

66. *China Trade and External Economic Statistical Yearbook 2005* (Beijing: China Statistical Press, 2005), pp. 208, 241.

China, including industrial giants such as Siemens, BMW and Audi. When Horst Seehofer, Governor of Bavaria, visited China in April 2010, his hosts, including PRC Vice Premier Zhang Dejiang (张德江), failed to mention the Uyghur issue (at least in public). Still, Zhang may have hinted at the basics of China's foreign relations when he stated: 'The Chinese government attaches great importance to relations with Germany and is willing to work with Germany to further promote *pragmatic* cooperation and lift bilateral ties to a new level'⁶⁷ (emphasis added).

Conclusion

Theoretically, Beijing could apply pressure on Berlin to change its policy toward the Uyghurs. Yet, the Chinese are smart enough not to use the economic weapon, all the more so since these relations are in their interest, especially in the field of technology (for example, energy transmission over long distances). Consequently, in the age of economic predominance, Sino–German thriving relations have not been affected by the Uyghur issue—and are unlikely to be affected in the future, and not only because of economic considerations.

Despite its rhetoric on the Uyghur 'problem', Beijing should not be *really* concerned about it. To be sure, China was outraged by Munich Municipality Council's decision to take in Uyghurs released from Guantanamo. Beijing has all along considered these Uyghurs as separatists who belonged to terrorist organizations listed by the US and the UN and demanded that they be returned to China. On the day of Munich's decision to welcome the Uyghurs, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman said: 'We have expressed our position many times about those *Chinese* terrorists detained in Guantanamo. We are opposed to any country accepting these people. We hope the parties concerned can resolve conveniently this issue according to the international laws and regulations'⁶⁸ (emphasis added). These statements, however, do not seem to reflect genuine concern. Beijing is well aware of the Uyghur marginal, if any, threat to China; its official stand and policy are meant to intimidate and embarrass foreign governments and especially to justify further persecution of Uyghurs at home and abroad. There is definitely no way that Germany would support Uyghur separatism or national ambitions—and Beijing knows it.

Occasionally, German politicians—mainly of the opposition—have expressed their concern about Uyghur persecution as reported by the international media. Speaking at the 58th Commission on Human Rights in Geneva on 20 March 2002, Joschka Fischer—then German Foreign Minister—underlined the German government's 'critical view of the human rights situation in China'. He stated: 'The Federal Government therefore calls once again upon China . . . to halt the oppression of

67. *Xinhua* (Beijing), (26 April 2010).

68. 'Westliche Doppelmoral: München Will Chinesische Extremisten Aufnehmen' ['Western double standard: Munich will receive Chinese extremists'], (9 February 2009), available at: <http://ham.china-consulate.org/det/gnxw/t536261.htm> (accessed 4 September 2009); 'China Kritisiert Deutschland wegen Plänen zur Übernahme von Terrorverdächtigen' ['China criticizes Germany on account of the plan for taking over terrorist suspects'], (29 December 2008), available at: <http://ham.china-consulate.org/det/gnxw/t529488.htm> (accessed 4 September 2009). See also: 'Munich willing to accept Guantanamo Uighurs', *Deutsche Welle*, (6 February 2009), available at: http://www.dw-world.de/popups/popup_printcontent/0,,4007732,00.html (accessed 5 September 2009).

ethnic minorities and to grant the Tibetans and Uighurs in particular substantial autonomy rights'.⁶⁹ At the invitation of the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, a German Parliament Human Rights Committee delegation visited China during 14–19 April 2009. Sent to examine the human rights situation, the seven-member delegation spent 1.5 days in Xinjiang where they held meetings with officials and visited the Xinjiang Islamic College, Xinjiang University and a Protestant Church. On 12 May, after its return, the delegation held a meeting and adopted a resolution about listing the Uyghur human rights situation as an important issue in Germany's dealings with the Chinese government. On 18 June WUC leaders Dolkun Isa and Asgar Can met with members of the delegation in Berlin for three hours to brief them on the situation in Xinjiang.⁷⁰

Yet, these were no more than words that have failed to produce any concrete German *action* on behalf of the Uyghurs. In fact, even when Uyghur issues have been debated in the Bundestag (or in Bavaria's Landtag), none have led to binding legislation. 'There is no *direct* parliamentary proposal at the federal level expressing support for Uyghur Guantanamo inmates to be taken into Germany' unlike the Bavarian Parliament that *directly* called for the acceptance of the Uyghur inmates.⁷¹ Both, however, have been sheer statements never to be implemented. In the meantime, Uyghurs continue their activities in Germany. On 5 February 2011, the WUC and the ETUE staged a large-scale demonstration in Munich 'to commemorate the victims of the Gulja massacre and to ensure that the world does not forget the horrific tragedies of that day'.⁷² It was led by Rebiya Kadeer, WUC President and self-proclaimed as China's public enemy number one, and there was absolutely nothing that China, or the Chinese Consulate-General in Munich, could or would have done to prevent it.

69. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.ch/hurricane/hurricane.nsf/view01/BC2F81BC2E5148FDC1256B830059B529?opendocument> (accessed 27 March 2011).

70. *Ibid.*, p. 6; ETIC, 'Regarding significance of German human rights committee's visit to East Turkistan', (24 June 2009), in Dialog, *Highlights: Uyghur Sources on the Internet*, 22–29 June (4 July 2009), p. 10 and 15–22 June (26 May 2009), p. 6.

71. 'The emergence of the Uyghur issue', p. 7.

72. On the Gulja (Yining) massacre of 1997, see: James A. Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 329–334.; Christian Tyler, *Wild West China: The Taming of Xinjiang* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), pp. 168–172.