

ENGAGING ETHNIC MINORITIES

A COMMISSIONED REPORT FOR EU
FOREIGN MINISTERS



Engaging Ethnic Minorities:

Definition, Discernment and Diplomacy

**A Commissioned Report for
EU Foreign Ministers**

By

Sallux and Oxford House Research Ltd



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Foreword

As this foreword is being written there are two issues in the news. One is the threat by Erdogan to again attack Northern Syria where a coalition of peoples established the Autonomous Administration of North-East Syria under protection of the Syrian Democratic Forces. Earlier Turkish invasions in Afrin and North-East Syria resulted in the death of thousands and the end of Kurdish and Syriac-Assyrian as well as Yazidi populations in regions occupied by Turkey. At the moment of this writing, the US (having a military presence in North-East Syria) seems to block Turkey from repeating a similar invasion which would be followed by similar war crimes and atrocities directed against ethnic minorities in that region. In light of past western permissiveness of Turkish targeting and eradication of Kurds and other minorities one Kurd stated on twitter: „The West must value Kurdish lives. Kurds are not for the bartering of NATO deals. The West is worsening the situation of the Kurds just to please an aggressive regime. Address the Kurdish Question, invest in the Kurdish Question, end the Turkish blackmail once and for all.”¹ Nadine Maenza, former Chair of USCIRF, stated from North-East Syria: „How can an invasion targeting civilians with killings, rape & kidnappings be considered a war crime in Ukraine but be ok when Turkey does the same here in NE Syria?”² This is happening in the context of a Turkish blockade against Swedish and Finnish NATO membership over (in particular) the oppression of the Kurdish people by Turkey. The response of high European officials has been the usual language in which Turkish systematic aggression against minorities is ignored.

Another news item is that of photographs emerged that detail the ongoing genocide against the Uighur people in Xinjiang.³ Regardless of this horrific reality, it is clear that global companies continue to use production chains that rely (in part) on Uyghur slave labor⁴. The ‘Comprehensive Agreement on Investment’ between the EU and China is still formally on the table and some governments of EU Member States still want to have it signed (while the European Parliament is blocking that)⁵.

During the war against ISIS, many calls from the Yazidi’s and Syriac-Assyrians in Iraq for direct support from the west and direct diplomatic engagement with the

1 Diliman Abdulkader: https://twitter.com/D_abdulkader/status/1529096726585524227

2 Nadine Maenza: <https://twitter.com/nadinemaenza/status/1529202880175132673>

3 “The faces from China’s Uyghur detention camps”, BBC May 2022

4 “Uyghurs for sale”, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 1 March 2020

5 “Germany seeks to revive EU-China investment pact”, EUOBSERVER, 22 December 2021

EU and EU Member States, have been systematically ignored. Subsequently the homelands of these peoples in Iraq are now a bone of contention between bigger powers at the cost of peace and local populations while these same areas could have been neutral buffers and secure homelands for these ethnic minorities.

Time and again ethnic minorities and their particular situations keep popping up as a stumbling block for 'bigger agendas'. As another Kurd described it: „I always imagine the diplomats and Western army personnel who talk to Kurdish forces attacked by Turkey asking Kurds if they can just accept Turkish demands and just move somewhere else or voluntarily die. Just for the sake of ease.” A Syriac-Assyrian friend once told me of a meeting with a western diplomat who indeed suggested that it was better that the Syriac-Assyrian people should migrate to the west instead of staying in the Middle-East.

Since 2014 Sallux has engaged many of the ethnic minorities of the wider Middle-East which has enriched our understanding of this part of the world. Moreover it has enriched and expanded our vision on foreign affairs overall and specifically how the EU and its Member States have to change their foreign affairs in relation to ethnic minorities.

At the moment there is not a coherent policy at EU or Member State level when it comes to engagement with ethnic minorities. However these ethnic groups are part and parcel of the regions that have a big impact on the EU.

The refugee crisis of 2015 and 2016 has been a wake-up call in that regard. We as Sallux have witnessed firsthand the situation of ethnic minorities and their impact on what is happening in the wider Middle-East. As Sallux we supported a range of ethnic minorities in reaching out to policy makers and policy influencers. We have therefore first-hand experience with how the issues of these groups are being ignored, sidelined and treated as a second-class category in foreign affairs and that this had and has real life and death consequences.

Ethnic minorities cannot be ignored or seen as an 'annoyance'. For example, more than 50% of the Iranian population is part of an ethnic minority in that country. So each of these ethnic groups is very relevant in the dynamics of that region. And this is just one example of how ethnic minorities influence the power dynamics of the 'big players'. The fact that the Maronites and Syriac-Assyrians of Lebanon shifted to a political alliance that is opposed to Hezbollah resulted in an overall power loss of Hezbollah (and therefore Iran) in the May 2022 elections in Lebanon.

However as stated in the prologue of this publication, there is also a principled reason for a coherent policy on ethnic minorities. The EU is founded on the principle of human dignity and on the principle of respect for diversity, which explicitly includes cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. These characteristics of diversity are (taken together) the very essence of ethnicity (certainly outside the EU). Ultimately, human dignity and the ethno-religious and cultural identity of every individual are inextricably linked. Most people are born in a specific ethnic and cultural setting, it defines who they are. Trampling on the rights of ethno-religious minorities means that the rights of individuals and their human dignity are deeply oppressed. The EU cannot selectively protect and respect ethnic diversity in the EU and ignore it outside the EU.

At the same time this study recognizes that it is challenging to create a consistent foreign policy with regard to ethnic minorities. Many of these ethnic groups do not have statehood while the states where they live in deny them to be represented according to their own will both in and outside these countries. Individuals or small groups within these minorities are subverted as proxies for the interests of these states towards the outside world. This creates a difficult and confusing situation for any serious diplomatic engagement.

For those in the wider European Christian Political Movement (ECPM) and Sallux | ECPM Foundation this report can complement the many efforts that are made to protect freedom of religion. In the experience of Sallux the respect for freedom of religion and the respect and freedom of ethnic minorities often go together. To advance freedom of religion we need to include the situation of ethnic minorities and ensure their safety and future in their homelands⁶. Often this will result in increased freedom of religion. The religious dimension does not exist in isolation from the concrete socio-political circumstances of believers and their identity is often not just religious but also ethnic and therefore part of the political and geopolitical realities.

The aim of this publication is therefore to create a deeper understanding of the issues at stake when dealing with ethno-religious minorities outside the EU. These issues are highlighted through the case-studies with regard to the Uyghur, Baluch and Kurds. This report strongly urges the EU to increase its capacity to better understand, include, and monitor the minority ethnic and religious communities that the EU and EU Member States engage in their international diplomacy.

⁶ See also 'When Religious Freedom is Not Enough' by Robert Nicholson, Providence Magazine, 20 December 2019

We thank Oxford House and all the writers for their excellent work and great cooperation in delivering this report. We hope that this report will contribute to a better situation for ethnic minorities worldwide.

Johannes de Jong

Sallux director

Prologue

This report studies the application of the principles of the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* (EU) to the Union's interaction with ethnic and religious minorities; specifically, in the three Case Studies that follow, the Uyghurs, Baluch and Kurds. The Prologue of the Charter states:

The peoples of Europe, in creating an ever-closer union among them, are resolved to share a peaceful future based on common values. Conscious of its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It places the individual at the heart of its activities, by establishing the citizenship of the Union and by creating an area of freedom, security and justice. The Union contributes to the preservation and to the development of these common values while respecting the diversity of the cultures and traditions of the peoples of Europe as well as the national identities of the Member States.

Though every member state in the EU has its own internal issues and approach to other countries, the EU's founding vision for, and explicit commitment to, cultural diversity, mutual respect, and the rule of law, are both clear and common to all. Articles 1 and 22 of the Charter declare: 'Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected', and 'The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.' Shared values continue to unite Member States, as does its commitment to placing 'the individual at the heart of its activities'. However, dissonance in theory and inconsistencies in practice can be seen in the application of the Charter to the foreign policy and diplomacy of the EU (both as a whole and by individual Member States) with respect to ethnic and religious minorities. Credibility is compromised when the actions of the EU Council, Member States, and the European External Action Service (EEAS), are out of step with the EU's Founding Charter.

Diplomacy requires a considered response in different settings and situations. Projection of a limited and limiting set of values and assumptions risks distorting interpretation and devaluing interaction. In light of the three Case Studies presented here, this report implies that the EU appears to be presently – and dangerously – under-resourced in its work to understand, include, and monitor the minority ethnic and religious communities it engages in its international diplomacy. This leaves it exposed to criticism for inconsistently applying the princi-

ples it espouses in its Founding Charter.⁷ It also leaves it vulnerable to the charge of not facing and resolving the theoretical and ideological gap between its own respect for cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity and an individual's 'rights', and their *explicit denial* by some of the major states and minorities they interact with internationally. If individuality and equality matter on principle *inside* the EU they should matter *outside* the EU, too. Membership of the EU does not bestow human worth, it recognizes and celebrates it. When the EU ignores or devalues cultural and religious distinctives in ethnic minorities, it legitimates this behaviour in others. The Union constitutionally repudiates narrow ethno-nationalism. When it demonstrates this through lax or ill-informed interaction with violent minorities and oppressive States, it cuts off its own feet.

Cultural, religious, and ethical literacy and sensitivity are *essential* in a conflicted and diverse, globalized world.⁸ This report reinforces this essential principle and presses for its reaffirmation by the European Council.

The Case Studies that follow – on the Uyghurs, Baluch and Kurds – are descriptive, analytical and critical. Together they reveal the importance of understanding, integrity, flexibility and creativity in EU and Western Alliance engagement with ethnic and religious minorities. In the conclusion, practical proposals are presented that intend to safeguard good practice and address deficiencies in EU foreign policy and practice. More could be said on all of the issues addressed in this report. It is hoped sufficient grounds are laid here to encourage the European Council to commission a more substantial survey of EU foreign policy with respect to ethnic and religious minorities and, as a consequence, invest at least as much in understanding as in helping minority communities.

7 Large ethnic minorities, like those studied in this report, may legitimately question, for example, how their own cultural and linguistic identity is downplayed while Irish Gaelic (or Gaeilge), which is spoken by a tiny number of people in Ireland, will be recognized as an official language in EU institutions in 2022 (cf. 'Derogation to be removed so Irish language has full status in EU by 2022', 21 June 2021, EU Law Live).

8 N.B. we need to be aware of the inter-connectedness of the ideologies that threaten minorities outside the EU and the threats to the EU's security and social cohesion. Cf. 'Parlementaire ondervraging naar ongewenste beïnvloeding van maatschappelijke en religieuze organisaties in Nederland' (July 2019), which charted the spread of extremism among diaspora communities.

Executive summary

The Western Alliance faces many challenges. Externally, an uncooperative China, belligerent Russia,⁹ and unholy alliance of rogue nations, act independently and together to undermine the public profile, mutual trust, military cohesion, economic strength, and multi-faceted security of Western powers. In service of this hostile agenda, new forms of extra-territorialism are apparent in cyber warfare, offshore attacks on dissidents, security laws with global applicability (*pace* Hong Kong), the weaponizing of migrants and refugees,¹⁰ and all bolstered and justified by bare faced lies, hypocritical claims to beneficence, and cynical denials of wrongdoing. Internally, the EU and Western Alliance face economic and political rivalries, prolonged ‘culture wars’, divisive ‘identity politics’ and the socio-economic and security threat of migration from MENA and Central/SE Asia.

As Russia’s recent invasion of Ukraine has dramatically reminded the EU and Western Alliance, they now face a clear and present danger from an array of hostile agents and agencies. This report responds to one element in the threat the EU and Western Alliance face; namely, disgruntled and misunderstood minorities, who are casualties of conflicts they may, and may not, have created. The report therefore examines, a. the character, consistency, and coherence of the EU’s *internal* response to minority ethnic communities and, b. the style, sophistication, and effectiveness of the EU’s *external* engagement with minorities in complex, conflicted, international settings.¹¹ In light of this, the report asks, and seeks to answer, three key questions:

- i. What lessons can, and should, be learned by the EU and Western Alliance through close study of their interaction with minorities, particularly in complex, conflicted, international settings?
- ii. Can the EU be said, and seen, to be acting wisely, consistently, and coherently in its internal response to minorities?
- iii. What practical steps should the EU take to safeguard the interests

9 This report was finalised during Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which began on 21 February 2022.

10 While preparing this report, Russian-backed Belarus was sparring with Poland and the EU. Migrants were flown from Turkey, under President Erdoğan’s explicit direction, as an unwitting cohort to effectively intimidate an EU member state and, in the process, challenge the Union’s approach to migration per se. A similar weaponizing of ‘migrants’ is evident in cross-Channel politics post-Brexit.

11 N.B. Though this report is prepared for EU Foreign Ministers, the authors hope it will be read by, and resonate with, other government agencies (incl. NATO, the UN, security services and armed forces).

of Member States while enhancing engagement with cultural, religious and ethnic minorities?

To focus discussion, the report begins with reflection on current definitional debate about the nature and status of ‘minorities’ inside and outside the EU, and on recent accreditation of the ‘affective’ dimension in contemporary International Relations (IR).¹² The three Case Studies that follow (on the Uyghurs in China, the Baluch in Pakistan and the Kurds in Syria) map on to internal EU issues *and* illustrate the challenge and potential of frontline interaction with minority groups.

Case Study I (p. 14f.) sets the brutal treatment of the Uyghur minority in Xinjiang, China, in an historical, political and socio-geographical context. Without minimizing the plight of the Uyghurs, it looks at the potential of interfacing China’s policies on ‘sinicization’ and ecology to leverage greater cultural awareness and respect in PRC to benefit the Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities. Case Study II (p. 29f.), on the Baluch in northwestern Pakistan, sets the ethnonationalist conflict in Baluchistan in a broader historical, political, diplomatic, and socio-economic context, with both China and India major players in the region. Analysis highlights here the implications of cultural awareness and ethics in framing EU foreign policy. Case Study III (p. 45f.) provides a longer historical and cultural introduction to the 40m.+ Kurds, as background to analysis of the impact of the two Gulf Wars and Civil War in Syria on so-called ‘ethnic minorities’. Study of the Kurds leads the report to affirm the foundational value of ‘enculturated’ engagement with minorities and the importance of informed analysis of their ethnic priorities, political aspirations and religious sensibilities, both *in situ* and in diaspora communities in Europe and elsewhere.

In light of its three Case Studies, the report argues that if a dialogue between *internal* and *external* perspectives on minority engagement exposes the weaknesses of existing EU resources and methodologies, it also suggests ways to strengthen the diplomacy and integrity of the EU and Western Alliance going forward. In the Conclusion (p. 67f.), six practical proposals are presented as a creative response to the report’s findings. Written from first-hand experience of situations and issues described, the authors unite in appealing for greater courage, sensitivity, and in-depth engagement with cultural and ethnic minorities. Failure to do so will, they believe, further weaken the EU and Western Alliance.

The authors of the report would welcome opportunities to interact with EU policymakers and analysts on any of the topics and issues discussed in this report.

¹² Viz. attention to the emotional, relational, psychological, motivational, cultural, and religious dimensions of human behaviour at an individual, communal, and national level.

PART I

Definition, Discernment and Diplomacy

a. Definition, consistency and values

Our report uses the terms ‘minority’ and minorities and ‘identity’ and ‘identities’, deliberately: it also does so circumspectly. These terms are prominent in socio-political discourse. All of them are susceptible to misunderstanding and abuse. Just as ‘Western’ has negative connotations in post-colonial criticism, so ‘minority’ and ‘identity’ can be – and indeed, often are – used in a demeaning and condescending way. That is not the intention here.

This report uses the term minority to identify, and re-accredit, the demographically smaller community, the weaker cultural voice, and the right of marginalized ‘non-state actors’ to be heard and seen. ‘Minority’ is used here of a tribal, cultural, or ethnic group, which, regardless of its size, exists in a socially inferior way beside a dominant or majority community.¹³ As Chicago sociologist Louis Wirth (1897-1952) puts it, minorities are ‘a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment’ and feel ‘objects of collective discrimination’.¹⁴ A ‘minority’ is a complex organism, frequently fractured and fragmenting through war, dispersion, discrimination and internal dissent. To outsiders, they can appear evasive, elusive, opinionated, chaotic and incoherent. Mindful of the pressure on front-line operatives and policymakers, this report nevertheless highlights how the EU and other members of the Western Alliance have, and more often have not (at time unwittingly), engaged intelligently, effectively, and sympathetically, with minority communities in recent international di-

¹³ To illustrate the complexity of engaging a country, of the ca. 40m Iraqis 75-80% are Arabs and 15-20% Kurds. 99% of Iraqis are Muslim: the 3 largest groups being Shi’a Arabs (60-65%), Sunni Arabs and [mostly Sunni] Kurds (32-37% combined). Prior to ISIS, there were in Iraq an estimated 350k Christians, 500k Yezidis, 200k Kaka’i, less than 5k Sabean-Mandaeans and a few Bahá’í. Ethnic minorities in Iraq include Turkmen, Shabak, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Armenians, black Iraqis and Roma, with some Yezidis claiming to be a distinct ethnic group, while others self-identify as Kurds. To project ethnicity, unanimity, or harmony on such a diverse country and set of communities is fraught with risk.

¹⁴ Wirth, L. (1945), ‘The Problem of minority Groups’, in R. Linton (ed.), *The Science of Man in the World Crisis* (New York: Columbia UP), 347. Texas Professor Joe R. Feagin (b. 1938) has refined this into five hallmarks of a ‘minority’, viz. they suffer discrimination/subordination, have distinctive (to some offensive) physical and/or cultural traits, a deep sense of collective identity/shared concerns and of who ‘belongs’ and who cannot adjudicate their status, and are likely to intermarry (*Racial and Ethnic Relations*, 2nd ed. [Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1984], 10).

plomacy. The report's aim is to learn lessons from three Case Studies and propose practical strategies going forward.

Projection of Western assumptions on non-Western minorities risks exacerbating a sense of domination and marginalization. This will have a negative impact on diplomacy. The language, customs, ancient 'myths', historic power structures, tribal ties and sense of 'place and space' of minority communities, matter to them and should matter to all who engage them. This is their 'language' which outsiders must learn. To miss the marks of minority identity risks reinforcing negative perceptions and exacerbating discord. Many in contemporary liberal democracies will, the authors of this report believe, acknowledge that minorities have a right to their identity and should be respected for such.

Despite popular accreditation of minority rights, this report explores the frequent disconnect in the thought and practice of EU leaders between their *theoretical* affirmation of 'inclusive' multi-culturalism and their *practical* elitism and colonial prejudice when engaging minorities internationally; particularly, in culturally complex arenas of conflict or humanitarian crisis, such as Syria, Yemen and Iraq.

b. Discernment, demography and power differentials

Though seen elsewhere, sensitivity to minority interests and identity rights is an essentially Western phenomenon, arising from classical Judeo-Christian and secular humanist values. As such, it can be both a gift and conundrum for cultures that do not question a majority's rights, power, and privileges, nor readily/consistently include minority voices in the political process.

Faith-based perspectives and egalitarian humanism are traditionally in the forefront of seeking to re-value the poor and protect the weak. But this is not always the case. Mainstream religions and secular humanism have been linked to various forms of racism, sexism, intellectual elitism, and societal 'apartheid'. This has contributed to pejorative use of the term 'Western'.

Close study of minorities reveals that in some settings the demographic majority are ruled by a numerically smaller elite. In other words, power and privilege are – and in some cases remain – in the hands of a demographic, racial or ethnic minority (e.g., the minority Alawites in Syria, Christians in Lebanon and, historically, whites in S. Africa). Local power differentials require careful integration in EU foreign policy analysis and strategy, lest a form of ethnic apartheid offensive to European stakeholders be perpetuated uncritically in international diplomacy.

In order to exegete EU engagement with minorities accurately, the report uses an inductive method; that is, it seeks to understand engagement with minorities from where people *are*, not where we *think they are* or, worse, *where we think they should be*. This inductive approach takes identity and geography seriously: geography, that is, in the broadest sense, as study of the history, location, resources, risks, and potential of individuals and communities in isolation and in context. Conflict is often at root about territory and/or natural resources. The need for spouses and water, grazing lands and access to holy sites, has often stirred jealousy and enmity. Part II includes geography and ecology as significant elements in minority identity that need to be more fully – and effectively – accredited in international diplomacy and peace initiatives.

As an extension of geography, this report also studies socio-economic factors that cause and compound conflict. Financial security and work, like inheritance and investment, are pillars of stable societies. They are also useful incentives to garner good will and build peace. However, as Part II will evidence, integration of economic factors in ‘major power’ engagement with ‘non-state actors’ is fraught with difficulty. Divergent perceptions of money, inducement, hierarchy, status, profession, and male-female roles, come into play. Economic inducements can heighten cultural and political power differentials and engender suspicion of both friends and enemies.

The affective dimension to human life for individuals and societies includes the spiritual (or religious) and ethical (or moral). It is estimated 85% of the world interpret reality through a spiritual lens. Tribal identity is often bound up with a subtle schema of spiritual myths and rituals that explicate, evaluate, empower, regulate, and perpetuate life. When ‘major [Western] players’ engage with ‘tribal or non-state actors’ regard for this ‘spiritual’ dimension is at a premium.¹⁵ Cultural discourtesy becomes careless transgression of ‘taboos’ without trained awareness and attentive local assistants. A Western predisposition to relativize values and globalize them is counterproductive here. As Part II will again show, it is both unwise and insensitive to expect minorities to forswear inherited *mores* to sit at an alien power’s diplomatic high table.

¹⁵ The report uses the expression ‘major state’ to acknowledge power differentials in international affairs. There is no intention in using this expression to privilege states over non-state actors, nor to suggest smaller nations are of less inherent importance than larger countries. ‘Major state’ is used as much as a reminder of responsibility as a bestower of priority; indeed, at the heart of the report is a plea for great mutual recognition and respect between countries and ethnic communities.

c. Diplomacy, identity and cultural inclusivity

This report takes seriously, then, the culture clash that can – and does – occur when Western cultural and ideological perspectives encounter non-Western attitudes to race, sex, ethnicity and societal/domestic roles and responsibilities. Much diplomatic and relational harm is done when Western value systems are projected onto non-Western communities. Faith, spirituality, tradition, and enculturated ethics matter inside *and outside* the EU. The ‘affective revolution’ in contemporary IR takes these personal and communal distinctives increasingly seriously: failure to do so risks repeating the mixed results of Western engagement in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.

Education in cultural distinctives can help reduce or mitigate the effects of misunderstanding. As our Case Studies illustrate, however, the problem is as often Western diplomatic amnesia, with respect to its avowed inclusion of ethnic and political minorities and ‘special interest groups’, as it is the conscious endorsement of local discriminatory cultural norms.

Diplomatic consistency and personal integrity require Western engagement with minorities be *neither* blind to local socio-political and cultural dynamics *nor* forgetful of values that esteem minorities in liberal democracies. Diplomatic skill, intellectual discernment, and emotional intelligence are required to safeguard Western values and interests while navigating complex cultural, ethnic, and political realities. This report seeks to highlight for EU Foreign Ministers some of the risks and opportunities that arise from nuanced engagement with minorities.

International Relations theory and practical diplomacy cannot ignore the ‘affective’ and remain effective, particularly in understanding and engaging *all* parties in situations of conflict and/or humanitarian crisis. Failure to do so, as the sad narrative of Afghanistan has recently confirmed, and our report will further illustrate, can serve to exacerbate problems in the short term and prolong conflict and chaos in the medium and long term. This failure in Western diplomatic theory and practice cannot be allowed to continue unchallenged, unchecked, or unchanged. The international community has in recent times begun to reject intrusive globalization and (unsurprisingly?) embraced localism as a safer cultural stronghold amid stormy geopolitics.

Acute discernment and ‘deep [cultural] listening’¹⁶ are also required in discussion

¹⁶ For a brief introduction to ‘deep listening’ as an aspect of Mindfulness, see <https://www.mindful.org/deep-listening>.

and evaluation of identity. ‘Special interest groups’ can be the death of social cohesion and political harmony. Diplomacy cannot succumb naively to every expression of local protest or appeal to be part of any and every political conversation. Front-line military interaction with ethnic groups is fraught with physical, cultural, and interpretative risk. ‘Deep listening’ is needed. Assessment difficult.

‘Identity politics’ in Western discourse has issued a legitimate appeal for a person’s individual ‘right’ to self-definition and respect. Though many social commentators in the West now see wholesome individualism to be under threat from self-preoccupying narcissism and anti-social libertarianism, the fundamental ‘right’ of a human to be received and respected *as a human* is a core value of EU member states and of signatories of the UNDHR. The threat to social cohesion ‘identity politics’ poses Western liberal democracies should not be consciously or unconsciously reflected in their engagement with foreign minorities. Minority identities are cultural micro-systems, which deserve respect and protection. This report seeks to uphold the ‘identity rights’ of ethno-religious communities against willful or accidental destruction by major state actors.

d. Rights, Russia and the migrant crisis

To some, part of the *external* threat to the Western Alliance is the recovery of a rejuvenated Communist ideology by newly belligerent China and totalitarian Russia. In Marxist and Maoist ideology individuality is subverted to socio-political corporatism. The person has no essential ‘identity’ or ‘rights’. The projection of this dehumanizing anthropology onto the global stage is deeply alarming, as recent events in Ukraine have confirmed again. When Western involvement in international disputes and humanitarian crises fails to see, understand and value *individuals*, it reflects this shamefully subhuman anthropology. Cultures that honour the ethic and wisdom – expressed in slightly different forms¹⁷ – of the ancient ‘Golden Rule’ (‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you’¹⁸) dishonour themselves and others when they fail to keep it.

The refugee and migrant crisis, that has seen hundreds of thousands of displaced persons flood Europe in the last decade or so, is an extension of the issues considered in this report. Western security, values, political cohesion, and economic capability, have all been deeply challenged by the daily reality of political refu-

¹⁷ The ‘Golden Rule’ is found in both a positive and a negative form in all of the world’s major faith traditions and social philosophies since antiquity. As Confucius replied to his disciple Zu Gong, ‘[N]ever impose on others what you would not choose for yourself’ (Analects XV.24)

¹⁸ Luke 6.31.

gees, economic migrants and fundamentalist insurgents seeking legal and illegal entry into Europe. Statistics on mortality rates and incarceration make for grim reading.¹⁹ Few European politicians or analysts claim easy answers to the current migrant crisis. Screening, distributing, and integrating migrants, refugees and asylum seekers is fraught with difficulty. Closed borders can be as problematic as open ones. Compassion rarely wins elections.

Though some migrants seek to abuse European hospitality and foment violence on our streets, the vast majority are innocent victims of conflict in the MENA region. They travel at great risk to flee violence, famine, and persecution, in the hope of finding a better life. They bring with them their own inherited cultural norms. They enter a new world that they believe – and hope – to be different. Detention and delay are the breeding ground of disillusionment, disaffection and cooption to anti-social agendas and behaviour. Vulnerable identities are susceptible to nefarious coercion.

The reception migrants receive can be disorientating. The West is not *their* West, as they had hoped it would be. The EU and UK's (at best) mixed reception leaves a bad taste in the mouth of migrants and EU/UK nationals. Like diplomats in alien cultural settings, migrants experience 'culture jolts', on particularly bad days 'culture shock'. Sympathy, born of our shared humanity, is a worthy response. But, as in diplomacy, domestic policy cannot dispense sympathy uncritically, hence the need for deep listening, informed understanding and diplomatic skill.

In the dialogue this report encourages between the EU's *internal* response to migrants and its *external* engagement with cultural minorities, we cannot fail to recognize that many migrants have fled situations Western action helped to create, or, despite good intentions, now appears to have failed to improve. It is right we ask, Did Western powers act in the best interests of *all* when they engaged in military action in Iraq or Syria? Were local cultural, religious, and ethnic distinctives adequately factored into analysis and decision-making? Were the interests of local minorities sufficiently integrated in Western military and political strategy?

19 In the week before this part of the report was finalized (15-21 November 2021), the UK saw the highest number of migrants in a single day crossing the channel in small boats. On Thursday, 11 November 2021, 1,185 migrants landed on the Kent shore seeking entry into the UK. France protests a lack of funding to support its border patrols: the UK protests France's failure to staunch the flow. As elsewhere, migrants are weaponized here in post-BREXIT wrangling. The greatest beneficiaries are the people traffickers, who trade off the dreams of desperate people. The flood of migrants from war-torn Ukraine in February and March 2022 intensifies the need to engage the issue of social identity and geographic fluidity with even greater skill and sensitivity.

We cannot change the past, but we can seek to avoid repeating our mistakes in the future. In this report we revisit recent diplomatic and military action (and their failures) to examine in detail the nature, challenge and potential of engaging minorities in conflicted settings, as a path to recalibrate domestic perspectives within the Western Alliance. In the three Case Studies that follow the report highlights specific issues that offer, the authors believe, particularly useful insights for diplomatic and military strategy in the mid-twenty-first century. The report concludes with practical proposals to sharpen EU foreign policy and diplomatic practice.

PART II

Three Case Studies of marginalized minorities

In Part II of this report, we develop the dialogue between the EU's *internal* domestic response to, and its *external* international engagement with, minorities from complex, conflicted areas. We focus on three instances where diplomacy has faced, and continues to face, issues directly associated with the identity of minority communities under pressure from major state actors.

Many examples might have been cited and studied in this part of the report. We have selected three that offer, the authors believe, important – and immediately relevant – *external* insights into pressing *internal* EU issues. The implications of this data for the wider Western Alliance are also in mind throughout. For, though tensions persist in EU-UK relations post-BREXIT, and the Western Alliance manifests after-effects from the divisive Presidency of Donald Trump (b. 1946; Pres. 2017-2021), the need for historic allies to think and act in an informed, coherent, united way with respect to domestic and international minorities, has arguably never been more urgent. Enemies promote and exploit division: friends agree to unite against threats.

As intimated earlier, marginalized, or neglected minorities are easy prey for hostile powers and disruptive ideologies that oppose the political influence, and past and present cultural values, of the West. Minorities are fertile soil for various forms of grooming, disaffection, violence, and radicalization. They are easily co-opted and weaponized. Developing effective access to, and means of communication with, diffuse minority communities is difficult. Knowing the physical, social, political, economic, and cultural context they inhabit, is essential. In the Case Studies below, 'context' in its broadest sense is a key component of the report's findings and conclusions.

So, what's at stake? Material to answer the three fundamental questions behind this report, viz.

- i. What lessons can, and should, be learned by the EU and Western Alliance through close study of their interaction with minorities, particularly in complex, conflicted, international settings?
- ii. Can the EU be said, and seen, to be acting wisely, consistently, and coherently in its internal response to minorities?

- iii. What practical steps should the EU take to safeguard the interests of Member States while enhancing engagement with cultural, religious and ethnic minorities?

More than this, the authors of this report believe the *internal-external* dialogue introduced here is foundational for global harmony and the safety and security of the EU and Western Alliance in the second half of the 21st century.

CASE STUDY I

China, Xinjiang, and the potential of eco-diplomacy

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We begin with China, a distant power geographically for the EU, but an imminent presence politically and diplomatically. EU-China relations are a major pre-occupation of EU member states: they are also a major concern today of every member of the Western Alliance. China features prominently in contemporary geopolitical analysis: it is right this report accords its attitude and actions towards its ethnic minorities a central place. For Western powers engaging China on *internal* domestic issues is arguably even more difficult than over *external* international matters. The widely reported plight of the Uyghur Muslim minority in the western Province of Xinjiang (Fig. 1) provides useful insights into engaging China internally *and* externally, and on the broader issue of major state engagement with minorities.

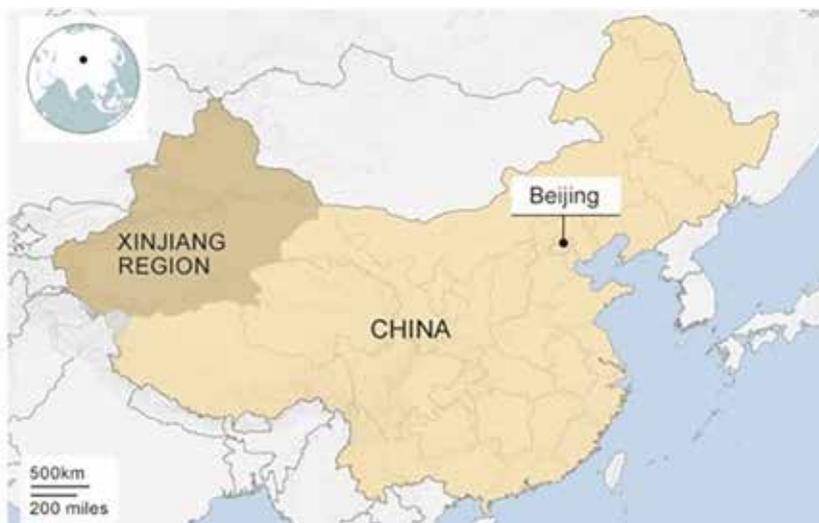


Fig. 1: Xinjiang Province, PRC (BBC)

a. The Rise of China as a Superpower

The rise, and reversal, of the Peoples' Republic of China to an old-style commu-nistic militarism under President Xi Jinping (b. 1953; Pres. 2013-present) is widely recognized and reported. It is hard to misread China's self-presentation as the next, dominant, Superpower. President Xi's second 'centennial goal' is for PRC in 2049 to be a 'strong, democratic, civilised, harmonious and modern socialist country'. In a 2020 article on China in *Foreign Policy* (22 May 2020), Prof. Hal Brands (Johns Hopkins) and Dr. Jake Sullivan (Carnegie Endowment for Interna-

tional Peace) speak of Xi Jinping 'gearing up to contest America's global leadership', with China displaying 'a Superpower's ambition'. To support this claim, they point to China's launching of more vessels between 2014-2018 than 'the total number of ships in the German, Indian, Spanish, and British navies combined'. And, they argue,

There is Beijing's bid to dominate high-tech industries that will deter-mine the future distribution of economic and military power.²⁰ There is the campaign to control the crucial waterways off China's coast, as well as reported plans to create a chain of bases and logistical facilities farther afield. There are the systematic efforts to refine methods of converting economic influence into economic coercion throughout the Asia-Pacific and beyond.

Though evidence suggests the COVID pandemic has affected China's population and economy more than it is prepared to admit, the world's second largest economy (\$15.66 tr.) still saw its GDP grow by a stunning 18.3% in the March quarter of 2021 (with a projected 6% for the year).²¹ Meanwhile, China's global reach extends unopposed. In Africa, a continent where China has invested \$2 tr. since 2005, and its dominance in infrastructure development is clear,²² China's presence is 'ubiquitous' (*Forbes*, 3 October 2019). In addition to its \$1bn 'Belt and Road Africa' fund and \$11bn Trans-Maghreb highway (from W. Sahara to Libya), in 2018 China provided a \$60 bn aid package. Daan Roggeveen (founder of MORE architecture) comments: 'Right now you could say that any big project in African cities that is higher than three floors, or roads that are longer than three kilometers, are most

20 Cf. unsurprisingly perhaps, the Chinese tech giant Tencent is worth more than its US counter-part Facebook.

21 China averaged a GDP growth of 9.29% between 1989-2021.

22 China has gained a 40% share in Africa's essential infrastructure development since 2011: Eu-rope's has reduced meanwhile from 44% to 34%, the US from 24% to 6.7%.

likely being built and engineered by the Chinese.’ China is Africa’s largest trade partner (\$200 bn p.a.) with 10,000 Chinese firms operating there.

Though China was the third largest contributor to the UN budget (7.9%) between 2016-2018, and claims (despite Xi Jinping’s absence from COP26) to be committed to preserving the planet and reducing carbon emissions, to many observers its intentions remain unclear. Hu Jintao’s vision for ‘China’s peaceful rise’ now seems a distant dream in Xi’s ‘new era’ China. Though a permanent member of the UN Security Council since 1945 and a member of WTO since 2001, China has often preferred to abstain on controversial legislation. Significantly, in 2014 it voted with Russia to veto a proposal to refer the crisis in Syria to the International Criminal Court. Far from promoting *pax sinica* (Lit. Chinese peace), a majority of international experts now see Xi’s China as a dangerous, imperious, bully,²³ its international diplomacy habitually one-way.

b. Xinjiang: an initial overview

Our first Case Study focusses on the Western Province of Xinjiang (Fig. 2) or, as it is known officially, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), 新疆维吾尔自治区. The term Xinjiang (Lit. New Frontier) dates from the region’s conquest by the Qing in 1759. The Province of Xinjiang was created in 1884. The region has known much conflict and oppression over the centuries.

Bordered by aspirant Superpowers India and Russia, and by the culturally and geographically conducive terrorist strongholds of Pakistan and Afghanistan, Xinjiang today reflects the ethnic diversity of its vast Central Asian neighbours, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Xinjiang itself covers more than 1.6m sq.km (620k. sqm.), the largest province in China and 8th largest country subdivision in the world. Beijing’s sensitivity to the region is not surprising.

²³ On the character and possibility of China’s rise to Super-Power status, see the illuminating article, ‘Today’s China will never be a Super-Power’ (Financial Times, 26 May 2019).



Fig. 2: Xinjiang and its environs (BBC)

The ancient 'Silk Road' ran across Xinjiang from its NW corner eastwards. The size, demography and strategic location of Xinjiang have, in recent times, afforded it an unparalleled profile in PRC's domestic policy and 'Belt and Road' (B & R) initiative.²⁴ Though the terrain is rugged, with only 9.7% of it habitable, for centuries the region has been a frontier for dissent and development. The topography and ecology of the region add much to its complexity and importance today.



Fig. 3: The Dzungarian Alatau

²⁴ On the 'Belt & Road' initiative, see further pp. 15, 25, 33.

Xinjiang is encircled by, and dominated in its south and west by, the Karakoram, Kunlun and Tian Shan mountains. Its provincial neighbours are Gansu, Qinghai and the closely monitored Autonomous Region of Tibet. A mountain range (Dzungarian Alatau) bisects Xinjiang physically and culturally (Fig. 3). To anthropologists and ecologists, topography and ethnic identity are cousins.

To the north of Dzungarian Alatau, the steppes and semi-desert region of the Dzungarian Basin were traditionally home to Tibetan-Buddhist Dzungar nomads who lived on grassland fed by melting mountain snow. The region still supports agriculture; notably, the cultivation of wheat, barley, oats, and sugar beet, and raising of cattle, sheep, and horses. With easier access to Russia in the west and stronger rail and trade access with the rest of China to the east, the Dzungarian Basin has seen significant industrial and commercial development over the last half century, in and around the provincial capital of Urumqi, oil, coal, iron, and gold have all drawn in immigrants, investors and gangsters. This is China's 'Wild West'.

In contrast, the drier Tarim Basin (Fig. 4) to the south, once home to passing traders and oasis dwelling Turkic Muslims, the Uyghurs, has seen little development of its less hospitable terrain. Though the world once passed through the Tarim Basin it has now, it seems, passed it by; the Uyghurs, but for Beijing's recent crack-down, a forgotten minority people, like so many world-wide.



Fig. 4: The Tarim Basin

Xinjiang's 25m. inhabitants are unequally distributed across its vast, mountainous, beautiful, landscape, with its sweeping grasslands and scattered stands of poplar, tamarisk and willows, its herds of Onagers, Goitered gazelles and Wild Bactrian camels, its 'Three Rivers National Park' (on the Tibetan plateau) and 'Great Gobi National Park' (partly in NE Xinjiang). Migration from the south has increased prosperity and productivity in the north: it has also compromised the area's balance of nature and biodiversity. In the process, it has poured fuel on the fire of deep-seated ethno-political tension. Conflict in Xinjiang and its environs is not new. Beijing's battles with the Uyghurs are part of an ancient 'culture war', which superficial analysis and knee-jerk condemnations, overlook. Interpreting Uyghur identity *in context* is at a premium (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5: Xinjiang: a region of significance to biodiversity conservation (Geographical Magazine)

c. 'Ethnic minorities' in China and Xinjiang

China officially recognizes fifty-five ethnic minorities. They comprise 8.49% of the nation's population. Historic Maoist terminology reflects earlier Soviet classifications. A 'minority' is *shaoshu minzu* 少数民族 (Lit. minority nation) or *zhonguo gezu renmin* 中国各族人民 (Lit. Chinese people of different nationalities). 'Ethnicity', as Western anthropologists understand the term, is an alien concept. In line with Xi Jinping's widely reported – and legally binding – policy of 'sinicization' (February 2012), minorities are now recategorized as *zhonghua minzu* 中化民族 (Lit. 'Chinese peoples'). The term echoes President Sun Yat-Sen's (1866-1925) early-20th century appeal for a unified, republican, 'Chinese nation'. A little under a century later, un-

der the Communist President Xi, 'minority' identity must now conform to centrally imposed marks of 'Chineseness'. The contrast could not be clearer (Fig. 6). In the case of the Uyghurs, culture, dress, physical features, language, and religion, are all proscribed, their unique identity destroyed by government diktat and brutality.



Fig. 6: A young Uyghur (Al Jazeera)

Xinjiang has always been ethnically mixed. In the 21st century, Kazakhs, Mongols, Kyrgyz, Han, Hui, Uyghurs, and transient labourers from across Central Asia to the South and West, cohabit this frontier region. The plight of the Uyghurs is not unique, but it is exceptional (see Fig. 7).



Fig. 7: PRC Military crackdown on Uyghur protests

Contemporary use of the term ‘Uyghurs’ is misleading: behind it lies a long and complex history. ‘Uyghur’ has become an umbrella term sheltering a composite ethnic identity and community. Subsumed in the imperial period under the general designation for China’s indigenous Muslims, ‘Hui’ (回族),²⁵ the Uyghurs suffered with other ‘Hui’ in the Tang Dynasty (618-927 CE) for their exclusive identity and perceived reluctance to integrate into the majority Han culture. Tension between Han and Muslim Chinese (including the Uyghurs) increased during the Manchu Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) when a significant number of Han migrated to China’s western regions.²⁶ Though the 4th Qing Emperor Yongzheng (1678-1735; Emp. 1722-35) issued an edict prohibiting legal and social discrimination against Muslims, and in the late-Qing period semi-official *sharia* courts existed,²⁷ tension persisted. In 1826 a rebellion broke out in Xinjiang, the precursor to regional conflict that persisted into the mid-20th century. Separatist energies in Xinjiang today are traceable to two periods (1933-1934, 1944-1949) when East Turkestan was independent. Though the region was peacefully absorbed into Mao’s ‘New China’ in 1949, Xinjiang’s unique regional, ethno-religious identity remained unchanged, the issue of China’s attitude towards its minorities unfaced and unresolved. President Xi has grasped a nettle that others avoided.

Over the centuries, multiple cultural and ideological influences have been brought to bear on Uyghur identity; not least, through seasonal economic migration in the late-19th and early-20th centuries into Soviet-controlled Central Asia. Once a disparate,²⁸ peaceable, Turkic (*qua* Uzbek) speaking nomadic tribe, engaged in oasis farming, small-scale trade, and basic craftsmanship, the Uyghurs gradually cohered as a distinct minority in the 20th century. Politics, geography, culture, and religion brought them together in (and around) East Turkistan. Muslim scholars played their part.²⁹ Attempted regulation by far-off Beijing fueled regional ethnic passion.³⁰

25 N.B. we also find the term ‘Hui’ applied to Christians and Jews in Imperial China. During the Republican and/or Nationalist period (1912-49), Hui designated one of four *minzu* (‘minority people’) recognized by the government; as such, it was a broad term referring to all the Islamic groups in NW China.

26 It is estimated that between 1953 and 1964 the proportion of Han Chinese in Xinjiang increased from 6.1% (299k) to 32.9% (2.45m). Ethnic tension in the region has deep roots.

27 In 1950, the CCP appears to have dismantled this *sharia* system, but the evidence is sketchy.

28 N.B. when the USSR recognized East Turkestan, the Soviet-aligned warlord governor of Xinjiang, Sheng Shicai (1897-1970; Gov. 1933-44), used Soviet categorization to identify 13 distinct groups of ethnic Uyghurs.

29 The transformation of the Uyghurs from an independent, culturally Muslim, community to a self-conscious associate of global Islam occurred during the 20th century. Religious intellectuals played a key role in reconfiguring Uyghur identity. The transformation has been closely monitored and finally confronted by the PRC government at a national and local level.

30 N.B. there are nearer 2-300 identifiable tribal groups in China that live more-or-less peacefully

Our first Case Study is against the backcloth of President Xi's enforcement of the new ideology of 'sinicization'. This 2012 policy requires cultural conformity by China's citizens, including its religious and ethnic minorities. The plain fact is this new policy contradicts a majority of the ideals outlined in Part I. An ideological and political 'culture clash' is clear. The issues for us are, what lessons can be learned from close study of China's attitude towards its ethnic minorities? And, what diplomatic pressure, if any, can be brought to bear on Xi Jinping and PRC leadership to bring its approach to the Uyghur minority more in line with Western priorities and values?

d. The Uyghur crisis: outlining the problem

Though the Uyghurs are located primarily in Xinjiang, they are found in other Central Asian republics and as far afield as Turkey. Their sense of ethnic identity and communal solidarity has been enhanced by the sustained pressure put upon them by the dominant Han Chinese, who control them from far off Beijing or government offices in Xinjiang. In the 2020 census, 46% (viz. 12m.) of Xinjiang's 25.8+m. citizens self-identified as members of the Uyghur minority; and this, despite constant reporting over the past decade by Human Rights agencies and the world's media of violent oppression, inhumane abuse, and short and long-term detention for 're-education' (Fig. 8). Uyghurs have been interred in vast camps, or, as they are officially known 'Xinjiang Vocational Education and Training Centers' (新疆职业技能教育培训中心).³¹ This is part of the government's '*de-extremification campaign*' (去极端化) and '*counter-extremism*' agenda (反极端化),³² which target China's regional, religious minorities to strip them of their cultural, moral, religious and ethnic distinctives.³³ To many European observers, there will be little to learn here except, yet again, humanity's capacity for cruelty and cultural barbarism.

among the majority Han.

31 In addition to an estimated 1.5m. Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and other ethnic minorities are presently held in Xinjiang's internment camps.

32 N.B. first referenced in Xinjiang in 2012, absorbed in government reports from 2014 and turned into law (for the first time, nationally) in 'Xinjiang Autonomous Region Regulations on de-extremification' (2017).

33 N.B. 'The People's Republic of China Anti-Terror Law' (2016) defines extremism as 'the ideological basis of terrorism', which more generally involves, 'inciting hatred, discrimination, or agitating violence through distorting religious doctrines or other means'. The 2017 law on 'de-extremification' proscribes use of 'appearance, clothing and personal adornment, symbols, and other markings to disseminate religious fanaticism, disseminate religious extremist ideologies, or coerce others to wear extremist clothing or religious extremist symbols'.



Fig. 8: Uyghurs in an internment camp.

Few international commentators now question this grim narrative, however much it is denied by China's international allies and repudiated as meddling by the authorities in Beijing.³⁴ But an estimated 1m. Uyghurs are currently detained in Xinjiang, and this is only part of the central government's brutal suppression of the Uyghurs' identity. According to one report, enforced sterilizations in Xinjiang jumped from 3,214 in 2014 to more than 60,000 in 2018. In the same year, the region accounted for 80% of newly inserted IUDs nationwide. German anthropologist Adrian Zenz, who studies the demographic and socio-economic impact of internment camps in Xinjiang, claims population growth has dropped to nil (if not lower) in minority regions.³⁵

Of the three Case Studies in this report, the plight of the Uyghurs is the least ambiguous. This ethnic minority has been singled out for exceptional mistreatment by its government. External protest has to-date fallen on deaf ears. The issue for us here is not so much how to reach and help the Uyghur minority directly (which is virtually impossible), but how to re-tell their story in such a way that the rest of

³⁴ 53 countries supported China at the UN in 2019 and rejected allegations of human rights abuse (including rape, torture, executions and psychological abuse). By 2020, 39 countries had denounced China's actions in Xinjiang and China's support had shrunk to 45. Despite claims from Beijing that they were winding down the internment camp programme, in September 2020 the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) reported construction of the camps was continuing. Support for China was, it appears, partly motivated by a diplomatic and strategic desire to uphold the principle of 'non-interference' in another sovereign state (see further pp. 25, 29f.).

³⁵ On this, Zenz, A., 'Sterilizations, Iuds, and Mandatory Birth Control: The CCP's Campaign to Suppress Uyghur Birthrates in Xinjiang', The Jamestown Foundation, 24 March 2020.

China and the world understands the full implications of treating this minority in this particular way. Lessons extrapolated here can, the authors believe, shed important light on the EU's response to its own minority communities.

e. Drilling down into Xinjiang and the current Uyghur crisis

The Uyghur crisis in Xinjiang is, as indicated above, not new. A number of factors have, however, converged of-late to make the situation worse. These deserve attention and enumeration.

First, *heightened Muslim consciousness in Xinjiang is in part due to central government policy*. With the liberalization of Chinese society, and permissive reconstruction of a religious 'public square' in the 1980s, which were both inspired by the visionary politician Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997; Chairman of the Central Advisory Cttee of CCP 1978-1989), 1000s of mosques were built in Xinjiang with the blessing of the local and national government. Their despoliation today is a direct – and embarrassing – reversal of an earlier policy. The narrow-mindedness of the present regime is in stark contrast to the creative, cultural generosity of an earlier generation. The first 'Cultural Revolution' left China the poorer in every way: the second seems set to do the same. Handled wisely, ethnic diversity is invariably an enrichment of a society, particularly when that ethnicity is ancient and indigenous. Assimilation of new ethnicities is habitually more difficult.

Second, Xinjiang's sense of self-determination today reflects earlier confidence in the region's economic development.³⁶ In 2010, three years prior to the official launch of the 'B & R' initiative, Xinjiang was reimagined once again as the western gateway to China's 'Silk Road'. The regional city of Kashgar was designated a 'Special Economic Zone' (经济特区). The central and regional governments invested vast amounts economically and reputationally in the province. Xinjiang was to become the impressive face of China westwards. Huge numbers of Han Chinese moved to Xinjiang in the early 21st century hoping to benefit from its new economic profile. The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (新疆生产建设兵团), or Bingtuan (Lit. 'The Corps') which was founded in 1954 – now sanctioned by the US for its part in building and maintaining detention camps – was central to Xinjiang's extraction and production industries (Fig. 9). Hopes for Xinjiang as a PR success have been dashed. Beijing's embarrassment is clear. Visitors are not welcome. Greed and poor planning contributed to the increased ethnic tension in the region. Disillusioned Han have now drifted back eastwards, Uyghur protests salting their wounds.

³⁶ GDP per capita increased by 139% in Xinjiang during the 1980s.



Fig. 9: Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang

Third, *globalization has rendered Uyghur Muslims aware of, and connected to, the theology and action of global Islam.* Like China's vast Christian community, Uyghurs are now self-consciously internationalized. Over time, religiously and socially conscientized Uyghurs warmed to global religious pressure. On 5 April 1990, a year after the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests (April to June 1989), a religiously motivated uprising took place in Barin township, Kizilsu Akto County, near Kashgar. It was led by Zeydin Yusup (1964-1990), the charismatic head of the East Turkistan Islamic Party.³⁷ The event shook the CCP to the core, but at the time Deng Xiaoping's vision for progressive liberality and ethnic inclusivity protected Xinjiang's Muslims against major reprisals. 9/11 and terrorists attacks worldwide have again shaken China's faith in this generous approach: other solutions are now more acceptable.

Fourth, *the Uyghurs have suffered from the PRC government's lack of religious self-awareness.* China looked to the UK, EU, and US for advice on handling religious radicalization when its own Religious Affairs Bureau fell short. But this was short-lived. An Islamist knife attack on police in Kashgar in 2008, and Muslim violence against Han-owned businesses and economic migrants in Urumqi in 2009 (in which 200 people died),³⁸ rumbled the central government and hard-

³⁷ According to one source, 200 men engaged in a violent protest against 250 forced abortions on Uyghur women.

³⁸ N.B. many from the heavily Christian Eastern seaboard city of Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province.

ened its resolve to confront radicalization head-on. It found external justification for this in the political and social chaos of the [social] media driven ‘Arab Spring’³⁹ (December 2010), and from the chronic failure of the Western Alliance to expunge radical elements from MENA and to reduce the flow of migrants into Europe. The PRC leadership also looked inwards at the socio-political and economic impact of infrastructure failures associated with the Sichuan earthquake (12 May 2010) and at the 2014 separatist attack in neighbouring Kunming, Yunnan Province (in which 31 civilians were killed). An accommodating approach to ethnic minorities, including the Uyghurs, would not, it concluded, work: it would merely increase the risk of (already heightened) social instability and of international and domestic terrorism.⁴⁰ Brutality towards the Uyghurs reflects this change in perception.⁴¹ Whereas the Uyghurs were once an ethnic ‘minority’, they are now a religious and ideological ‘threat’, in which the ‘three evil forces’ of separatism, extremism and terrorism, converge.⁴² A sledge hammer has been used to crush a problem of Beijing’s making.

Fifth, *China’s ancient quest for self-understanding is being played out in 21st-century Xinjiang*. The crisis in Xinjiang exploded when the Chinese leadership felt acutely vulnerable to societal pressures it was unable to control, viz. urbanized professionals, globalized youth, a booming church, socio-economic unrest. As we have seen, prior to 2012, when Xi Jinping’s hardline policy of ‘sinicization’ or ‘*sinification*’ (汉化 or 中国化)⁴³ was first introduced, Xinjiang was a success story. In line with Western values, a neo-liberal, ‘Chinese capitalist’ mindset lauded the province’s industrial and economic achievements. Ethnic tensions would, it was confident, be drowned by the region’s prosperity: its separatist passion and religious imagination converted by dynamic market forces. The Party Secretary of Yarkand

39 The impact of social media in fueling both the Arab Spring and Uyghur separatism cannot be underestimated. Indeed, the implementation of arguably the world’s most aggressive surveillance and censorship apparatus by the CCP in the Xinjiang region reflects the degree to which the CCP now views technological access as a threat.

40 Their concerns were not allayed when Uyghur militants joined ISIS in the civil war in Syria (from March 2011).

41 China’s majority Han population are almost certainly supportive of the government’s suppression of minority dissidents and dissent.

42 Regionalism is something Beijing has feared for decades. The old Chinese adage ‘Kill the chicken to frighten the monkey’ almost certainly applies to their singling out of the Uyghurs for exemplary treatment. ‘Others, beware!’ However, Raffi Khatchadourian is almost certainly right to claim, like other parts of NW China, Xinjiang has ‘never seemed fully within the [Communist] Party’s grasp’ (‘Surviving the crackdown in Xinjiang’, *The New Yorker* [5 April 2021]). On the threat, and perceived threat of terrorism, see Jackson, R. ‘The Ghosts of State Terror: Knowledge, Politics and Terrorism Studies’, *Critical Studies in Terrorism* 1.3 (2008): 377-92.

43 Cf. *China Daily*, 27 March 2018.

County in S. Xinjiang, Wang Yongzhi, was an advocate of this policy (contextually applied). The policy palpably failed. As Australian scholars Ben Hopper and Michael Webber have shown, it had the opposite effect. To use earlier terminology, it failed to reckon with the 'affective' dimension of local, human consciousness. It was premised on the pragmatic atheist conviction that religio-cultural affinities were 'for sale'. As Hopper and Webber explain the interplay of ethnicity and socio-economics in Xinjiang: 'As the state withdraws direct rule and relies increasingly on market forces ... the commodification of labour relations and property [is] the source of social rifts along ethnic lines.'⁴⁴ Xinjiang was a wake-up call to Beijing not to outsource direct rule to market forces. The plight of loyal party official Wang Yongzhi has been widely reported. Pressured by Beijing to change tack and support mass internment, Wang refused,⁴⁵ was 'criticized' for 'serious disciplinary violations', and sacked,⁴⁶ his knowledge of the socio-political and cultural dynamics of the region rejected. Ethno-religious identities run deep: the confident 'one size fits all' cultural mindset of Beijing's Han Chinese elites fails to understand this.

Sixth, though a neo-liberal economic mindset still impacts policy in Xinjiang, *Beijing's approach to the region is now more akin to old-style Han-Confucian supremacism (in which minorities are weak, manipulable, subordinates) and old school Communist atheism (in which religion per se is a useful narcotic to dull restless peasants).*⁴⁷ These ideological convictions sit comfortably with Xi's vision for China's 'sinicization', in which its values, language, education, religion/s and socio-political ideology, at home and abroad, are both determined and vigorously defended by the CCP and imposed on any who, for whatever reason, come within their sphere of influence. This 'ideological turn' re-directs trust, loyalty, and cultural values away from the individual and a metaphysical God to a rejuvenated CCP and newly self-confident Chinese Empire.

44 Hopper, B., and M. Webber, 'Migration, Modernisation and Ethnic Estrangement: Uyghur Migration to Urumqi, Xinjiang Autonomous Region, PRC,' *Inner Asia* 11.2 (2009): 173-203; accessed July 9, 2021.

45 It appears he (rightly) feared repressive policies would inflame local and international feeling against Beijing. For in-depth analysis, Zenz, A., 'The Xinjiang Papers: An Introduction': <https://uyghurtribunal.com> (2021); accessed 18 February 2022.

46 He was replaced by the hardline, ex-Governor of Tibet, Chen Quanguo, who has effectively turned Xinjiang into a police state.

47 Details of internal PRC government attitudes towards and statements on the situation in Xinjiang were leaked by the New York Times (16 November 2019) in the 400-page 'Xinjiang Papers'. In these documents, Xi Jinping draws a comparison with the threat posed to the US by 9/11 and describes Islamic extremism as a virus-like contagion and addictive drug, which will require 'a period of painful, interventional treatment'.

Seventh, the ‘ideological turn’ evident in China’s domestic and international agenda over the last decade reflects the PRC leadership’s acute suspicion of Saudi-promoted Salafism. To Beijing, this form of Islam is anti-modern and prone to violence.⁴⁸ The consequence of this for Xinjiang is that the Uyghur minority is viewed not only through a one-dimensional, neo-liberal, socio-economic framework of asset-liability but as practitioner-partners of a politically destructive, metaphysical worldview.⁴⁹ According to Xi’s new ideology, they are guilty without recourse or close examination. Beijing’s handling of the Uyghurs is at every turn a Case Study in failure.



Fig. 10: The routes for PRC’s land and sea ‘Belt & Road’ initiative (The Silk Road Briefing)

48 Cf. Al-Sudairi, M., ‘Changing State-Religion Dynamics in Xi-Jinping’s China: And its Consequences for Sino-Saudi Relations’, *Dirasat* 19 (2017), 28; q. in Findlay, J. S., ‘Securitization, insecurity and conflict in contemporary Xinjiang: has PRC counterterrorism evolved into state terror?’ *Central Asia Survey* 38.1 (2019): 1-26. DOI: 10.1080/02634937.2019.1586348. See also, on Saudi-Sino relations, Al-Sudairi, M., ‘The Communist Party of China’s United Front Work in the Gulf: The ‘Ethnic minority Overseas Chinese’ of Saudi Arabia as a Case Study’, *Dirasat* 34 (March 2018).

49 The failure of the West to control, assimilate, or eradicate radicalized Islamist groups has almost certainly fueled PRC resolve to crack-down on the Uyghurs; although, as Prof. Haiyun Ma has argued, ‘after the collapse of the Soviet Empire and the formation of the Central Asian Muslim republics, overtly anti-Islamic attitudes started to resurface in China’ (<https://www.hudson.org/research/15095-the-anti-islamic-movement-in-china>; accessed 17 July 2021). China’s awareness of the role the Mujahadeen in Afghanistan indirectly played in eroding confidence in Soviet leadership prior to the collapse of the USSR, is evident in its early use of Western rhetoric of their own ‘war on terror’ in Xinjiang (for which they initially sought US help). Anti-Islamic sentiment is now widespread on China’s social media and internet platforms.

Eighth, the Uyghur crisis threatens perception and implementation of China's 'Belt and Road' initiative, a central feature of President Xi's foreign policy. Formerly known as 'One Belt, One Road' (一带一路), the 'B & R' initiative (Fig. 10), that was launched in 2013 and integrated in the Constitution in 2017, is a global infrastructure project which will run until 2049. Its aim is officially to 'enhance regional connectivity and embrace a brighter future', but China's intention is self-evidently to strengthen its geopolitical and public profile. 70 countries are targeted for investment and development. Phase I of the 'Silk Road Economic Belt', launched in Kazakhstan in September 2013, is the construction of road and rail routes from China through Central Asia. Xinjiang features prominently in the first phase of this bold – and highly controversial – project. The Uyghur crisis has cast a shadow over the ethos and implementation of the whole venture. It has exposed inconsistencies in China's avowed empowerment of communities affected by the project and eviscerated respect for countries who take China's money and turn a blind eye to its Human Rights abuse. The disingenuous disconnect between China's official policy of 'non-interference' and its intrusive extra-territorialism and cyber warfare, has corroded confidence in its professed ambition to promote 'a brighter future'. The Uyghurs are a tragic example of PRC policy bull-dozing the topography of inconvenient social and cultural obstacles. However, members of the Western Alliance should recognize the moral problem *and* the socio-political possibilities this affords. While decrying PRC brutality and cultural barbarity, EU member states and their allies should see the opening this PR disaster provides to build stronger relations with minorities (and others) who have been hitherto suspicious of Western values and intentions but are now equally uneasy about being supposed 'beneficiaries' of China's manipulative 'B & R' imperialism. As argued above, skillful diplomacy on the margins of the EU can reduce its internal threat from Asian migrants.

Last – and here we begin to orientate towards responses to PRC's treatment of the Uyghurs – *the crisis in Xinjiang has challenged global confidence in 'The China Solution'* (中国方案), which Xi Jinping announced on 1 October 2016. Xi's vision is for China to offer an alternative (or, at least, complementary) strategy to address pressing issues affecting the planet, such as climate change, economic volatility, globalization and terrorism. He is to be commended for wanting new Superpower China to make – and be seen to make – a positive contribution to human flourishing (like the US in its heyday). As an expression of this, China has sought to demonstrate through the 'B & R' initiative its capacity for both altruism and mediation.⁵⁰ Critics have dismissed its attempts at both, finding its approach wooden, bureaucratic, and controlling, its view of peacemaking the imposition

⁵⁰ Cf. on this <https://merics.org/en/short-analysis/china-conflict-mediator>.

of harmony and denial of difference. Contrasts are drawn with the UN's 'Guidance on Effective Mediation', in which consent, inclusivity, civil society actors, and women in leadership and at a grassroots level, are key.⁵¹ What's more, as the UN's advice warns, '[S]upport from civil society and other stakeholders cannot be taken for granted ... some of these actors may have hardline positions and oppose the mediation.'⁵² In short, tact and skill are needed to bring about a lasting peace. China seems better equipped for war.

One final take-away from this last point, as we turn to some constructive proposals. China may to-date have been ineffective in mediation, but its 'B & R' initiative does recognize the need for careful stakeholder engagement. PRC's brutal response to the Uyghurs – which Beijing is not slow to justify – does not mean a foothold cannot be found here for elaboration of ways major states engage with lesser parties, viz. smaller countries, non-state actors and minorities.

f. Reframing discussion of Xinjiang

The plight of the Uyghurs is so dire analysis of wider dynamics of the problem and the broader context of Xinjiang have tended to be overlooked. In this penultimate section, we identify two approaches which cast fresh light on the plight of the Uyghurs and propose alternative ways to respond to it. Throughout, as before, our concern is to stimulate critical reflection within the EU on its own approach to minorities. Xinjiang provides important raw *external* data for reflection on the EU's *internal* and *external* approach to minorities world-wide. The inherent complexity of engaging *any* minority should caution major state actors against false assumptions, simple solutions, and anything that smacks of a zero-sum victory.

We focus here on two over-looked international responses to the situation in Xinjiang; one based on modern 'systems theory', the other on lessons from ecological diplomacy.

a. Xinjiang, the Uyghurs and modern 'systems theory'.

Modern sociology now sees 'systems theory' as essential to understanding people, communities, corporations and countries. This approach involves what some call a 'relational' (or 'affective') revolution' in which human behaviour is recategorized ac-

51 Cf. <https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/GuidanceEffectiveMediation>. On the linkage between Human Rights and conserving biodiversity, see the August 2021 report: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Environment/SREnvironment/policy-briefing-1.pdf>.

52 Ibid.

ording to the 'systems' that shape identity, personality, language, motivation and values. In other words, life is deconstructed to the building blocks of behaviour.

The relevance of systems theory to the crisis in Xinjiang is that it focusses attention away from government action towards greater understanding of Uyghur motivation. It asks, which 'system' or 'systems' impact the Uyghurs (and other people groups) of Xinjiang? Many answers could be given. History, language, religion, and an array of cultural *mores* are part of Uyghur identity. In their eyes, they are not a minority: they are a distinct ethno-religious community that operates according to its own, complex, cultural 'system'.

A systems theory approach to the Uyghurs, as to any minority, will prioritize their unique cultural 'language' (and seek to learn it) and routine patterns of behavioural rituals (that shape daily life). More than this, a systems approach will recognize that individuals and communities may have distinctive moral and metaphysical values, which deserve to be included, and respected on their own terms for what they are. To act as if these things 'don't matter' is an offence to justice and courtesy; for justice protects human identity, while courtesy honours it. China trusts in its numerical supremacy. It can, it believes, out-work, out-fight, out-create and outlast any rival. In China's reliance on its numerical strength lies its greatest weakness: for it sees and treats people as mere statistics, and squashes minorities into the dull, amorphous majority. Europe has historically owned a quite different socio-political ethic and dynamic anthropology in which individuals and individuality matter.

Systems theory is also sensitive to space and place. It will study Uyghurs, like every minority, in the context of society *and* the geography and ecology of the region. It will explore the impact on Turkic Uyghurs of migration from the Tarim Basin north across the Dzungarian Alatau to the steppes and semi-desert region of the ancient Tibetan-Buddhist Dzungar. It will look for enhanced respect for the cultural 'known' amid the new unknown. It will monitor marriage and death rituals, initiation rites and holy sites. It will study home life and domestic roles, the nurture of children and moral formation, attitudes to work and the shape of leisure. It will locate Uyghur culture in the panoply of global cultures with indices on how Uyghurs 'connect' with life, its safety and taboos, its power and joy. In short, systems theory will work to unite spatial awareness with 'affective' sensibility, and so bring depth to analysis.

One final point from systems theory. The 'deep listening' that occurs in all clear communication and mediation relies on a conducive context. Wise diplomacy will always register the impact of location on dialogue with minorities and go

out of its way to accommodate them. It knows all too well that a neutral space, tribal tent, or agreed site, always work better than an army base or diplomatic compound.⁵³ If we hold up this external mirror to internal EU behaviour, we find settings selected to accentuate power differentials so non-state actors are intimidated by officialdom.

Systems theory offers a way to integrate Uyghur identity and motivation with the topography, geology, dominant Han culture, and economy of the PRC. Reductionist PRC policy treats the Uyghurs as a single, deviant entity out of step with the China-project as a whole. Action taken to correct this group is therefore justifiable as both logically coherent and politically justified. A systems-led approach to minorities refuses to reduce them in a binary way to the dominant majority, or to de-couple them from their cultural identity and relationship to that majority. In other words, it offers a potentially attractive win-win approach to the crisis in Xinjiang, where internal Uyghur dissent and external human rights protest have to-date achieved very little. An approach which recognizes the essential ecological harmony between Han political culture and local Xinjiang priorities affords an alternative diplomatic option. Subtle persuasion is not a poor relation in International Affairs.

b. Xinjiang and the potential of eco-diplomacy.

As an extension of point a., the *external* issue of the Uyghur crisis in Xinjiang offers significant learnings for EU foreign policy and its domestic response to migrants and minorities.⁵⁴ A vast subject can be reduced to four salient points.

First, *China's approach to ecology and climate change correlates with possible new approaches to its treatment of the Uyghurs.* Despite the absence of President Xi at the COP26 gathering (1-12 November 2021), China was represented by senior officials and played a significant role in supporting discussion of the need for a coordinated response to climate change. China's commitment to responsible ecological policies is confirmed by its hosting of the 'Global Biodiversity Framework' 2021-2022⁵⁵ and investment in green technologies and carbon emission reduction. Outsiders may justifiably look for some consistency in China's application of its ecological principles, not least in Xinjiang. An eco-based approach to

⁵³ N.B. the same issue of materiality applies to food, clothing and hospitality.

⁵⁴ N.B. there is no intention in what follows to suggest China's criminal abuse of the Uyghurs should be overlooked or avoided, in fact, quite the reverse: alternative strategies are, the authors believe, required because of the failure of existing approaches to cause a rethinking of PRC policy and halting of its foul human rights violations in Xinjiang.

⁵⁵ N.B. postponed from 2020 because of the COVID pandemic.

pressurizing the Chinese over its treatment of the Uyghurs side-steps predictable brick-walling of appeals to the Uyghurs' Human Rights.

Second, *the conceptual and practical importance of the 'local community' has been reaffirmed officially at a national and local level by Xi Jinping.* In part as a strategic response to widespread social unrest – protesting policies and practices that ignore local concerns, viz. land rights, freedom of movement, legal representation, health care and corruption – bureaucratic empowerment of local communities has met a felt need within China for political and social identity and a public voice. Communitarianism is President Xi's measured response to grassroots, democratic pressure. Silencing what are seen to be unwelcome, dissident voices like the Uyghurs, exposes the political deceit inherent in official advocacy of local communities. Communitarianism becomes no more than a cynical weaponizing of a natural human longing to belong. The double standards in China's actions should caution Western nations against celebrating their own flawed politicking over migrants at home and minorities abroad.

Third, *as in forward-thinking ecology worldwide, China involves 'indigenous peoples and local communities' (IPLCs) and local officials in co-management of its ancient and endangered habitats and biodiverse conservation areas* (Fig. 11). This enlightened co-management strategy (社区共管) is applied to China's new National Park system, which includes Sanjiangyuan (三江源; Lit. 'Source of the Three Rivers') source of the Yangtze, Yellow and Mekong rivers. Sanjiangyuan covers almost half of the Qinghai Plateau, which it co-manages with Tibetan conservators and communities. This is all highly commendable, especially when ca. 40% of the world's 'protected' regions and 80% of global biodiversity (including vast socio-ecological regions like Xinjiang) are in areas that are IPLC managed or conserved.⁵⁶ The disconnect evident in the practice of PRC's commendable ecological principles is that its 'indigenous peoples' (viz. its minorities) are in reality only *conditionally* co-managers: their native skills and way of life must (*pace* the Uyghurs) also conform to Xi's 21st century 'Chinese' ideology.

56 On this, <https://theconversation.com/indigenous-peoples-are-crucial-for-conservation-a-quarter-of-all-land-is-in-their-hands-99742>; <https://bio4climate.org/article/a-spatial-overview-of-the-global-importance-of-indigenous-lands-for-conservation-garnett-et-al-2018>.

<https://www.conservation.org/docs/default-source/publication-pdfs/the-state-of-the-indigenous-peoples-and-local-communities-lands-and-territories.pdf>.



Fig. 11: China celebrates ethnic diversity (China Highlights)

Fourth, synergies can be seen in China's international principle of 'non-interference' and national programmes for 'autonomous regions', and best practice thinking on conservation areas. Biodiversity conservation has come to recognize the vital role that indigenous communities play. 'Indigenous and community conserved areas' (ICCAs) are now understood to be significant 'territories of life', in which people and land co-exist in an ecologically vital symbiotic relationship.⁵⁷ Anthropology, ecology and systems theory concur in affirming the importance of 'space and place' both for indigenous communities and for the planet as a whole. Recognition of the socio-geographic givenness of communities – that is, their physical, and often spiritual, connection to specific land and cultural expression of this in rituals that honour and preserve that place⁵⁸ – is foundational for good conservation and engagement with minorities. Migration (for whatever reason) and poor integration threaten the fine balance of the world's cultural ecology. China has witnessed this in the social unrest associated with the mass migration it has seen from devastated and deprived rural areas to its booming eastern seaboard

⁵⁷ As endorsed inter alia in the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas, see <https://iucngreenlist.org>.

⁵⁸ On this, and for detailed figures, see Stewart, J. and J. Gosling, et al (2013), A Global Spatial Analysis: The estimated extent of territories and areas conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities <https://report.territoriesoflife.org/global-analysis/>. On the connection between community lands and the reduction of carbon emissions, see e.g., <https://www.wri.org/insights/4-ways-indigenous-and-community-lands-can-reduce-emissions>.

cities. Savage abuse of the Uyghur minority contradicts China's own principles, damages its international standing and wounds its national psyche. The prized Confucian principle of social 'harmony' is offended.

Conclusion

Shining a spotlight on the plight of the Uyghurs is unlikely to be successful. China is famously impervious to criticism and calls for change: in this, it is neither unique, nor culpable. Nations are independent entities. That said, what many external observers see as the Chinese government's crass and abusive mishandling of the Uyghurs can, and should, instruct the EU and Western Alliance on worst practice with respect to minorities and migrants. It can also illustrate the value of an 'affective', systems theory approach to the cultural, psychological, spiritual, and ecological dimensions of its engagement with minorities and migrants.

Lest political and economic implications of this approach be missed, sustainability and biodiversity experts point to a connection between environmental decay and economic decline, and the socio-economic advantages of empowering locals in IPLCs to continue to conserve areas they call 'home'. In such tangible, physical, strategies lie paths to conflict avoidance and healthy, mutual respect. Conflict in Xinjiang and the abuse of the Uyghurs are unlikely to stop any time soon. The best that can be hoped for is, perhaps, some measure of de-escalation. This is possible if China keeps faith with 'autonomous regions' and self-regulates its much-touted policy of 'non-interference' in 'B & R' countries which share features of Xinjiang's cultural and ecological diversity. Understood in this way, China's economic development and ecological aspirations could be presented by the EU as beneficially co-existing in reframed dialogue over Xinjiang and other environmentally and politically sensitive areas. Seen in this light, the diverse minorities of Xinjiang can re-educate China and the world on valuing the values of 'indigenous peoples and local communities' (IPLCs). To be sure, they have a vital role to play in humanity's shared quest to reduce global warming, combat climate change and promote 'harmony' and 'inclusivity'.

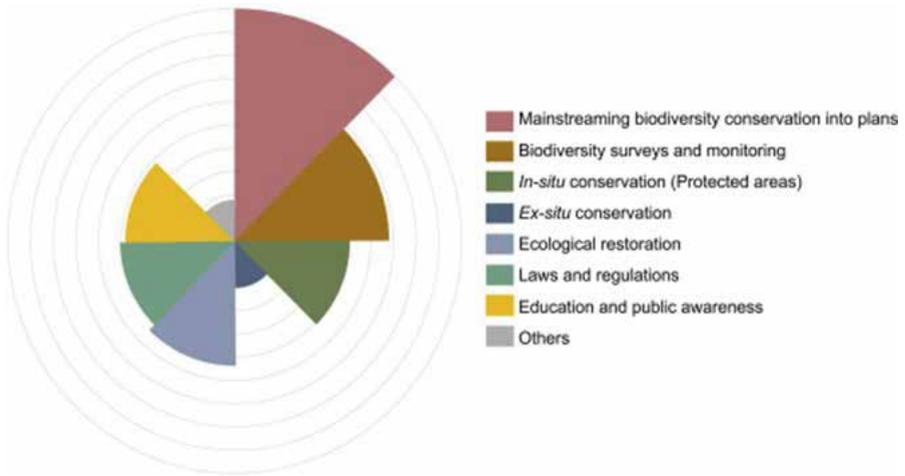


Fig. 12: Biodiversity conservation in China (Science Direct)

But there is another approach which is also worth noting (Fig. 12). Policy discourse is central to CCP practice: it sees it as central to its demonstration and preservation of power. Policy positions in speeches by the Party Chairman effectively override other legal instruments and constitutional pronouncements. Consistency, accountability, and the old Confucian principle of ‘saving face’, matter. China has made policy commitments to conservation and climate change mitigation. This is important: it offers international observers ways to leverage PRC internationally. Explicit policy statements on biodiversity conservation not only carry internal weight they also offer external diplomatic options. The EU and Western Alliance might appropriately remind the PRC leadership of the intrinsic interconnectedness of indigenous peoples and their biodiverse *locale*, and, in light of China’s oft-repeated principle of ‘non-interference’ in other sovereign states, of places transected by ‘B & R’ projects where biodiversity conservation is of global import. Highlighting these policies – fully aware of their relevance to the crisis in Xinjiang – can illuminate in potentially uncomfortable ways for the PRC leadership embarrassing inconsistencies in their behaviour. Minorities, including the Uyghurs, might benefit collaterally from this reframing and refocusing of EU discourse and diplomacy. A minority community can in the process assume a newly visible profile as an active stakeholder in a series of ecological issues China and the world now accredit.

To refine its diplomatic activity, the EU and Western Alliance might adopt a four-stage process:

- i. identification of minorities/indigenous peoples and local communities in B&R states that play a key role in ecological management.
- ii. support for these communities to enhance their visibility domestically and internationally, perhaps through programmes that celebrate the relationship between a community's identity and contribution to biodiversity conservation.
- iii. identification of pathways to facilitate codification of a minority's access to and role in the land and environment.
- iv. progressive reinforcement of the cultural identity and ecological profile of minorities as seen from within China's dual policy commitments to 'non-interference' and biodiversity conservation, the purpose being to safeguard the minority community as a stakeholder.

In other words, eco-diplomacy offers creative options for EU and Western Alliance responses to the humanitarian crisis and human rights abuse in Xinjiang.

CASE STUDY II

Lead author: Dr. Sean Oliver Dee (Associate, Oxford House Research Ltd.)

Pakistan, the Baluch, and ‘ethical foreign policy’

Our second Case Study takes the discussion in a different direction. The major state actor is now Pakistan – officially, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan – and its Muslim neighbours, not Communist China; the minority to be considered are the Baluch, an historically Iranian people group from the Southeastern edge of the Iranian plateau who have spread to North and West Pakistan (Baluchistan), Iran and Afghanistan (Fig 13).



Fig. 13: Baluchistan and its geographic and ethnic setting

To distinguish this Case Study – in its methodology, emphases, and conclusions – from Case Study I, two questions shape this part of the report:

- i. To what extent is EU and Western Alliance foreign policy shaped by the cultural character, and socio-economic and political realities, of the Baluch?

- ii. How might the concept, and practice, of an ‘ethical foreign policy’⁵⁹ be applied to EU and Western Alliance engagement with the Baluch in Pakistan and its Central Asian neighbours.

First, though, a brief overview of Pakistan’s relationship to China. This provides a bridge with the preceding and an opportunity to see the broader socio-political, cultural, and economic context in which the predicament of the Baluch, and Western responses to it, is to be understood.

I. Setting scene

a. Pakistan and China: history to the present day

Pakistan’s colonial history, majority Islamic culture, and historic and present international profile, are very different from the vast, often intimidating, power to its North and Northeast. Though separated by the Himalayas, it is a little less than 1700km (1000mi.) from Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, to Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. Travel between them is by road, rail, or indirect air routes. Beijing is not unhappy to make the journey difficult. As we have seen, PRC authorities at a national and local level are hyper-conscious of the threat of radical Islamism within its borders and on its perimeter, including along its 596km (170mi.) border with Pakistan. As Beijing is all too aware, the Taliban, ISIS,⁶⁰ and other Islamist groups, are no respecters of international boundaries.

Despite – or, perhaps, more accurately because of – the threat posed to it by Pakistan’s religious extremists, China has been proactive in establishing positive relations with its neighbour to the Southwest. Despite India’s repeated objections,⁶¹ the 1963 Sino-Pakistan Agreement is still recognized by both countries. Under the

59 NB. there is an increasing body of literature on the concept of an ‘ethical (or moral) foreign policy’. See, for example, Bully, D. (2009), *Ethics as Foreign Policy: Britain, the EU and the Other*, Abingdon: Routledge; Chandler, D., ‘Rhetoric without Responsibility: The attraction of “ethical” foreign policy’, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 5:3 (2003): 295 – 316; Henis, V. and Chandler, D., ed. (2006), *Rethinking Ethical Foreign Policy*, Abingdon: Routledge; Shapcott, R. (2008), ‘International Ethics’, in Baylis, J. Smith, S. and Owens, P. (ed.), *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, 4th ed., Oxford: OUP; Smith, S. Hadfield, A. and Dunne, T., ed. (2012), *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*, 2nd ed., Oxford: OUP; Smith, K. and Light, M., ed. (2001), *Ethics and Foreign Policy*, Cambridge: CUP.

60 On ISIS, pp. 8, 23, 50, 49, 59, 65-71.

61 In 2020, Rajnath Singh, the Indian Minister of Defense, reported to Rajya Sabha (the Upper House of Parliament) on the ‘illegal Chinese occupation in western Ladakh’ and on ‘the so-called Sino-Pakistan “Boundary Agreement” of 1963’ whereby ‘Pakistan illegally ceded 5,180 sq. kms. of Indian territory in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir to China.’ China reaffirmed the Agreement with Pakistan.

terms of this agreement, China and Pakistan ceded more than 1942 sq.km [750 sq. mi.] to the other, including disputed Northern areas of Kashmir and Ladakh. EU Foreign Policy (and Western Alliance diplomacy in general) cannot ignore historic, regional, bi-lateral agreements such as this, especially when one or more of the signatories (such as Russia, China, North Korea, or Iran) is adjudged a hostile power or ‘clear and present danger’. Crucially, if EU and Western Alliance interventions on the plight of the Uyghurs angers President Xi and PRC leadership, external interest in the well-being of the Baluch risks opposition from Islamabad and Beijing. Unhindered access to minorities is often as problematic as a clear grasp of their character and situation. In the case of the Baluch, as we will see, international support has been muted; in part at least lest relations with China be compromised or Pakistan be offended. If so, this illustrates the threat *real politik* poses to humanitarian idealism and diplomatic progress. Whatever this report proposes in its Conclusion is in light of this hard reality.

b. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

A new chapter in Sino-Pakistan relations began in 2013 with the creation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Fig.14), the ‘jewel in the crown’ of China’s ‘Belt and Road’ (B & R) initiative.

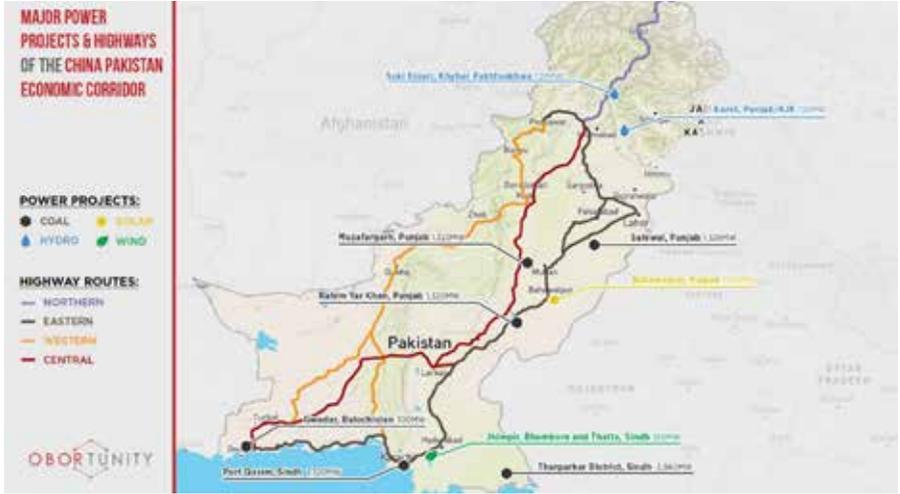


Fig. 14: The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

Like other Chinese projects worldwide, CPEC is an agglomeration of major infrastructure projects that will benefit at every level the host nation (Pakistan) and the major investor (China). Since 2013, the projected value of CPEC has increased

from \$47bn to \$62bn (2020). With an estimated 3.55% of the country's GDP lost in its deficient transport network, and another 2-2.5% of GDP squandered in dilapidated power systems, the Pakistan government projects 2.3m new jobs and 2-2.5% GDP growth between 2015-2030 through CPEC's 'Early Harvest' power projects and improvement to the nation's transportation. Part of the latter include a 1100km highway from Karachi to Lahore, a major upgrade of the 1300km Karakoram Highway from Hasan Abdar to the Chinese border (to join China National Highway 314), a high-speed (160kmph) rail link from Karachi to Peshawar, and a new line to Kashgar that will join the Southern Xinjiang Railway network. In addition, a new port in Gwadar and expanded port in Karachi promise Pakistan *and* China stronger maritime links to Africa and West and Southeast Asia. A new system of pipelines, including a \$2.5bn gas pipeline (eventually reaching Iran) from Nawabshah in Sindh Province to Gwadar Port on the Arabian Sea in the Province of Baluchistan, promises to distribute wealth and employment across Pakistan.

CPEC has been likened to the Marshall Plan in the USA after World War II. Its socio-economic impact is already being felt by many in Pakistan. New power plants, 'special economic zones', and early-win infrastructure projects (i.e., 10,400+ MW was added to the national network by the end of 2018) have sought to persuade doubters, promote China and endear the government. Despite – or, perhaps once again, because of – the eye watering amounts associated with CPEC,⁶² it is not without its critics. As elsewhere, if CPEC will enrich and empower China, it threatens to impoverish Pakistan. Though revenue and employment are projected, and Gwadar Port is now fully operational, economists (esp., in India, the USA and Europe) point to dangerous exposure in the financial structuring of the project as a whole: viz. the total value of the project is ca. 6% of Pakistan's already volatile GDP; 80% of CPEC are Joint Ventures (between Pakistan and China) with the possibility of China renegeing on, or, as in Sri Lanka, recalibrating agreements;⁶³ only 20% of CPEC is debt-based finance, so Pakistan's freedom to raise new capital is limited; also, though 40,000 jobs in CPEC will go to Pakistanis, 80,000 will be for Chinese workers; likewise, it is pointed out, despite the cost-saving of infrastructure improvements, a mere \$6bn p.a. will be raised through tolls on new roads and bridges. Few doubt that Pakistan has been lured, like many other countries, into China's new, seductive, form of economic imperialism and fiscal dependency.

62 The initial value of CPEC (\$46bn) equaled direct foreign investment from 1970 and equated to 17% of Pakistan's gross domestic product in 2015.

63 Significant parts of the project are financed by attractive (viz. subsidized) 'concessionary loans', i.e., the \$11bn needed to modernize transportation across the country. This 'easy money', with high interest rates, exposes the borrower to the risk of long-term indebtedness and, in the case of Pakistan, political manipulation by China.

China's aggressive courting of Pakistan is motivated as much by a desire to woo Pakistan away from its historic Western allies (especially Britain and the USA) as it is to develop Pakistan as a vassal state. As it is, Pakistan's historic socio-political instability – to say nothing of its weak judiciary, hardline Islamic policies, oppression of women and religious minorities, and poor record on Human Rights – is of less concern to China (indeed, within limits it welcomes instability for its evisceration of Pakistan's political class and international voice) than its potential as a regional ally against further Indo-US cultural, economic, and military proximation and collaboration.

We study the Baluch minority in this complex diplomatic setting. What should be clear already is that, however distinct, ancient, gifted, or numerous the Baluch, their importance for Islamabad – let alone Beijing – is domestically outweighed by Pakistani nationalism, infrastructure renewal and persuasive overseas investment. We should not be surprised if they struggle to be heard.

c. Pakistan and the European Commission

Pakistan is not only of interest to China. The country's strategic location, vast population, rich natural resources, complex ethnic identity, and diverse topography (from the soaring Himalayas to the deserts of Sind, and azure Bay of Bengal), have rendered it susceptible to sustained socio-political, diplomatic, military, and economic pressures, from every corner of the globe since its formation, and independence from India, in 1947.



Fig. 15 (Tehran Times)

Formal diplomatic relations were established with the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1962. In 2004 a Cooperation Agreement was signed between the EU and Pakistan, with the EU at the time Pakistan's largest trading partner (ca. €7bn p.a.). In light of China's renaissance, on-going tension with India, Islamist extremism post-9/11, counter-insurgency operations in the Northwest Frontier Province, and the February 2008 General Election, EU Council Conclusions on 8 December 2008 voiced the EU's commitment to strengthening bilateral (esp. economic and commercial) ties with Pakistan. In 2009, the EU increased its humanitarian aid to Pakistan from €7m. to €72m., with ECHO Commissioner Louis Michel (b. 1947) making €20m. of new funding immediately available and an additional €45m. coming from the EU's emergency reserve. At the Donor's Conference in Tokyo in April 2009, the Commission pledged €485m. in development support over a 5-year period and confirmed its intention to enhance cooperation on counterterrorism, law enforcement and criminal justice. Prior to the first EU-Pakistan summit (Brussels, 17 June 2009)⁶⁴ EC President, José Manuel Barroso (b. 1956; Pres. 2004-2014), encapsulated the Commission's position:

Last year the people of Pakistan voted for a strong, secular, democratic government. I welcome President Zardari's commitment to reinforce the democratic institutions, reform the economy and defeat extremism and terrorism, which pose a threat not just to his country, but to its neighbours and to the rest of the world. The EU will continue to assist Pakistan in its fight against both militant insurgency and economic crisis, while boosting significantly our humanitarian aid. The strategic dialogue we announce today shows our commitment to raise our relations to a higher level.

The desire to secure and strengthen Pakistan and EU-Pakistan relations is clear. Humanitarian aid (viz. water, sanitation, shelter, cooking equipment and health care) and the reduction of poverty are directly linked to trade and security; that is, to a potential Free Trade Agreement and access to preferential EU projects, in exchange for dialogue and the sharing of sensitive data.

A second EU-Pakistan summit was held in Brussels on 4 June 2010. The communiqué issued after the summit outlined a 5-year Cooperation Plan and the desire

⁶⁴ At the summit, the EC was represented by the Czech President Vaclav Klaus (b. 1941; Pres. 2003-2013), the President of the EC, Dr. Javier Solana (High Representative for the EC's Common and Security Policy), Benita Ferrero-Waldner (EU Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy) and Baroness Ashton (EU Commissioner for Trade). Pakistan was represented by President Asif Ali Zardari (b. 1955; Pres. 2008-2013) and by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Commerce, and the Interior.

of both parties to partner for peace on the basis of shared hopes and values.⁶⁵ Over the years, as part of this developing partnership, the EU has committed over €1.3bn to development projects (incl. agriculture and infrastructure). In addition, in 2017 the Pakistan Science Foundation was declared a ‘Focal Organisation’ for the EU’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Program.⁶⁶

Trade between the EU and Pakistan is important to both parties. The 1976 trade agreement they signed was for an initial 10-year period, renewable thereafter every 5 years. Since 2014, Pakistan has enjoyed the EU’s ‘Generalised System of Preferences Plus’ (GSP+), which removes two-thirds of EU tariffs on condition that it demonstrates progress in honouring (27) accredited conventions of good governance. Pakistan, the EU clearly believes, is making positive progress.⁶⁷ In light of EU-Pakistan trade and cooperation agreements, the EU is currently Pakistan’s second largest trading partner (with ca. 15% of its trade and 28% of its exports).⁶⁸ According to the EU’s trading website, in the past decade Pakistan’s exports to the EU have almost doubled. A joint group has been set up to capitalize on this, but business costs and infrastructure issues appear to be hindering expansion of this trading relationship. To offset this, the EU has invested (esp. *via* its ‘Multi Annual Indicative Program’) in enhancing Pakistan’s infrastructure and internal security. The benefit to Pakistan from EU interest and investment is an important *external* factor in diplomatic discussion of the predicament of the Baluch.

d. Pakistan, India and the Baluch

We turn now to arguably the most complex element in analysis of the Baluch; namely, the degree to which Pakistan’s relationship to this ethnic minority is impacted by India. Time and space do not permit detailed analysis of Pakistan’s prolonged territorial, military, and ideological conflict with India. Study of the Baluch sheds important light on broader issues in Indo-Pakistani relations.

65 Cf. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/dsas/dv/council_2-eu-pkst_/council_2-eu-pkst_en.pdf.

66 N.B. as part of the EU’s Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE), Pakistan has also been part of the Erasmus + EU education programme.

67 Information about the conditions of the GSP+ can be found at <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/access-to-markets/en/content/welcome-access2markets-trade-helpdesk-users>.

68 Cf. Three quarters of Pakistan’s exports to the EU are textiles or clothing. A third of Pakistan’s imports from the EU are machinery (esp. transport equipment). https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/pakistan/index_en.htm.



Fig. 16: India, Pakistan and Baluchistan (News Intervention)

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (b. 1950; PM 2014–present) referred to Baluchistan in his Independence Day speech on 15 August 2016.⁶⁹ It was the first time an Indian leader had made mention of the Baluch’s predicament. Many commentators noted this. After two years of unsuccessful attempts to persuade the Pakistan government to counter anti-Indian terrorism, it now appeared clear to many the Indian PM was ready to use the Baluch as a tool to bludgeon support. By naming the Baluch, Modi turned the tables on the Pakistani government by highlighting its own domestic vulnerabilities and India’s readiness to exploit them (Fig. 16).

But India is also hyper-conscious of China’s expansive influence in Pakistan and the impact this has on Baluchistan. The development of CPEC has been viewed with growing alarm in Delhi and, though India’s response has been lethargic, the Baluch have gradually emerged as integral to their strategy for regional influence. Hence, India’s courting of the Baluch financially in exchange for military intelligence and diplomatic influence. The fruit of both were seen in enhanced Baluch military capability when security forces were attacked in December 2020. In a speech in Multan days afterwards, Pakistan’s Minister for Foreign Affairs

69 Rajagopalan, R., ‘Why the new Balochistan strategy is the best option for India’ (22 August 2016) www.orfonline.org.

Shah Mahmood Qureshi (b. 1956; MFA 2018-present) blamed India for increased terrorist activity in the region and cited India's desire to sabotage CPEC.⁷⁰ Though evidence for India's military support for Baluchi separatism is elusive, guns, munitions, training, logistics and intelligence are almost certainly included. China is clearly troubled and has already warned India about meddling in Baluchistan and threatening CPEC.⁷¹ Such threats tend to inspire more than intimidate India: much to China's irritation. However, as we noted in Xinjiang, 'major powers' can be embarrassingly wrong-footed by minority issues. China, India *and* Pakistan beware!

II. Introducing the Baluch

So, what do we know of the Baluch, past and present? And why does their cause *really* matter? As noted above, the Baluch are an historically Iranian people group from the Southeastern edge of the Iranian plateau. It is estimated there are now more than 10m Baluch, who are dispersed across North and West Pakistan (Baluchistan), Iran and Afghanistan. Precise numbers are hard to confirm, but records from 2017 indicate there were ca. 6.8m Baluch in Pakistan, viz. 3.6% of Pakistan's population (at the time) of 207m. Of these, 50% lived in Baluchistan, 40% in Sindh Province and a small number in Pakistani Punjab. In addition, 1.5-2m Baluch resided in Iran (2% of pop.), 0.5-2m in Afghanistan (2% of pop.), 468,000 in UAE, and 100,000 in Turkmenistan. Of these, a little less than half spoke the traditional Baluchi language. With the Uyghurs mostly resident in Xinjiang, and a mere 0.31% of the Chinese population, the Baluch minority are both more numerous and more widely distributed. Uyghur suffering is widely known and reported, that of the Baluch less so, for a host of complex reasons outlined below.

So, what's at stake in this Case Study of the Baluch? Three key issues:

- i. It highlights the risk to EU member states, and others in the Western Alliance, of ignoring the plight and appeals of minorities.
- ii. It exposes the danger of superficiality in political, diplomatic, and socio-cultural assessment of minority causes.
- iii. It confirms the need for a values-based or 'ethical' approach to international diplomacy.

70 Anon, 'India has allocated billions to Sabotage CPEC Project – Pakistan FM Qureshi' (28 December 2020) www.eurasiantimes.com.

71 IANS (2016) 'China warns India, says it will intervene if New Delhi incites trouble in Baluchistan' (28 August 2016) www.firstpost.com.

Simply put, the authors believe the failure of the EU and Western Alliance to engage with the Baluch has played into the hands of hostile forces in Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. Furthermore, this has not only inspired migration from the region, but failed to recognize the potential of the Baluch as regional allies and productive citizens in the countries where they reside. Minorities, this Case Study argues, deserve greater diplomatic attention because of the disproportionate power they can exercise for good and ill locally, globally *and* domestically within the EU and other Western Alliance states. Failure to understand the character and cause of a minority drives moderates to extremism and countries into chaos.⁷²

a. The predicament of the Baluch

The predicament of the Baluch is best understood in terms of three converging forces:

- i. *Opposition from majority forces* in Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and UAE. The Baluch minority lacks socio-political weight and/or recognition in the countries where they reside. Though co-habiting with other culturally (sometimes radicalized) Muslim communities, the Baluch do not feel welcomed, or integrated, as a distinct, ethno-religious, cultural minority. Physical threats compound their sense of cultural and psychological vulnerability.
- ii. *Internal ethno-nationalist pressure from radical groups within their own ranks.* The failure of majority governments and major states to recognize the Baluch as a distinct cultural minority has fueled opposition sentiment. If the crisis in Xinjiang is driven by PRC pressure on the Uyghurs to conform, our second Case Study is shaped by the Baluch's drive *not to conform*, viz. to be safe and distinct.
- iii. *Baluch anger (esp. in Pakistan/Baluchistan) at not benefitting enough from CPEC and other socio-economic initiatives.* The Baluch claim they have been overlooked in central government planning and policies, despite substantial projects in CPEC being built in, or across, Baluchistan (i.e., Gwadar Port and the new rail, road and gas pipeline connected to it). Over the decades, many minorities have expressed similar feelings of anger and resentment, especially if a government appears to have privileged socio-economically a cultural or demographic majority.

72 N.B. this section of the report is based on direct contact with leaders of the Free Balochistan Movement.

Two further general points should, however, be born in mind with respect to the Baluch:

- i. *The Baluch have been largely overlooked in international commentary and diplomatic protest.* Unlike the Uyghurs, the Baluch – in keeping with many other minorities – have attracted little international attention. This has incensed Baluch leaders and strengthened local support. The simple fact is, ethno-religious minorities rarely attract international attention,⁷³ unless they represent a substantial threat nationally or internationally.⁷⁴
- ii. *The Baluch are potentially more of a threat to local, national, and global peace than their numerical size and socio-economic profile might suggest.* The Baluch are what scholars would term an ‘intermediate’ threat; that is, on closer examination, the dynamics of their situation and their ethno-nationalist aspirations, though not a ‘clear and present danger’ do warrant careful study and astute diplomacy. More is at stake than first meets the eye. As Professor P. Sahadevan of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, has written of Baluchistan and the Baluch:

The structural framework of the region – incorporating features such as close geographical proximity, socio-cultural linkages, and interdependent politico-strategic relations of states – creates pressures for the regionalisation of ethnic conflicts as an inevitable part of political life. The interlocking of these conflicts appears inevitable, given the intense cross-boundary ethnic linkages as well as the deep ethnic cleavages in most of the South Asian societies.⁷⁵

In other words, it is only if, or when, the *specifics* of the Baluch situation (and that of other minorities across Asia) are fully understood, that their significance (and the ‘intermediate’ threat they pose) nationally and globally will be grasped. To see these, we focus the lens further.

73 Petrič, E. (2013). ‘Features of Foreign Policy of Small and New States’, in E. Petric, *From Conception to Diplomatic Practice*, Leiden: Brill, p. 241 - 268.

74 Cf. McClory, J. (2012), *The New Persuaders III*. London: Institute of Government.

75 Sahadevan, P. ‘Ethnic Conflicts and Militarism in South Asia’, *International Studies* 39.2 (2002): 103 - 138 (104).

b. The predicament of Baluch in more detail

As we have seen, the Baluch are distributed across Baluchistan and Sindh Provinces in Pakistan, and in neighbouring Afghanistan, Iran and Turkmenistan. Though consistently distinct culturally, and (at times) linguistically identifiable, the Baluch's relationship to their context differs. In Iran, for example, as we will see further below, the (Sunni) Baluch minority – who had been the object of popular and political animosity since the Islamic Revolution of 1978-79 – became (and remain) a convenient object of the (majority Shia) government's hostility, especially after the 7 June 2017 ISIS⁷⁶ attacks on the Iranian Parliament and the Mausoleum of Ruhollah Khomeini, in which 17 civilians were killed and 43 injured. As here, minorities are easy targets for negative publicity at home and abroad. However diplomatically inconvenient, justice demands accurate reporting.

So, what of the character of the Baluch and their relationship to the political, cultural, and physical environment in which they are situated?



Fig. 17: Quetta valley, Pakistan (Din Muhammad Watanpaal, ZMA Photos International)

First, on the Baluch and Baluchistan. A quarter of the 9m. residents of the Province of Baluchistan (which covers 347,190km² or 43% of Pakistan) live in its cap-

⁷⁶ On ISIS, pp. 8, 23, 33, 49, 59, 65-71.

ital, Quetta (Fig. 17). The rest of the population live in hamlets and villages. The Baluch are traditionally a rural people, committed to a lifestyle shaped by, and in harmony with, the harsh physical conditions they inhabit. West and Northwest Pakistan are vast, arid, sparsely populated regions. The Baluch traditionally live free and travel light: the contours of their life shaped by family, home, culture and tribe. In the 2011 census of Baluchistan, 52% of the population were Baluch, 36% Pashtun and 12% Brahui, Hazara, Sindhi, Punjabi, Uzbek, or Turkmen. We might, perhaps, expect the (in this instance) majority Baluch here to be confident and contented: alas, history and present reality have rendered them neither.

Faded glory can breed disappointment. Under British colonial rule, Baluchistan flourished. The regional capital, Quetta, was called 'Little Paris' as the home of chic urbanism and a majority European population. Today, poverty, tension, despair, and unemployment are prevalent. Gunfights between Baluch nationalists and Frontier Corps are common. Taliban militants roster here *en route* to Afghanistan. As we have seen, though, poverty and militancy are only part of the story of Baluchistan: it is also of vital importance to China's South Asian 'String of Pearls' and 'B & R' initiatives. When Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf (b. 1947; Pres. 2001-2008) invited China to build the port in Gwadar, Baluch and Baluchistan were invited to reimagine their 21st-century prospects and recover something of their former glory. Would they not benefit from the gas pipeline to Gwadar and the new, lucrative, copper mine at Reko Diq, in Chagai District? To Baluch nationalists, the simple answer is that such dreams and promises remain unfulfilled.

Read in this light, the painful, paradoxical, predicament of the Baluch in Baluchistan begins to become clearer. On closer examination, there are six further elements in Baluch consciousness, experience, and behaviour that EU and Western Alliance policymakers should recognize.

- i. *History matters to the Baluch.* This impacts Baluch politics and self-understanding today. The cultural and linguistic origins of the Baluch are disputed; however, Baluch nationalists claim their cause is 1000 years old. Some scholars trace their roots of the Baluch to the Bronze Age (3300-1300 BCE) Indus Valley Civilization, and ancient Sumeria and Arkkadia;⁷⁷ others to the so-called 'proto-Dravidian' people (also from the Indus Valley Civilization), who over time

77 Hansman, J., 'A Periplus of Magan and Meluhha', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 36.3 (1973): 553 - 587; id., 'A Further Note on Magan and Meluhha (Notes and Communications)', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 38.3 (1975):609 - 610.

spread across SE Asia (esp. S. India).⁷⁸ Whatever their origins culturally and linguistically, the Baluch appear as a distinct people group in the annals of the Macedonian warrior King Alexander [III] ‘the Great’ (356 – 323 BCE; r. 336 – 323 BCE). A deep sense of their distinct, historic identity remains a feature of Baluch culture.

- ii. *The history of Baluchistan impacts Baluch consciousness and politics today.* The origins of an independent Baluch state lie in the emergence in the early 17th century (officially 1638) of the ancient city of Qīqān (mod. Kalāt e-Brahui/e-Sewa or Qalāt) as a regional centre of power. In the 19th century, however, British forces subdued the Baluch and Kalat State came under British control officially in 1876 (Fig. 18). The origins of much subsequent tension in the region lie in this new administrative structure. As elsewhere, strong arm British imperialism created an artificial ethnic construct. Diverse tribal and language groups, including significant numbers of Shi’a Hazar and Mohajir, were thrown together in a newly formed Baluchistan. Baluch identity was bull-dozed by British bureaucracy.



Fig. 18: Baluchistan under British control (GlobalSecurity.org)

78 Parpola, A. (2015), *The Roots of Hinduism: The Early Aryans and the Indus Civilization* Oxford: OUP; Thapar R., 'A Possible Identification of Meluhha, Dilmun and Makan', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 18.1 (1975):1 - 42.

- iii. *The history of the Baluch maps on to the complex history of Indo-Pakistani relations. When India secured its independence from Britain in 1947, Baluchistan was annexed to Pakistan. In the local power vacuum this created, Pakistan's central government and military stepped in. The issue of Baluchistan's independence now became implicated in Pakistani patriotism, army zeal and diplomatic pragmatism. The Independent Baluchistan Movement (IBM; 1973 - 1977) and Baluch Student Organization (BSO) have reconstituted themselves from 2000 as the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA).⁷⁹ The BLA was led by Hyrbyair Marri (b.1968) until he was killed in 2007. Some analysts claim (despite his denials) that Hyrbyair Marri's brother Balach now heads the movement. Major funding for the BLA has been linked to Russia, India and Pakistani nationals.*

In 2005, Baluch insurgents, led by Oxford University educated head tribesman (or *Tumandar*) and Minister of State for Interior and Governor of Balochistan, Nawab Bugti (1927-2006), sabotaged pipelines to Gwadar and sought to hold the Pakistani government to ransom. Numerous attacks by the BLA inside and outside Pakistan (on non-Baluch and international targets) have now been recorded, as have counterattacks by Pakistani, Iranian and Afghan military. The Pakistani army leadership has consistently defended – often savagely, if reports of violence against Baluch women are to be believed – the nation created in 1947. To Baluch regionalists – and erstwhile Baluch nationalists – their plight parallels Nepal, where nationality and allegiance were (in their minds) also arbitrarily assigned, illegally enforced and violently imposed. Dispersion in oppressive Iran, war-torn Afghanistan, oft forgotten Turkmenistan, and throughout politically and economically volatile Pakistan, has played into the hands of Baluch independents. Self-determination and statehood – and, if needed, militant action to secure them – are proclaimed as credible (and attractive) alternatives. As elsewhere, radicals are willing to pay the ultimate price to secure them. Like many minorities around the world, who believe they have little to lose and much to gain (and a strong argument for Human Rights abuse to put before an international court), Baluch nationalists take their cause to the thoroughfares and by-ways of Baluchistan.

⁷⁹ NB. the history and evolution of the BLA from the Independent Baluchistan Movement Baluch Student Organization is complex, with the militarism of the BLA controversial among some Baluch.



Fig. 19: Baluch separatist fighters (M. Farman, Associated Press)

- iv. *The dynamics of Baluch ethno-nationalism find parallels elsewhere.* Though, as we have seen, the plight of the Baluch is different from the Uyghurs, there are parallels with the Bengalis' fight for an independent Bangladesh in 1971-3 and with the situation of the Sindh and Punjabi in Baluchistan today.⁸⁰ In each case, issues of cultural and political identity are complex, and have been resolved by a brutal exercise of military might. The residents of Baluchistan today have a composite cultural make-up: tribal, local, regional, and national identities vie for ascendancy. Tribal loyalties define, unite, and divide in Baluchistan (and in many other parts of Central and Southern Asia). As elsewhere, Baluch ethno-nationalism reflects a complex historical process of cultural, political, and socio-economic 'conscientization', in which Baluch interests are studied, compared, and privileged against competing local and national agendas (Fig. 19). In this process, the Baluch have become self-aware, hyper-sensitive, and articulate in their desire for self-differentiation and statehood. The fact they feel forgotten, used, and abused nationally and internationally, has hardened their resolve. The widely reported rape of

⁸⁰ Cf. Lievan, A. (2011), *Pakistan: A Hard Country*. London: Allen Lane, p. 342.

Dr. Shazia Khalid at the military camp at Sui in Dera Bugt in February 2005, a Baluch rocket attack on President Musharraf's helicopter escort in October 2007 (after which a reported 5000 Baloch militants were captured and executed), 'death squad' raids by Pakistani troops in the Keelor area of Panjgur district in June 2021, on top of numerous claims of rape, abduction and sexual abuse of Baluch women by the Pakistani army (as in the Bangladesh conflict) and by Chinese workers in military compounds linked to CPEC, and the sanctioning of this brutality by the Panjabi military leadership in Rawalpindi, have all served to intensify Baluch animosity and violence. As Professor Sahadevan has said of ethno-nationalist movements across S. Asia, 'Fear of a loss of identity' and 'a sense of powerlessness' drive Baluch protest.⁸¹

- v. *The Baluch struggle to define their identity and demonstrate unity and integrity.* No one issue determines the situation of the Baluch today. Simplistic analysis is dangerous. Topography, demography, water poverty, rural tribal practices, and economic hardship, are as important as the activities of the Pakistani government and military. The Baluch's own perception and protest are multi-faceted. Baluchistan's low profile nationally and internationally (despite its natural resources and recent inward investment)⁸² and major state disregard for Baluch claims, have intensified a sense of despair and isolation. Shallow diplomatic and political promises have increased Baluch cynicism. Pakistani Presidents have issued veiled hints of Baluch independence, while actively fomenting unrest.⁸³ But the Baluch are not above reproach or legitimate suspicion. Jihadism,⁸⁴ criminality, division and corruption among some Baluch have soiled their reputation, inflamed opponents and alienated friends. In the 2009 provincial elections in Baluchistan, 62 out of 65 seats were won by Baluch nationalists. However, in addition to their official salaries, newly-elected MPs reportedly awarded themselves a further 50m.

81 Cf. Sahadevan, 105, Table 2. N.B. the historical roots of Baluch protest are, perhaps, insufficiently recognized in Sahadevan's article.

82 Protest intensified in 2010 when re-calculated provincial budgets saw a mere 2% increase for Baluchistan.

83 Disagreement among the Baluch (perhaps also fomented by Chinese financial incentives) has led to conflict between two tribes of the Bugti over rights to the lucrative Sui Gas field. See Noraiee, H., 'Baloch nationalism in Pakistan: Articulation of the Ethnic Separatism after the end of the Cold War' *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 11.1 (2020):72 - 85.

84 Cf. Lievan, *Pakistan: A Hard Country*, p. 357.

rupees (ca. £350,000) out of the provincial coffers.⁸⁵ ‘Ghost Education’, as a 2013 report by the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (and a number of academic studies) revealed, has likewise seen large sums syphoned off to individuals and other causes.⁸⁶ Patronage, corruption and tribal power/s beset Baluchistan: unsurprisingly, Baluch protests are viewed by ‘major states’ as unwelcome, unimportant, or untruthful.

- vi. *External factors both compound and perpetuate Baluch problems.* The situation of the Baluch is volatile. Friend and foe both contribute to this, as do the Baluch themselves. The role of Iran is particularly illuminating. In 2014, the *Economist’s* Intelligence Unit reported the capture of five Iranian Border Guards by Jaish al-Adl (a Baluch-Sunni Extremist group). Iran accused Pakistan of using Baluch as *agents provocateurs* in their countries’ prolonged border dispute.⁸⁷ For its part, as Stephane Dudoignon has pointed out, successive Iranian leaders have groomed Sunni sympathisers through *Sarbazi ‘ulama* (religious leaders) in Southern Baluchistan. Many of these conservative *‘ulama* were educated in the revivalist Deobandi tradition. Initially sent to provide a Sunni religious bulwark against Soviet expansionism in Afghanistan in the 1980s, the *‘ulama* have been mobilized again, only now to fight Salafi and Saudi influence in the region.⁸⁸ Dudoignon labels this activity the ‘Iranisation’ of the Baluch (and others) outside *and* inside Iran.

In a pragmatic *quid pro quo*, despite increasing economic and social pressure on the Sunni Baluch minority in Iran (esp. after the 2017 attack in Tehran), the small Baluch community in the south of the country has secured political concessions, including representation in local government. But repression and violence remain. The mediatory power of *Sarbaz ‘ulama* is limited. The Baluch are seemingly immune to threat. While Tehran protests, Baluch freedom fighters (*sarmachars*) are engaged in lucrative cross-border smuggling of Taliban, cocaine, minerals and weapons. In March 2021, the Jamestown Foundation think-tank reported Ira-

85 Ibid, p. 364.

86 Babar, Z. A., ‘Balochistan: Still a land of ghost schools, ghost teachers’, *Cutting Edge* (16 August 2017); Zaman, F., ‘Education in Balochistan’, *The Nation* (9 August 2018); Zehri, U., ‘Ghost schools and teachers in Balochistan’, *Balochistan Point* (27 July 2017).

87 Anon (2015), ‘Iran: Country Report’. London: Economist Intelligence Unit, p. 23

88 Dudoignon, S. (2017), *The Baluch, Sunnism and the State in Iran: From Tribal to Global*. Paris: EHESS.

nian Revolutionary Guards (perhaps because of an insufficient bribe?) firing on fuel transports by Baluchs on the Pakistan-Iran border.⁸⁹ Fears of border-region conflict are growing. Riots in Saravan followed the March 2021 incident. Though local religious leaders call for calm, tension persists.

The Baluch diaspora has been as potent as criminality and international tension in determining the community's reputation and fate. Like many diaspora communities, Baluch overseas are passionate advocates and generous donors in the nationalist cause;⁹⁰ and, as often happens, are arguably more passionate and active in this area than in causes closer to their new home. The substantial Baluch community in Oman has been a notable contributor to the nationalist cause for decades, as have other Baluch enclaves in UAE, Bahrain, Europe and the United States. Not, it should be stressed, that the power,⁹¹ wealth and influence of the Baluch diaspora have funded violence directly, rather they have resourced the nationalist cause more generally. As a side issue – although not unrelated – one contributor to the Pakistani *Express Tribune* (Naveed Ahmad) has drawn attention to the potentially dangerous number of Baluch who are selected for training by the Omani military (350 in 2016).⁹² Alongside finance, this military training also potentially strengthens the nationalist cause.

The multi-faceted nature of the problem presented in Case Study II again illustrates the complexity of major state engagement with a social, political and cultural minority. In this instance, the behaviour politically, militarily and (in some cases) illegally and unethically, of the minority and the involvement of a range of other parties (using, abusing, and ignoring the Baluch) form major stumbling blocks to responsible and effective diplomatic engagement by the EU and Western Alliance. However, as indicated above, failure to engage with this complex *external* issue risks exposing the West to increased *internal* threats from the aftershock of Baluch political and terrorist activity in Pakistan and neighbouring countries *and* from the emboldening of hostile states and agencies for whom Baluch behaviour serves their own nefarious purposes.

89 Aman, F., 'Iran's fuel Smuggling paranoia in the Baluchistan Border Region', *Terrorism Monitor* 19.5 (2021): 1 - 3

90 Cf. Kiltromilides, P., 'The Patriotism of the Expatriates', *Il Pensiero Politico* 48.3 (2015): 518 - 526.

91 The Omani the Minister for Financial Affairs, Darwish Bin Ismail al-Balushi, is, as his name suggests, a Baluch.

92 Ahmad, N., 'Harnessing the GCC's Baloch pedigree' (10 February 2016) www.tribune.com.pk.

III. The Baluch problem: Is there a solution?

We turn now, for the remainder of this Case Study, to consider avenues for new thought and action to respond to the Baluch. To-date, as indicated, there has been relatively little Western engagement with the plight of Baluch ‘minority’. This has allowed the situation of the Baluch to go unreported, undefended, and unaccountable. The case for their independence remains, as a result, misunderstood, misinterpreted, and readily misrepresented by the disinterested or hostile. Without judicious international engagement, continued – if not escalated – violence seems inevitable. Carefully calibrated peace initiatives offer a potential win-win both to the Baluch and those who victimize them or suffer at their hands.

a. Panke’s proposal

German political scientist Diana Panke⁹³ has proposed a number of strategies for non-state actors and minorities like the Baluch, who are, or believe themselves to be ignored, oppressed, side-lined and misunderstood. Specifically, Panke suggests that such minorities might, i. *re-frame their case* (in a new set of bargaining strategies), ii. *appeal to expert evidence* (using empirical, social science data of any and every kind to buttress their arguments), iii. *claim the moral high ground* (and in the process shame their adversaries and hustle them to an international court of justice), iv. *fight the case in local courts* (turning federal courts and national constitutions against their opponents), v. *construct alliances and coalitions with like-minded protest groups* (increasing the optical and demographic weight of the case they make), vi. *barter and bargain their way forward* (accepting incremental steps on the path to a higher goal), and vii. *revalue their cause* (to secure a moral, political and diplomatic edge). None of these strategies are easy to handle, few of them are standard issue weapons in a minority’s armoury.

b. Responding to Panke

A number of other points should be made in response to Panke’s *schemata*:

- i. With respect to arguing the Baluch case in a local court, Pakistan’s constitution has changed significantly since 1947. The Islamification of Pakistan’s culture, courts, and constitution under President Muhammad Zia-ul-Huq (1924-1988; Pres. 1977-1988) has had a lasting impact on the country and still weighs justice against a dissenting

⁹³ Panke, D., ‘Dwarfs in International Negotiations: How small states make their voices heard’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 25.3 (2012): 313 - 328.

minority. Treason, blasphemy, insurgency, and criticism of the state are toxic issues in Pakistan's fragile courts. It is possible international pressure, and the growing size, voice, and influence of diaspora Baluch, may over the long-term serve to leverage global public opinion and the government in Pakistan, but this is not likely any time soon. Furthermore, such pressure will almost certainly be both counterproductive and physically dangerous in the interim for the Baluch minorities in Iran and Afghanistan.

- ii. Whatever the legitimacy of the Baluch cause, it represents a violent *and* controversial challenge to the national sovereignty of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. As such, supporters and sympathisers risk association with violent insurgency and increasing geopolitical instability. Violence infects and eviscerates protest movements in the eyes of many. War weary veterans are often the last to lay down their arms. To Baluch nationalists, the gun has become their bargaining tool. Panke's proposals ring hollow when blood has been spilled. Appeal to the 'affective' dimension to diplomacy and conflict resolution demands the accumulative impact of grief, resentment, distrust, and suspicion be factored in to discerning workable solutions. Furthermore, some Baluch – perhaps out of desperation that legal routes and lucrative commerce are closed to them – are known to engage in illegal smuggling of people and drugs. It is not uncommon to find criminality by some funding protest (*pace* money laundering and drug smuggling by the IRA during 'The Troubles' in N. Ireland), but it stains the cause in the eyes of many.⁹⁴ Purported necessity is rarely a strong moral argument.
- iii. A balanced response to the Baluch will absorb the complexity (and moral ambiguity) of their case while upholding the national, regional, and constitutional rights *and duties* of the States in which they reside. One-sided problem-solving and mindless blame gaming are rarely successful relational strategies. In this instance, an appeal to Baluch history and culture suggests a point of access to Baluch trust *and* federal and international attention. Setting the problem within an evolving historical narrative may also help to refine Baluch claims and persuade national leaders that British colonial history left an

⁹⁴ D'Souza, J. (2011), *Terrorist Financing, Money Laundering and Tax Evasion: Examining the Performance of Financial Intelligence Units* Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, p. 29.

important issue unresolved.⁹⁵ Such, at least, might be the shape of data presented to an EU or UN Committee, or, as suitably, to an independent review body appointed with the agreement of Baluch leaders and local State powers.

- iv. Panke is at risk of projecting what Benedict Anderson⁹⁶ would call a ‘Constructivist’ theory of identity on to a minority such as the Baluch. That is, that their appeal to a distinctive (politically and militarily defined) ethno-nationalist identity is a new construct and not an organic expression of a deep, unique, and consistent ethnic worldview. This mechanistic ‘constructivism’ fails to recognize, critics argue, the durable yet malleable reality of an ancient ethnic identity.⁹⁷ Even if (*pace* Croucher⁹⁸) a minority identity evolves over time – perhaps especially in light of globalization or migration – the historic myths, rituals, language, *mores* and perception of land and *locus*, tend to remain as distinct and defining cultural indices, which cannot and should not be ignored by major states in their interaction with such a community. When or wherever a ‘Constructivist’ view of ethno-nationalism prevails in the corridors of major state powers (as it often does), a failure of interpretation and engagement with minorities will necessarily occur. Such has been the case with the Baluch.

Conclusion

Four important lessons can be extrapolated from this Case Study of Baluch ethno-nationalism.

- i. However justifiable, *violence throws debris on pathways to peace*. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the Baluch cause, violence on all sides has made peace negotiations more difficult. Casualty numbers, loss of face, and a fear of reprisals, terrorize peace-making. Moreover, however brutal the Pakistani military or criminal the BLA,

95 Parallels might be drawn with Myanmar where prolonged Inter-tribal and civil conflict has been an unresolved legacy of Britain’s creation of the artificial construct, Burma.

96 Cf. Anderson, B. (1991), *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso.

97 Cf. Samuel Huntington’s argument for a ‘primordialist’ or ‘essentialist’ view of fixed cultural identities in Huntington, S. (1996), *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

98 Croucher, S. (2018), *Globalization and Belonging: The Politics of Identity in a Changing World*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

neither party wants to appear weak or desperate. It is never wise for governments to accede to violent demands. The authors of this report would encourage the EU and Western Alliance to be proactive in pressing the Baluch to sue for peace *and* in reminding the Pakistani government of its political and moral obligation to every citizen, including the Baluch. Protracted peacemaking is always preferable to prolonged conflict.

- ii. However slow or unattractive, *due process is preferable to populism and violence*. The simple fact is, in contrast to China, Pakistan has a widely recognized constitution and an established legal and federal system. Within the latter, regions are granted a measure of freedom and autonomy with respect to local policy and policing. Baluch criminality can, and should never, be justified at the expense of Pakistan's central government and devolved Federal system. Baluch claims to autonomy are justifiably assessed in terms of their demonstration of socio-political and legal responsibility. At present, despite well-proven acts of wanton brutality by the Pakistani military, the BLA has done little to-date to persuade sceptics and doubters inside and outside Pakistan that they would and could form an effective and reliable government for an independent Baluchistan.
- iii. However implausible, *advocacy (as proposed in Panke's toolkit of options) remains a viable diplomatic strategy*. The ruling authorities in China and Pakistan today, and the oppressive systems of government they oversee, can undermine confidence in rational argument and persuasive speech. The EU and Western Alliance must resist the erosion of confidence in these venerated instruments of Western government and diplomacy. 'Fighting fire with fire' risks a greater conflagration. The plight of the Uyghurs and Baluch is hot enough: cool heads and calculated international responses are needed as rational hydrants to dampen passion and promote discussion. Panke's strategies for effective advocacy are plausible both as an expression of Western intellectual and diplomatic values and as practical options for front-line international action. Crucially, though, they are premised on EU and Western Alliance foreign policy understanding the national and regional context and local character, culture, activities, and complaints of the Baluch. A failure of basic understanding will always weaken diplomatic credibility and effectiveness.
- iv. *The wider regional implications of the Baluch question cannot be sep-*

arated from the rights and wrongs of the Baluch's desire to be autonomous. Given their strategic location and their willingness to take support from India, Baluchi nationalists have put themselves within a far wider geo-strategic context where their own desire to be free is of far less importance to the principal protagonists (China, Pakistan and India) than the strategic and economic value of the region. In this context it may be that the main hope for securing some form of autonomy for the Baluch lies in the diplomatic leverage that the EU has in its trade and aid relationship with Pakistan.

CASE STUDY III

Lead author: Prof. Dr. Christopher Hancock (Director, Oxford House Research Ltd.)

Syria, the Kurds, and 'enculturated' engagement

Geographically, Case Study III addresses a set of inter-related issues that are closer to the physical frontline of East-West diplomatic, political, military and philosophical/religious engagement. Much could be said. Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Turkey (and countries drawn into the late-20th and early-21st century conflict in the region) are on the doorstep of Europe and at the entry point of Asia. That the Near East has been a flashpoint for a bitter, militarized 'Culture War' should come as no surprise: blood has been shed in the dust and deserts of the region for millennia. What is new – and central to this Case Study – is the extent to which the present conflict has been *globalized* and *relativized* through 'instant news' and inflammatory social media: the causes and casualties of war being often lost in a cloud of commentary, mutual accusation and diplomatic pragmatism. Clear thinking is needed to appropriate this data and assess the character and impact of *external* 'major state' engagement (here, the EU and Western Alliance) with ethnic minorities (and other non-state actors), and, conversely, the *internal* effect this action has had, indeed *should* have, on the EU and her allies. But the factual and interpretative complexities of this Case Study abound.⁹⁹

I. Three initial clarifications

To clear the undergrowth, three clarificatory issues need to be faced.

a. 'Threats' and 'threat levels'

'Threat' has been used hitherto in this report in an unnuanced way. It is time to reexamine the term. Recognizing threat at a personal and national level is vital. Missing or misreading threats can be disastrous. The geographic proximity of the Gulf and Iraq Wars (17 Jan 1991–28 Feb 1991; 20 Mar 2003–15 Dec 2011) and

⁹⁹ The lead author in this section, Johannes de Jong (Director of Sallux), writes from first-hand experience, as a Western interlocutor with, and advocate for, both the minorities described and the EU policymakers, who have sought to engage them. As such, he has been a participant in the struggles described and is sympathetic to the struggles ethnic minorities have experienced when their voice, identity and flourishing have been ignored.

Civil War in Syria (15 March 2011–present) highlighted for many in the West the reality of, and rationale for, the ‘threat levels’ set by governments on the advice of military and security services.

Given the geographically and culturally distant (and indirect) nature of the Uyghur problem, it has not impacted ‘threat levels’ in the EU or Western Alliance. Likewise, the predicament of the Baluch in Western Pakistan, will not have registered in Washington, DC, as a ‘warning problem’, or an unambiguous and immediate threat to national security. However, as we have seen, neither Xinjiang nor Baluchistan should be ignored. Individuals are threatened if national interests are not. Morality makes as great a claim as military or economic expedients. Furthermore, as noted above, the *external* plight of minorities can have a direct and indirect *internal* impact on the EU and her allies: witness 9/11, the 7/7 bombings in London, and the series of actual, intended and, thankfully, frequently thwarted, terrorist attacks in France, Belgium, Spain, Austria, Italy and Germany.¹⁰⁰ Understanding the nature and implications of threats is vital. Failure to see how minorities do and do not handle despair is dangerous. Carefully constructed analytics are needed. Viral medical threats and cyber security attacks offer other heuristics. When culture and human behaviour are involved, a wide range of empirical and intuitive resources are required. Some of these will be considered in due course (see below p. 71f.).

Though the Uyghurs and Baluch crises may not put the EU on a war footing, but both warrant monitoring for the potential impact of interested parties (e.g., China, India, Pakistan or A.N.Other major state) escalating activity to provoke an EU/Western Alliance response, to endanger Western personnel, or to increase regional instability disadvantageous to the West.

Blunt analytic tools can exacerbate problems and overlook other types of threat. The fact the Uyghurs are not a ‘warning problem’¹⁰¹ does not mean Western powers should not protest. Ignoring their plight threatens Western values. The fact the Baluch are often forgotten does not mean Western interests are not at risk from China calling the shots in Baluchistan or India goading Pakistan.¹⁰²

100 On violence and extremism in Germany, see <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/germany>. Europe was rocked and shocked by incidents like the terrorist attacks on Bataclan theatre and in the northern Saint-Denis suburb of Paris (13 November 2015) and the bombings in Brussels (22 March 2016) for which ISIS claimed responsibility (as they did for killing 130 people in Beirut the previous day). On ISIS pp. 8, 23, 33, 49, 59, 65-71.

101 Various terms are employed by government agencies to assess and categorize threat levels or ‘Indications and Warnings’ (I & Ws) and their potential impacts, i.e., DEFCON 1, DEFCON 2, Red, White, etc,

102 For a recent example of a US Council on Foreign Relations assessment of threats: <https://www>.

This Case Study will show how minorities can have a disproportionate impact on major state credibility, security and domestic harmony. The report's authors would argue that it is in the EU's best interests to include in their list of 'threats' the cultural, ethical and 'affective' impacts of diplomatic and military action *and* of deliberate inaction.

b. Bipolar and multipolar problems

In contrast to the essentially bi-polar nature of the crisis in Xinjiang (where national and local governments confront Uyghur culture, identity and activity), but like Baluchistan (where the Baluch are caught in a web of competing regional interests), the situation described in this Case Study is multi-polar. That is, multiple ethnicities and political regimes converge to create a maelstrom of competing agendas. EU policy and principle are exposed to fierce crosswinds from *real politik* and ethnic passion. Clear perception and prioritization are at a premium. Readiness to admit failures of policy and practice is essential. The need for wise minds, warm hearts, and sharp tools to unlock the political complexity and socio-psychological pain of Syria, Iraq, Iran, and the wider region, could not be more urgent. If skill, sensitivity, and treatment are needed for 'bipolar disorder' (viz. manic depression), comparable skills and resources are required for this on-going form of socio-cultural and political 'multipolar disorder' (where actions are unpredictable, emotions volatile, and ethnic identity pathologically complex). The hope for analysts and policymakers is that close engagement with *external* minority interests in Syria, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and the MENA region, may provide experiential resources to address equally complex *internal* minority interests within the EU and Western Alliance.

c. 'Solid state' and 'fluid state' realities

'Solid state' chemistry and physics study the synthesis, structure and properties of solid phase chemicals and materials, through quantum mechanics, crystallography, electromagnetism, and metallurgy. Other methodologies are employed for 'fluid' or 'liquid state' realities which demonstrate a 'characteristic readiness to flow with little or no tendency to disperse and relatively high incompressibility'. Social Scientists use 'solid state' and 'fluid state' of human relationships, community structures and political systems. This is a useful heuristic for us. The EU faces situations and communities that are 'solid' in their cultural identity and claims for power and autonomy, and (intentionally or accidentally) 'fluid' in their politics, location and actions. Conflict and confusion reign if major states un-

cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ukraine.

derestimate the tenacity and acuity of ‘fluid state’ ethnic minorities. Culture is a tough, durable material. The physics of ‘liquid state’ situations requires a different interpretative and behavioural methodology to ‘solid state’ governance and diplomacy. Case Study III provides EU policymakers with new ways to read and engage the increasingly common phenomenon of ‘fluid state’ communities at home and abroad. In a post-secular, postmodern world, old style ‘solid state’ diplomacy is no longer ‘fit for purpose’. Case Study III is a wake-up call to reassess diplomatic shibboleths.

II. The focus of Case Study III

Case Study III addresses inter-related issues: a. the past and present plight of the Kurds (in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran); b. the evolving identities and political loyalties of other ethnic and religious minorities in the two Gulf Wars and Civil War in Syria; c. the impact of ISIS¹⁰³ and response of the EU and Western Alliance diplomatically and domestically. Separating these themes is difficult, but necessary. If we do, we can study the dynamics of ‘situational multipolarity’, that is, how and when multiple factors converge to ‘complexify’¹⁰⁴ truth and reality and render it multi-dimensional. Problematizing political, cultural and diplomatic ‘reality’ in MENA in this way since the start of the Gulf War enables us to forge tools to understand and engage ethnic, religious, and socio-political minorities in other contexts.

In light of the above, Case Study III considers three key questions, which we take in turn:

- A. Who are the Kurds and why do they, or should they, matter to the EU and Western Alliance?
- B. What impact has EU and Western Alliance involvement in the two Gulf Wars and Civil War in Syria had on the attitudes and actions of ethnic and religious minorities in the region?
- C. What lessons can be learned from this Case Study that reinforce, correct, or expand those already identified in Case Studies I and II?

¹⁰³ On ISIS, pp. 8, 23, 40, 49, 59, 65-71.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Complexity Theory’, which has gathered momentum in recent times from disciplines as varied as organizational development, strategic management, and church growth, builds on natural science analysis of predictable uncertainties and non-linear development. Attentive to causality and context, Complexity Theory studies dynamic interactions between entities and their self-organizing adaptation to unpredictable change. Complexity Theory offers analysts important resources to chart and assess the character and actions of major states and minorities

A. Who are the Kurds and why do they, or should they, matter to the EU and Western Alliance?

Many Western observers know the Kurds simply as a militant minority, who have been active participants in the conflict that has engulfed the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) for the last thirty years. Few know more. The Kurds are not unique: they share the fate of other minorities, their linguistic and cultural identity of little note to many in the West or assigned a lower priority than more pressing issues within MENA. Today their long, painful history attracts less attention than the Uyghur crisis in Xinjiang because the nations they inhabit carry less geopolitical weight than China. They have fewer international allies than the Baluch because the stakes in their case are unattractively low. The Kurds and Kurdish identity risk being devalued or ignored, or, worse still, only profiled when linked to incidents or migration that impact the EU and her allies. If, or when, this becomes the normative response, Kurdish identity is *contingent*, or dependent on the actions and attitudes of others. This is far removed from the spirit and intention of Articles 1 and 22 of the EU's *Charter of Fundamental Rights* (cf. p. 3). Common decency, if not international law and morality, suggest this is wrong. To correct a limited and limiting perception of the Kurds, we begin with four key things to know about them:

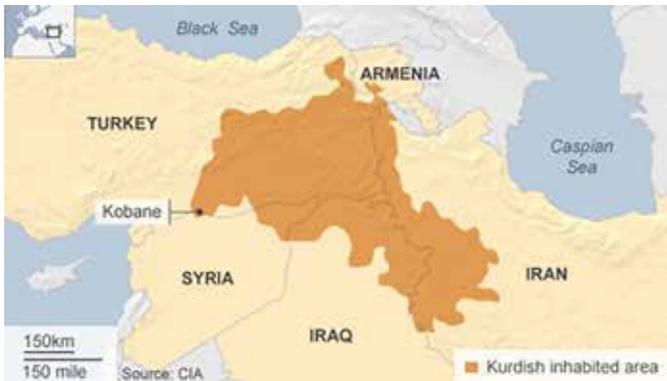


Fig. 20: Kurdish inhabited areas (BBC)

i. Geography and history. The Kurds (Kurdish: كورد) or Kurdish people are an *Iranian ethnic group* from the rough, mountainous terrain of historic Kurdistan, which spans modern day SE Turkey, N. Iran, N. Iraq, and N. Syria (Fig. 20).¹⁰⁵ Commu-

¹⁰⁵ Cf. some scholars connect the Kurds with the 'Karduchi/Qarduchi' from the 'land of Karda' (named in a 3rd century BCE Sumerian text). Their progenitors are more probably, the 'Qarti' or 'Qa-

nities of Kurds are also found in various parts of the Caucasus, Central Anatolia, Khorasan, W. Turkey (esp. Istanbul) and Europe (ca. 1.3m., esp. in Germany and Britain). Though, once again, precise numbers are hard to glean, it is estimated between 30-45m. people claim a Kurdish ethnic identity and speak Kurdish and/or the Zaza-Gorani languages, which are derivatives of the Iranian and Indo-European family of languages. In other words, we are dealing with a 'minority' that is almost certainly twice the size of the Uyghur community in Xinjiang (12.8m.) and at least three times that of the Baluch (9m.) inside and outside Pakistan.¹⁰⁶ Within 'Greater Kurdistan' (as their homelands across the northwestern Zagros and eastern Taurus Mountain ranges are sometimes called), the Kurds are the *majority* population. That said, there is a long, complex, and contentious story behind identifying 'Kurdistan', to which the 20th and early 21st centuries have added much. We do not understand the Kurds today without grappling with some of this story.

The term 'Kurdistan' first appears in writings from the great Turko-Persian Seljuk Empire (1037-1194), which controlled a vast population and landmass from the Persian Gulf to Central Asia, from the Levant and western Anatolia to the distant Hindu Kush in the East. Over the centuries Kurdish identity sought expression and independence in regional chiefdoms and principalities, emirates and dynasties. But absence a consistent form of government and administration, and a clear definition of Kurdistan's geographic borders, the Kurds were continually vulnerable to political and cultural abuse, and internal calls for independence, as they are today. During the 20th century nationalist movements and international sympathy combined to create a whole series of short-lived Kurdish states, but none emerged as a secure or satisfying answer for a majority of Kurds or their impacted neighbours. Hence, the post-WWI Kurdish state (1918-1919), the Kingdom of Kurdistan (1921-1924), Kurdistan Uyezd, or 'Red Kurdistan' (1923-1929), the Republic of Ararat (1927-1930) and the Republic of Mahabad (1946), all failed to answer the cry of many Kurds for a homeland and of regional powers for peace.

To many inside and outside the Kurdish community, the best solution for the Kurds lay in local agreements with major states. In 1970 an agreement was signed

rtas' from 2nd century BCE Mesopotamia, with many Kurds (as in their national anthem) making a connection to the Medes (and the ancient Median language and calendar), who overran the Assyrian capital Nineveh in the 7th century BCE.

106 To put these numbers into some kind of perspective (and ignoring smaller countries and France, Germany and Italy, which have much larger populations): the population (in 2021) of Scotland was 5.5m., Denmark 5.8m., Sweden 10.4m., the Czech Republic 10.6m., Belgium 11.5m., Poland 37.9m. and Spain 46.5m. In other words, we are dealing with an ethnic people just under the size of Spain, and larger than a majority of EU countries.

with the Iraqi government for an autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan.¹⁰⁷ This was renamed Kurdistan Region by the federal Iraqi Republic in 2005.¹⁰⁸ Likewise, the Kurdistan Province in northwestern Iran, which traces its roots to antiquity – and is not, note, politically autonomous – has settled over time into a distinct ethno-religious and linguistic regional identity with Tehran’s consent. No such local agreement has succeeded to-date between the Kurds and ruling authorities in Syria.

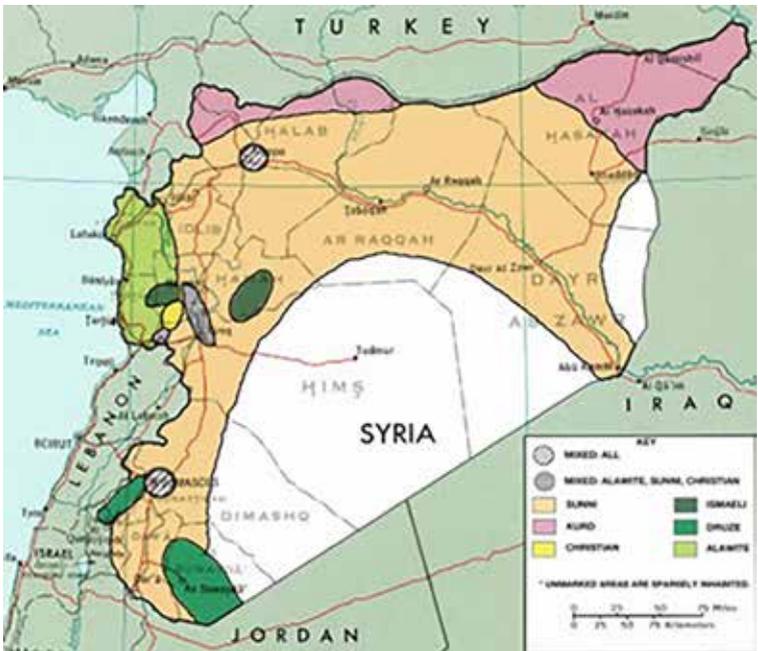


Fig. 21. Ethno-religious makeup of Syria, in Holliday, J. (2011), *The Struggle for Syria in 2011*, Institute for the Study of War.

The Kurdish presence and predicament in Syria – particularly in light of the Civil War (15 March 2011 – present) – is a central feature of this Case Study. Historically the largest ethnic minority in Syria (ca. 9-10% of the population, and 5% of the

107 The autonomous Kurdistan Region in Iraq is subdivided into four Kurdish-majority governates of Dohuk, Erbil, Halabja and Sulaymaniyah, with Erbil the regional capital.

108 Kurds once constituted ca. 17% of the Iraqi population, with a majority in Kurdistan Province, but a significant number also found in southern Iraq (ca. 100,000), Baghdad (ca. 300,000), Mosul (ca. 50,000), Kirkuk and Khanagan. But the displacement of Kurds in Iraq through war, politics, and religious conflict, has redrawn the map of their presence dramatically (see further below, pp. 57, 65f.).

Kurds as a whole), native Syrian and Turkish Kurds (living in Syria) were found in the northern border regions of Jazira, the central Euphrates Region around Kobani and in the west near Afrin (Fig. 21), with concentrations also in the ancient cities of Aleppo and Damascus. During the early stages of the Civil War in Syria, Kurdish fighters saw considerable success. They took control of – and, as many Kurds had long hoped, established autonomous administrations in – the North and East of the country. However, as this Case Study will explain, as a result of military setbacks and on-going political and cultural opposition from the government in Damascus and among Syrian President Bashar-al Assad's (b. 1965; Pres. 2000-present) international allies, a majority of asylum seekers and refugees in Europe (esp. in Germany), Canada and the USA, are today of Syrian Kurdish descent.¹⁰⁹ Hence, the *external* realities of life for this diaspora Kurdish minority community once again impact directly and indirectly the *internal* political, economic, and security concerns of the EU and her Western Alliance allies; to say nothing of the converse impact this has had *externally* on EU and Western Alliance foreign policy and diplomacy throughout 'Greater Kurdistan'.

We will return to the complex historical, political, and cultural predicament of the Syrian Kurds shortly (see below p. 60). To understand their predicament in the Syrian Civil War, we need to look at the ethno-religious and cultural identity of the Kurdish people *per se* in more detail.

ii. Ethno-religious and cultural identity. The issue of 'Kurdish identity' is no more straightforward than their history, geographic dispersion, and socio-political regional profile: indeed, it is directly affected by their location and reception by the dominant, or majority, power.

109 Cf. in 2011 there were ca. 12k ethnic and Kurdish speaking Kurds in Canada and ca. 20k in the USA (a majority living in Nashville, TN, or 'Little Kurdistan' as some locals call it). Most of these Kurds are political and/or economic migrants. The Turkish billionaire and philanthropist Hamdi Ulukaya (b. 1972), founder of the Chobani yogurt brand, is a prominent member of the Kurdish community in the USA. He has cited government oppression of the Kurdish community as the reason he emigrated from Turkey to the USA.



Fig. 22: *Ishak Pasha Palace in Dogubeyazit*

To condense a mass of material, Kurdish identity is comprised of three inter-related elements:

a. *Religion.* Most Kurds are Sunni Muslims, with a majority Shafi'i and a minority Hanafi. Within the Shafi'i school, Kurds follow either the Naqshbandi or Qadiriyya Sufi tradition. But not all Kurds are Sunni: millions are Shia, with a minority belonging to the syncretic Islamic traditions of Yazidism (ca. 1.3m.) and Yarsanism (ca. 0.5m.). In recent times, a noticeable number of Kurds have become Zoroastrians or Christians. The Kurds' complex religious identity has left them exposed to pressure from 'orthodox' and 'radical' religious groups. In some places (cf. above p. 51), their religious freedom has been protected by their majority status. More often, their minority religious profile has led to oppression, alienation, violence and hostility. Almost certainly, the fragmentation and fluidity (*qua* diversity) of Kurdish religious identity has contributed to the volatility and variety of their treatment politically and socially.

b. *Culture.* Kurdish culture is a composite phenomenon, reflecting the contexts in which Kurdish communities have lived over the centuries: however, it essentially

'Iranian' and similar to that of the (majority) Persian¹¹⁰ and (smaller) Lurs¹¹¹ communities.¹¹² Traditional Kurdish houses, often layered on mountain slopes, are simple mud dwellings with flat roofs. But Kurds also celebrate citadels in Erbil and Diyarbakir, the Mudhafaria Minaret and Yezidi pilgrimage site in Lalish, the fine 17th and 18th century castles in Hosap and Sherwana, the 19th century Ellwen Bridge, and the Ishak Pasha Palace in Dogubeyazit (Fig. 22). Madrasa education, weaving, oral folklore,¹¹³ dance and handicrafts – e.g., artefacts (esp. from the Kermanshah and Sanandaj regions of Iran) like jewelry, fretted windows or *Oroosi*, the double-bladed *Jambiya* knife, pipe and stringed musical instruments, ornaments, talismans (often associated with Jewish Kurds) and finely crafted wooden objects such as chessboards – are all integral to Kurdish culture and tradition. More recently, film (sometimes depicting the community's plight or trauma of impossible love) and sport (esp. football and wrestling) have become important.¹¹⁴ Disregard by the West, and wanton destruction of this rich heritage by enemies and others, have been painful for Kurds.

c. *Politics and history.* We study the recent history of the Kurds in what follows. 'Enculturated' analysis of this large minority is based on recognition of the painfilled history that Kurds share. The centripetal energy in Kurdish identity is impressive. It is also costly. The suffering of one is the suffering of all. Modern connectivity has increased the sense of Kurdish coherence *and* co-suffering. In five key Kurdish enclaves (Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Trans Caucasus and parts of Europe and N. America), their sad story is repeated. We look at these and communities in turn.

d. *Regional Kurdish communities*

i. Turkey. Kurds are historically the largest minority in Turkey (ca. 14m. of ca. 44m). For much of the last two centuries, they have fought for recognition and integration. Revolts in 1925, 1930 and 1938, and formation in the 1970s of the Kurdistan Socialist Party-Turkey (KSP-T) and later National Liberation of Kurdistan and paramilitary Kurdistan Workers Party or PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*), were in response to government denial and denigration of the Kurds' name, rights,

110 It is estimated ca. 50% of Iranians are 'Persian'.

111 The Lurs are mostly in western Iran.

112 N.B. Like their Iranian neighbours, Kurds celebrate the arrival of Spring (March 19-21) in dancing and coloured costumes, as part of the ancient Zoroastrian Newroz/Nawroz festival.

113 Cf. there are three traditional contributors to this important feature of Kurdish culture, viz. storytellers (*çîrokbêj*), minstrels (*stranbêj*) and bards (*dengbêj*).

114 N.B. Kurds won medals in the 2012 London Olympics in taekwondo, weightlifting and boxing.

existence, language¹¹⁵ and Turkish identity, dismissing them as ‘Mountain Kurds’ or ‘Easterners’ (Turk. *Doğulu*). Between 1984 and 1999, the PKK was engaged in armed conflict in eastern Turkey with government troops and with Kurds opposed to violence (Fig. 23). Many Kurds fled to cities (esp. Diyarbakir, Van and Sirnak), Europe or the USA. Support for the Kurds has been mixed. The PKK has been denounced by Turkey’s historic allies (the US, EU and NATO) as a terrorist organization.¹¹⁶ Though Turkey is a signatory to the ‘International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights’ (ICCPR), it has faced repeated charges in the ECHR, including for its abuse of the Kurds.¹¹⁷ To-date, it has not been consistently held to account for its actions: as a consequence, the Kurds continue to suffer abuse, torture, imprisonment, displacement and death.

Distribution of Kurdish population

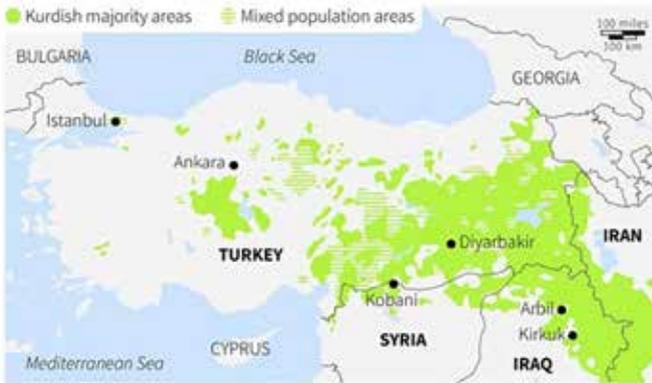


Fig. 23: Distribution of Kurds in Turkey (ABC)

115 After the coup in Turkey in 1980, speaking, writing and singing in Kurdish in public and private was outlawed. Many Kurds were arrested, charged, and imprisoned for violating this law. Kurds are still prevented from having a primary education in Kurdish in Turkey.

116 NB. this position was not adopted by the UN, Switzerland, Russia, China or India.

117 Much could be said on this, with accusations of ‘state terrorism’ rife. Over the years, Kurdish politicians have demonstrated remarkable courage. The first Kurdish female MP, Leyla Zana (b. 1961; MP 1991-1994), from Diyarbakir, was charged and imprisoned for treason in 1994 (along with four other Kurdish MPs) and awarded the Sakharov Prize for Human Rights by the European Parliament in 1995. In the 2009 local elections 5.7% supported the Kurdish Democratic Society Party (Turk: Demokratik Toplum Partisi, DTP; Kurdish: Partiya Cîvaka Demokratîk, PCD). On 11 December 2009, the Constitutional Court of Turkey banned the DTP as a ‘focal point of activities against the indivisible unity of the state, the country and the nation’. The government of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (b. 1954; Pres. 2014-present) has been impervious to internal and external criticism of its actions.

ii. **Iran.** Kurds in NW Iranian Kurdistan, NE Khorasan, and other parts of Iran (Fig. 23) have always been numerically and proportionately fewer¹¹⁸ than their Turkish cousins, and more fully integrated in society.¹¹⁹ Thwarted by the Paris Peace Conference (1919) from reclaiming all of ancient Kurdistan (after the fall of the Ottoman Empire post-WWI), the Persian (later Iranian) governments accepted the Kurds' self-limiting interests, despite brief outbursts of Kurdish nationalism.¹²⁰ Close historical, cultural, linguistic and literary ties¹²¹ between the Kurds and modern Iranian dynasties (esp. the Safavids [1501-1736] and Zands [1751-1794]), has legitimated the Kurdish presence in Iran and spiked calls for autonomy. Residual suspicion, ongoing tension between Iranian Shia and Kurdish Sunni, and the brief Soviet-backed Kurdish 'Republic of Mahabad' (22 January to 15 December 1946) in S. Iran have not affected the *status quo*; nor did the use of Turkish Kurds by Iranian rebel leader Simko Shikak (1887-1930) in the border conflict of 1918-1922, or cooption of Iranian Kurds by their Turkish counterparts in the 1930 'Ararat Rebellion'. Since the 1950s, Kurds have been prominent in Iranian politics. In the early 2000s, there were 30 Kurdish deputies in the 290-seat Parliament. Mohammad Reza Rahimi (b. 1954), Vice President from 2009 to 2013, and ex-soldier Mayor of Tehran, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf (b. 1961; Mayor 2005-2017), second in the 2013 Presidential election, were both Kurds.



Fig. 24: Kurds in Iran (Reddit)

118 Cf. Kurds constitute ca. 8-10% of the Iranian population.

119 N.B. there are ca. 7.9m Iranian Kurds.

120 Most famously, the rebellion in 1918-1922 by the Turkish speaking Kurdish chieftain Simko Shikak (1887-1930).

121 NB. the Persian language can be seen to have had a strong influence on Kurdish literature in its historic Kurmanji, Sorani and Gorani forms.

That said, complexities exist. Iran's last (secular) Shah (viz. King) Mohammad Reza Pahlav (1919-1980; r. 1941-1979)¹²² designated Kurds 'pure Iranians' and 'one of the most noble of the Iranian peoples'. However, post-WWII Iranian politics saw Soviet-backed socialist Kurds form the separatist Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI; Kurd. *Hîzbî Dêmkraî Kurdistanî Êran*) and Marxist-Leninist Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan (Kurd. *Komeley Şorrişgêrî Zehmetkêşanî Kurdistanî Êran*).¹²³ Their separatist vision still inspires sporadic acts of insurgency in Iranian Kurdistan or from N. Iraq. Since 2004, the anti-government and separatist stance of the militant Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK; Kurd. *Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê*), with strong ties to the PKK in Turkey and pan-Kurdish Kurdistan Communities Union, has provided a focus for Kurdish (and general dissent) in Iran, despite popular opposition and military setbacks (both with Turkish support).¹²⁴ In short, engagement with the Kurds in Iran needs cultural awareness and political acuity, especially after the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988),¹²⁵ the Gulf and Iraq Wars and Civil War in Syria.

iii. Iraq. (Fig. 25) The plight of Iraqi Kurds is reflective of Kurdish experience generally, but with local characteristics.¹²⁶ Unlike Iran, since becoming an independent Kingdom in 1932, Iraq has been wracked by conflict. No entirely minority is innocent in Iraq's deeply embedded civil strife. Calls for autonomy led to the so-called 'Assyrian affair'. Between 7 and 11 August 1933, 60 villages were looted and ca. 600 - 3000 (mostly Christian) Syriac-Assyrians killed in and around Semela, N. Iraq, by Kurdish General Bakr Sidqi (1890-1937).¹²⁷ In October 1935, Iraqi Prime Minister Yasin al-Hashimi (1884-1937; PM 1924-5, 1935-6) ordered government troops under Bakr Sidqi to suppress a Yazidi revolt against conscription. More than 200 Yazidi died in the action. From 1946, the large Kurdish community

122 The Pahlavi dynasty reigned was from 1925 to 1979.

123 Between 1967 and 1996, nationalist, Marxist insurgency, led by the the KDP-I and Komalah, continued. Leaders such as Qazi Muhammad (1893-1947) and Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou (1930-1989) were killed. In contrast to the PKK in Turkey, nationalist separatism has been largely absent from the political agenda of these Kurdish initiatives.

124 The size, military capability, and integrity of the PJAK are disputed: where Tehran sees 'foreign involvement', international Human Rights organisations see violence and discrimination. What is clear is that PJAK has suffered and succeeded enough for it to have attracted support from the Komala, KDP-I and PAK, and condemnation from Iran, Turkey, Japan and (since 2009) the United States, as a terrorist organization.

125 NB. during the Iran-Iraq War, Iran gave asylum to ca. 1.4m. (mostly) Kurdish Iraqis and support to the Iraqi Kurdish KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party) and nationalist PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan).

126 N.B. There are ca. 4.7-6.2m. Iraqi Kurds.

127 After the massacre in Semele, an estimated 15,000 Assyrians fled to Jazira and settled beside the Khabur River.

(ca. 17% of the pop.) under the charismatic Mustafa Mala (viz. preacher) Barzani (1903-1979), leader of the KDP (Kurdish Democratic Party), were torn between ethnic loyalty, a desire for regional autonomy, oppressive government policies, and conflicting external pressure from the Arab world and the Christian West. Failure to reckon with minority interests has plagued successive regimes in Iraq.

Four phases can be discerned in the recent history of the Iraqi Kurds:

i. 1960-1980, when two Kurdish 'Wars of Independence' (1961-1969, 1974-1975) led to 100,000s of Kurdish casualties and a short-lived Kurdish Autonomy Agreement (1970). The KDP under Barzani, who fled after the 2nd Kurdish-Iraqi war, secured Kurdish autonomy but suffered from Arabization,¹²⁸ especially in the historic and oil rich Kurdish regions of Kirkuk and Khanagin, and the Iran-Iraq Algiers Accord (1975), that cut supply lines to the Kurds. In 1975 a new Kurdish political party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) was formed in opposition to Baghdad and the KDP, led by among others Jalal Talabani (1933-2017), in time 6th President of Iraq (2005-2014). Intra-Kurdish conflict raged from 1977-1978.

ii. 1980-1988. After border clashes, the Algiers Accord was finally abrogated by Iraq, and it invaded Iran on 22 September 1980. Clashes with the government between 1983-1988 led to the Kurds being scapegoated by the country's Arab leaders. As a violent sideshow in the Iran-Iraq war, Kurdish villages were ravaged.¹²⁹ Mass deportation to southern and central Iraq, created a *de facto* civil war, with Kurds adjudged 'Anfal' (Lit. spoils of war).

128 According to this programme, Arabs were moved into Kurdish regions and, between 1975 and 1978 and more than 200,000 Kurds relocated within Iraq.

129 In the bloody 'Anfal Campaign' that Saddam Hussain orchestrated against the Kurds (1987-1988), the most infamous was a chemical attack on 16 March 1998, which killed 5000 Kurds in the town of Halabja instantly.



Fig. 25: Map of Iraqi Kurdistan (USAID/BBC)

iii. February 1991-May 1992. Defeat of the Iraqi army ignited Kurdish revolts in N. and S. Iraq. Though crushed in March 1991, Iraqi troops withdrew from Iraqi Kurdistan and *de facto* independence was established, with a 'no-fly zone' imposed in the victor's 'Provide Comfort' campaign. An estimated 1.5m. Kurds (and Assyrians) still fled to the Turkish and Iranian borders to escape reprisals: upwards of 20,000 dying *en route*. In the landmark UN Security Council Resolution #688, the Kurds were officially named for the first time and the Iraqi government instructed to end ethnic oppression. Safe havens were declared. A Kurdish military revival, and capture of Erbil and Sulaimaniyah (Fig. 26), led to elections in May 1992 and creation of the Kurdistan Regional Government, with a parliament and President, who is Commander-in-Chief of the Kurdish Iraqi Army, the Peshmerga.

iv. 1992-2007. Like most communities in the region, Iraqi Kurds have been impacted by the Gulf and Iraq Wars and the Civil War in Syria. We look at this in detail later (see below 65f.). For now, we should note that in 2003 most Iraqi Kurds supported the allied Western intervention to topple (Dictator) President Saddam Hussain (1937-2006; Pres. 1979-2003). But in the ensuing chaos, while the Peshmerga extended Kurdish control to Kirkuk and Mosul, and the new Iraqi Constitution (2005) ratified the mandate of the Kurdistan Regional Government (Arts. 113, 137), the ethno-religious violence characteristic of the country since, began to erupt. The formation of Iraqi Kurdistan did little to address the needs of the Syriac-Assyrians, Turkmen, and Yazidis in N. Iraq. Western allies must sure-

ly now rue the day its aims to do good – by demanding destruction of WMD held by Saddam Hussain and later confronting ISIS¹³⁰ – became a rod to beat its back geopolitically. As the complex story of the Iraqi Kurds (again) confirms, inadequate intelligence includes ignorance of, and/or disregard for, the cultural history, unique identity and socio-political aspiration of proud ‘minority’ peoples.



Fig. 26: Sulaimaniyah, Iraq

iv. Syria. (Fig. 27) As noted above, Kurds constitute the largest historic minority in Syria (ca. 9-10% of the pop.) with many of Turkish extraction. However, the Civil War (15 March 2011 – present) has caused their numbers to decline significantly.¹³¹ As in Turkey, Syrian Kurds have a long history of civil strife and cultural abuse. However complex historically and confusing interpretatively, like the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, the story of the Kurds in Syria is bound up with place and space. Individual villages and Kurdish quarters in cities,¹³² plains and mountains,¹³³ wells and fortresses, are part of their story. We list names in this section as a reminder ‘place’ matters historically and culturally to Syrian Kurds.

¹³⁰ On ISIS, pp. 8, 23, 49, 59, 65-71.

¹³¹ Cf. ca. 1.6m., in comparison with estimates of their presence in Turkey 14.4-16m, Iran 7.9m, and Iraq 4.7-6.2m.

¹³² E.g., Rukn al-Din or Hayy al Akrad (Lit. Kurdish quarter) in Damascus.

¹³³ E.g., the Plain of Nineveh E/NE of Mosul, the Kurd Mountains or Kurd-Dagh in NW Syria and SE Turkey, the Afrin Plateau NW of Aleppo in what the Ottomans called the ‘Sancak of the Kurds’.

Prior to the Civil War, Kurdish history in Syria has four main phases:

i. Antiquity to the Ayyubid Dynasty (1171-1341). During this period, Kurds were enlisted against Christian Crusaders in the Levant, by the Kurdish Sunni Muslim Sultan, Salah ad-Din or Saladin (1137-1193; r. 1174-1193), whose empire stretched from Damascus to Egypt, from Jazira (Upper Mesopotamia) to Hejaz (western Arabia) and across Yemen, Nubia and parts of NW Africa. Kurdish settlements in Damascus date from this time.¹³⁴ Contemporary Kurdish allegiance to the Damascus region runs deep.

ii. The Ayyubid Dynasty to the end of the Ottoman Empire (1516-1922). During this 400-year period, the Kurds consolidated their position geographically, socially, and politically in Syria and Anatolia. Kurdish tribes, settlements (e.g., from the 17th century in Jarabulus and Seruj on the left bank of the Euphrates), confederations (e.g., the Reshwan and Milan) and dynasties (e.g., the Janbulads around Aleppo), served their own interests and that of their Ottoman overlords. Hence, Kurdish Milli chiefs were appointed *iskan başı* (Lit. Head of Sedentarization) from the mid-18th century onwards, with power to tax and control other tribes. Kurdish allegiance to Raqqah and its environs dates from this period, as does their link to the Khabur Valley and Jazira.¹³⁵ Once nomadic farmers, Kurds were now settled Syrians. To secure their position and demonstrate their loyalty, Kurdish troops took part in ethnic cleansing of Armenian and Assyrian Christians in Upper Mesopotamia between 1914-1920.¹³⁶ We also find them as chiefs and tax farmers¹³⁶ in the Qusayr hills (NW Syria). After the charismatic Milli chieftain Ibrahim Pasa (1843-1908; Ch. 1863-1908) died, the tribe rejected Ottoman rule and settled on the Syrian side of the (new) Turkish border. Kurdish tribalism spread.

¹³⁴ Cf. Hayy al Akrad, the Salhiyya district on Mt. Qasioun, and around Krak des Chevaliers, or Hisn al-Akrad (Lit. Castle of the Kurds) near Homs.

¹³⁵ In 1764, a visitor to Jazira recorded five Kurdish (Dukurie, Kikie, Schechchanie, Mullie and Aschetie) and six Arab tribes (Tay, Kaab, Baggara, Geheish, Diabat and Sherabeh). Kurdish tribes are still found in the cities and villages of Jazira, or today's Hasakah Governate.

¹³⁶ The legacy of this genocide (of Christian Armenians, Syriac-Assyrians and Pontic-Greeks) is seen in inter-ethnic hostility to this day.



Fig. 27: Syria (World Atlas)

iii. 1922 to the end of the French Mandate.¹³⁷ Socio-political and cultural challenges Kurds faced pre-WWI pale in comparison with what followed. First, disappointment when the Treaty of Sèvres (signed by the defeated Ottomans on 10 August 1920) – which named an autonomous Kurdish region (within the new Turkish Republic) in SE Turkey and N Iraq – was never implemented.¹³⁸ Uncertainty, when the new Treaty of Lausanne (24 July 1923) which the Turks, under the revolutionary Field Marshall and 1st President of the new Republic, Mustafa Kamal Atatürk (1881-1938; Pres. 1923-1938), secured after the Turkish War of Inde-

137 According to the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) and the post-WWI settlement, which subdivided the Ottoman Empire, Britain was given oversight of Ottoman Mesopotamia (mod. Iraq) and the southern part of Ottoman Syria (viz. Palestine and Transjordan), while the French were to control (until self-government became a possibility) the rest of Ottoman Syria, Lebanon and Alexandretta (Hatay) and parts of southeastern Turkey. The French Mandate of Syria officially began on 29 September 1923 and ended in 1946.

138 The Treaty of Sèvres envisaged a Kurdish state and an Armenian state. Article 62 named 'Assyri-Chaldeans' (now described as Syriac-Assyrians) as a distinct ethnicity that had the right of 'full safeguards for protection' within designated areas in the proposed Kurdish state. Syriac-Christians have never forgotten this; indeed, the Treaty of Sèvres still informs international reflection on the Kurds, Syriac-Assyrians and region as a whole.

pendence (19 May 1919–24 July 1923),¹³⁹ left the Kurds in limbo between secular Turkey and French Mandate Syria. Though pockets of Kurds (esp. in N. Syria) were granted a separate State (viz. the Druze, Alawites and Christians), a majority became sad citizens in a fluid situation. Displacement, after Turkey suppressed Kurdish uprisings in the 1920s (see above p. 55), and 10,000s of Kurds moved south into French Mandate Syria; specifically, into Jazira, where 700-800 villages in the district of Tigris (later al-Malikiyah and Qamishli) became majority Kurd (*contra* the Arab district of Hasakah). Pockets of Kurdish Alevi Zazas also fled the Turkish army's brutal campaign in Dersim, E. Turkey (20 March–November 1937, 2 January–December 1938) and settled in Mabeta.¹⁴⁰

Though French Mandate Syria offered Turkish Kurds (and other minorities) a safe haven, some autonomy, and occasional military service (esp. the Alawites and Druze), calls for autonomy from Kurds in Jazira and the Iraqi-based Barazi Confederation intensified after formation of the Kurdish nationalist Khoyboun (Kurd. *Qoybûn*) party in 1927. The French authorities resisted these appeals but established a Syrian Republic. In elections held under the new 1930 Syrian Constitution, deputies were returned from the Kurdish regions of Jazira, Jarabulus and Kurd Dagh. Fearing Syrian independence would increase pressure from Arab-leadership in Damascus, a Kurdish-Christian (Catholic and Orthodox) coalition was formed in Jazira and Qamishli.¹⁴¹ Battlelines for later conflict were being drawn.

iv. The end of the French Mandate to the Syrian Arab Republic. Life for Syrian

139 Cf. with the Ottoman empire in decline, and vast tracts of Turkey reassigned at the end of WWI, the Turkish National Movement under Atatürk reasserted Turkish independence in a series of operations against Greece, Armenia, France and Britain and any in cities, towns and villages who did not embrace Atatürk's vision of a united, homogeneous, secular Republic.

140 NB. on 23 November 2011, Turkish President Tayyip Recep Erdoğan (b. 1954; Pres. 2014-present) apologized for the military's genocidal actions in Dersim, calling it 'one of the most tragic events of our near history'. Political sceptics read this apology as an opportunistic move against the main opposition party, the secular CHP.

141 NB. these concerns were validated when the French resisted further calls for an autonomous Kurdish state and annexed the Alawite and Druze States within the new Syrian Republic. One of the key Kurdish leaders at the time was Hasan Hajo Agha (d. 1940), chief of the Heverkan tribe. In time, the great-grandfather of a Kurdish dynasty, Hajo Agha emerged as a key leader of the the Kurdish nationalist Qoybûn party and the representative for Jazira. Christians were led by the Syriac Catholic Patriarch Gabriel I Tappouni (1879-1968), and by the Armenian Catholic Michel Dôme, president of the Qamishli municipality. For a study of this period, see B.T. White (2012), *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: The Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press). According to White, we see the terms and categorizations 'minority' and minorities emerge at this time. In retrospect, it is not difficult to see how, in the wrong hands, these terms could be deployed as politically repressive gestures to project vested local interests or controlling international agendas. Words, as we now know well, make worlds.

Kurds since the French Mandate has been tough, with conflict becoming endemic to Syria and MENA. The 1948 Arab-Israeli War, drafting of a Second Syrian Constitution (1950), election of two ethnically Kurdish (but ineffective) Presidents (Husni al-Za'im [1897-1949; Pres. 1949] and Adib al-Shishakli [1909-1964; Pres. 1953-1954]), who failed to protect Kurdish interests, and formation of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria (KDPS) in 1957¹⁴² – and its later suppression by the United Arab Republic (of Syria and Egypt; 1958-1961)¹⁴³ – increased pressure on Kurds. The 1962 Jazira census (purportedly to check the scale of Kurdish immigration from Turkey) made matters worse. The nationality of 120,000 Kurds, including settled Syrian Kurds, was repudiated or recategorized as *ajanib* (Lit. foreigners) or, if unlisted, *maktumin* (Lit. unregistered); that is, without identity, status, or rights to property, education or political representation. Pro-Damascus Arabs and Assyrians were allotted confiscated Kurdish property. Government slogans declared 'Save Arabism in Jazira!' and 'Fight the Kurdish Menace!'. Discovery of oil in Kurdish regions and the Barzani uprising in Iraq (1961-70), sparked cross-border conflict and creation of a 10-15km. 'Arab cordon' along the Turkish border in Jazira (1965).



The Economist

142 The KDPS continues as a subversive Kurdish movement.

143 After the 1961 coup d'état, Syria seceded from the union, but Egypt continued to be known as the United Arab Republic until 1971. Other iterations of Arab alliances followed with the Federation of Arab Republics (Syria, Egypt and Libya: 1972-1977) and the Arab Islamic Republic (Tunisia and Libya: 1974). Pan-Arabist consciousness is an important element in explaining opposition to, and suspicion of, the Kurds throughout MENA.

Fig. 28: Kurds in N. Syria (*The Economist*)

The 1970s and 1980s brought little relief. Arabs moved into Kurdish areas and the names of villages were Arabized. Upwards of 140,000 Kurds were relocated to the Al-Raad desert in S. Syria. Softening of anti-Kurdish policy by former President Hafez al Assad (1930-2000; Pres. 1971-2000) was short-lived. Tension persisted. Newroz celebrations in Damascus and Afrin in March 1986 turned violent.¹⁴⁴ In March 2004, Syrian security forces fired on Kurdish supporters at a football match in Qamishli (Fig. 28), killing (some reports claim) 65 people and later arresting and torturing 100s of others. In the face of international criticism, state sponsored strategies to curb Kurdish identity and freedom grew, with Kurdish language (in public), literature, schools and political parties banned, and Arab names for children and businesses enforced. Despite opposition from Damascus, conferences in Washington, DC and Brussels led to the formation of the Kurdistan National Assembly of Syria (KNAS) with a mandate to seek democracy, a distributive federal system, and Human Rights for all in Syria. This vision still inspires many Syrian Kurds, but the Civil War has driven many to want an autonomous Kurdish administration in N. and E. Syria, while others dream of an autonomous W. Kurdistan (akin to Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government).

Pressure on the Kurds should be put in context. In the UNHCHR's 2009 report 'Persecution and Discrimination against Kurdish Citizens in Syria', we read

Successive Syrian governments continued to adopt a policy of ethnic discrimination and national persecution against Kurds, completely depriving them of their national, democratic and human rights – an integral part of human existence. The government imposed ethnically-based programs, regulations and exclusionary measures on various aspects of Kurds' lives – political, economic, social and cultural.¹⁴⁵

The one-party Ba'athist¹⁴⁶ regimes of Bashar Hafez al-Assad (b. 1965; Pres. 2000-present) and his father have suppressed all forms of non-Arab cultural identity, with multi-ethnic NE Syria particularly hard hit. Though other dynamics have entered during the Civil War in Syria, the government's cultural agenda has driven embattled minorities to violence.

¹⁴⁴ The festival remains a flashpoint for conflict.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. 'Persecution and Discrimination against Kurdish Citizens in Syria', Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. 2009.

¹⁴⁶ Secular Arab Ba'athist (Lit. renaissance, resurrection) ideology, as defined and demonstrated by Hussain's Iraq and the Assads' Syria, advocates the creation and flourishing of a unified Arab state under a dynamic single party.

v. Trans-Caucasus and diaspora Kurds. (Fig. 29) Pan-Kurdish consciousness has grown since the end of WWI. The Kurds in Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and the West deserve our attention. The Kurdish presence in Jewanshir and E. Zangazur led in the 1920's to the short-lived Kurdish Okrug, or 'Red Kurdistan'. Armenian Kurds in the Soviet era were a protected 'minority' with rights to their own (state-sanctioned) newspaper, radio programmes and cultural activities. Muslim Azeri and non-Yazidi Kurds suffered, however, in the early 20th-century conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh (Fig. 28), which twice turned into full-scale war (1992-1994, 2020). This led to persecution and deportation of Kurds by Soviet and Armenian authorities.



Fig. 29: Kurds in Trans-Caucasus (ResearchGate)

A similar deterioration in Kurdish conditions can be seen when large numbers fled persecution in Iraq and Iran in the 1980s and 1990s. In the UK, where they have (at times controversially) settled in large numbers in West London and in Dewsbury, W. Yorkshire, resentment has been felt by (traditionalist) Muslims. Similar tensions are reported between Kurds and other Muslim communities in Europe and parts of N. America. Pan-Kurdish consciousness notes this and reacts.

In this brief introduction to the Kurds, we can see disturbing trends. A large, scattered, ethnic community (misleadingly designated a 'minority') repeatedly connected to conflict and coercion, marginalization and mistreatment. If com-

mon decency does not inspire sympathy, perhaps the dispersion and discontent of refugee Kurds in various parts of the EU will. To understand the level and rationale for their discontent, we turn to our second question.

B. What impact has EU and Western Alliance involvement in the two Gulf Wars and Civil War in Syria had on the perception and behaviour of ethnic and religious minorities in the region?

We enter here a widely reported, but little understood, chapter in the history of minorities in the MENA region; namely, from the eruption of civil violence in Syria in March 2011, after the sequential civic uprisings of the ‘Arab Spring’ (December 2010 to December 2012), to the present. This period saw the explosive impact of three incendiary forces on an already volatile situation.

I. Three incendiary forces

a. Allied Western military. Allied troops, headed by the US and UK, first deployed in January and February 1991 to drive Iraqi troops from Kuwait after its annexation; then from March 2003 to December 2011, according to US President George W. Bush (b. 1946; Pres. 2001-2009) and British Prime Minister Tony Blair (b. 1953; PM 1997-2007), ‘to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussain’s support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people’; and, thereafter, to support successive attempts to create a stable, inclusive Iraqi society. Since 2011, Western coalition troops have protected endangered minorities from attack by Syrian security forces and IS. They have fought with Arab, Kurdish, Russian and Syriac-Assyrian troops, and others to block creation and/or expansion of an Islamist caliphate by IS and to protect historic sites and communities in Iraq, Syria, and other parts of MENA.

b. ISIS. Anti-Western Muslim feeling assumed a new, violent, form in the variously named jihadist group that became Islamic State (IS) in 2014.¹⁴⁷ Though the ideological origins and character of IS are debated, it clearly owes much to the radical Egyptian educator Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), who provided intellectual leadership to the Muslim Brotherhood’s original vision of a new Caliphate ruled by *sharia* law. Less clear, given IS’s preference for self-interpretation of the *Qur’an* and Muslim tradition, is its debt to the Salafi theology of medieval scholar Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328). Alongside Sayyid Qutb, IS venerated the Palestinian Sunni scholar and influential Salafist jihadist Abdullah Yusuf Azzam (1941-1989) and to

¹⁴⁷ The group was also known at times as ISIL (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), and by the Arabic acronym Daesh.

Mohammad Hasan Khalil al-Hakim (*aka* Abu Jihad al-Masri and poss. Abu Bakr Naji), who was killed in a US airstrike in Pakistan on 31 October 2008. Founded by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (1966–2006) in 1999, as an Al-Qaeda associate in its fight against the US and coalition invasion of Iraq in 2003, IS and its self-appointed first Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (1971–2019; Cal. 2014–2019) came to prominence in 2014 when their offensive in W. Iraq led to the defeat of Iraqi security forces, capture of Mosul, and slaughter of thousands of Yazidis in Sinjar. By December 2015, IS controlled an area from W. Iraq to E. Syria, with 8–12m. people subject to a strict interpretation of *sharia* law. Russian and coalition forces inflicted heavy casualties on IS. In July 2017, IS lost control of Mosul and then Raqqa, to SDF forces. By December 2017 IS had been driven underground and in March 2019 its last forces were defeated in the symbolic Battle of Baghuz Fawqani.

c. Anti-Western agents. We should not overlook raw anti-Western feeling and its sponsorship by hostile states and militant minorities set on disrupting and defeating Western interests when and wherever they are expressed, including in Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran. The Civil War in Syria has expanded the pool of interested parties in the region. With the threat of the West consolidating its position in MENA and building useful alliances with grateful nations and communities, Russia, Turkey, Iran, China, and other powers inimical to the West, have sought opportunities to wrestle and meddle overtly and covertly in the ongoing struggle to drain, discredit, and ultimately defeat the Western Alliance. *External* engagement by major states rarely fails to draw in other adversarial major state interest.

The geopolitical after-shock of the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York, on 11 September 2001, are seen in the twenty-year period covered by this section. Deep engagement with human motivation, religion and culture in all parties in the conflicts described, is essential. The rationale for EU and Western Alliance involvement in the Gulf and Iraq Wars, Civil War in Syria, and fight against IS, is as complex as the competing energies and agendas of their regional allies and enemies. Superficial analysis and shallow diplomacy are unlikely to yield accurate insight, balanced judgement, or lasting peace.

II. Seven outcomes of EU and Western Alliance engagement with ethnic and religious minorities from the Gulf War to the present

To focus and process a vast body of material, the report reviews now *seven of the most significant outcomes* of EU and Western Alliance engagement with ethnic and religious minorities from the Gulf War to the present, and especially from the start of the Civil War in Syria. Consideration of these outcomes will help us prepare for the final section of this Case Study (on the lessons to be learned that

reinforce, correct, or expand those already identified in Case Studies I and II) and the Conclusion (where the report identifies strategic action points for policy and policymakers).

a. *Protection* – from Saddam Hussayn, President Bashir al-Assad, Turkey, ISIS, other minorities, and proactive enemies of the West. The simple fact is however contentious EU and Western Alliance engagement in conflicts in MENA since the Gulf War, and especially since the beginning of the Civil War in Syria in March 2011, many lives have been saved and worse violence prevented. Few security experts doubt that had Saddam Hussayn not been stopped, the brutality of his regime would have continued, if not worsened; likewise, President Assad’s oppression of non-Arab minorities in Syria, ISIS’s brutalizing of non-Salafi ‘infidels’, President Erdoğan’s anti-Kurdish aggression, internecine violence between ethnic minorities, and the invidious empowering of anti-Western agents by Russia, Iran, China and whomever. What’s more, though controversial, we should pay tribute to the sacrifice made by the US and her (35) Western allies in preparations to defend Saudi Arabia in ‘Operation Desert Shield’ (2 August 1990–17 January 1991), in the military campaign ‘Operation Desert Storm’ (ODS, 17 January 1991–28 February 1991), and in the ongoing support (primarily by the US air force), in the deliberately named ‘Operation Inherent Resolve’ (OIR, 15 June 2014–present),¹⁴⁸ of the Iraqi security forces and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in related actions against ISIL (Arab. *Daesh*) in Syria and Libya. The full cost to all involved in lives, limbs, minds, and military expenditure, is unimaginable. Tragically, 146 US and 47 UK troops were killed in ‘Operation Desert Storm’ (out of a total of 250 allied casualties), while 107 military personnel have been killed to-date in ‘Operation Inherent Resolve’. In the May 2021 report from the Combined Joint Task Force, we read:

Since the beginning of operations in 2014, the Coalition and partner forces have liberated nearly 110,000 square kilometers (42,471 square miles) from *Daesh*, eliminating their self-proclaimed territorial caliphate and freeing 7.7m. people from *Daesh* oppression. The Coalition will continue to work with partner forces to deny *Daesh* any physical space and influence in the region as well as deny *Daesh* the resources they need to resurge. The Coalition conducted 34,984 strikes between August 2014

¹⁴⁸ N.B. this comment from CENTCOM officials: ‘[T]he name INHERENT RESOLVE is intended to reflect the unwavering resolve and deep commitment of the U.S. and partner nations in the region and around the globe to eliminate the terrorist group ISIL and the threat they pose to Iraq, the region and the wider international community. It also symbolizes the willingness and dedication of coalition members to work closely with our friends in the region and apply all available dimensions of national power necessary—diplomatic, informational, military, economic—to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL.’

and the end of May 2021. During this period, based on information available, CJTF-OIR assesses at least 1,417 civilians have been unintentionally killed by Coalition actions since the beginning of Operation Inherent Resolve.¹⁴⁹

The figures speak for themselves. Every death and maimed life is a bitter tragedy. The losses in action against Saddam Hussain, President Assad, ISIS/*Daesh* and other hostile forces are, to those who led the US and allied coalition into these conflicts, the price of protection and freedom in the MENA region.¹⁵⁰

ii. *Internationalization*. Part of the cost and complexity of conflict in the MENA region since the Gulf War has been its internationalization. This is evident in a number of ways. As we have seen, Western coalition forces opted – and were invited – to join the fight against regimes, troops and ideologies deemed inimical to the West and destructive of regional cultural identity and inclusive human flourishing. Whether or not we agree with this action, its effect has been to bring international actors into national and regional conflicts, and conversely to globalize those conflicts because of the identities and loyalties of the parties involved. Ideological and ethnic minorities gain disproportionate power in a global village. Major states are humbled in asymmetric warfare. EU and Western Alliance engagement with minorities is forced to reckon with the recalibrated power differentials that radical ideologies and suicide bombers effect. To critics and analysts, Western action in the Gulf and Iraq Wars and Civil War in Syria inflamed jihadist zeal and inspired terrorist retaliation on the streets of Europe. By December 2015, an estimated 30,000 fighters from 85 countries had joined forces with ISIS, a surprising number from Belgium and other parts of Europe. It is estimated that in 2021 15% of these foreign troops were converts to jihadist ideology and 18% of them engaged in terrorist activity in their own country after serving with IS. The simple fact is, media coverage, family and tribal loyalty, social networks and jihadist preaching on-line and in person, turned local conflicts into a global war. But internationalization does not equate to agreement or consistency: terrorist attacks threaten (deliberately) EU and Western Alliance cooperation and accord; terrorism is itself threatened internally by competitive zeal, leadership disputes and the unplanned (at times unwanted) publicity of ‘lone wolf’ actions. As noted in general terms, *external* EU and Western Alliance policies have *internal* impacts. The next two points explore in more detail how the EU and Western Alliance and minorities are impacted in this process.

149 Cf. <https://www.inherentresolve.mil/Portals/14/CJTF-OIR>

150 To put these figures in perspective, as of June 2021 anywhere between 495,000 and 600,000 opposition activists have been killed in the Syrian Civil War.

iii. *Diminution*. Focusing on minorities first. *External* international interventions in the two Gulf Wars and Civil War in Syria, while confronting oppressive regimes and radical ideologies, have diminished minorities numerically, psychologically, culturally and socio-economically.¹⁵¹ Conflict has unintended consequences. Collateral damage of every kind occurs. In the name and act of ‘liberation’ by major states, embattled minorities are confronted in new ways by their vulnerability and dependency, their weakness and painful cultural history. Freedom can open old wounds. In pockets of peace, the horrors of lost identity and innocence, of loved ones and livelihoods, of homes and memories, intensify. Refugee camps and displacement bring little comfort. As we know, good intentions can have dire consequences: as here, an unpredictable war can produce an excruciating peace. The precious gifts of self-worth and self-determination are quickly lost and hard to regain. An individual and communal sense of diminution and marginalization, of manipulation and insignificance, of physical and psychological abuse, and of political and cultural irrelevance, is an almost indelible stain on the memory and psyche. International Relations and diplomacy face this complex ‘affective’ aspect of minority identity; not least, as here, because of *external* international involvement in MENA since the Gulf War. Integration of this complex ‘affective’ dimension in EU and Western Alliance assessment of their actions is vital. It may serve to reassure critics that Western and coalition actions and intentions have been subject to severe internal scrutiny.

iv. *Inflation*. If minorities can be diminished by major state actions, the converse is also true, the power and international profile of ‘major states’ are *inflated* by *external* engagement with minorities in complex and conflicted settings. More than this, international actions and decisions can wittingly and unwittingly serve to *inflate* the power and international profile of a national or regional majority at the expense of local, ethnic and religious minorities. Since the latter has a direct impact on perceived, and actual, power-differentials in a country or region, it needs to be scrutinized and evaluated. As above, good intentions can have adverse effects. Diplomatic insensitivity not only *diminishes* minorities, it fosters suspicion, increases defensiveness of identity and ‘rights’, and galvanizes resistance to cooperation. The impact of diplomatic and political *inflation* is evident throughout

151 According to a recent World Bank report, in addition to more than 350,000 verifiable deaths, more than half of the country’s 21m. population has been displaced and economic activity has shrunk by 50%. The report states: ‘The social and economic impact of the conflict is also large—and growing. A lack of sustained access to health care, education, housing, and food have exacerbated the effects of the conflict and pushed millions of people into unemployment and poverty.’ In its study of the impact of the war on Aleppo, Idlib and Hama and 2017 ‘Toll of War’ report, the World Bank calculated GDP losses to Syria to be \$226bn (viz. 4x the Syrian GDP in 2010). The economic impact is reckoned to be 20x the physical destruction on the country.

the Gulf Wars and Civil War in Syria. To critics, post-9/11, EU and Western Alliance action was intended to protect and extend Western interests and to promote and prosper Western values. Geopolitically, this has had the adverse effect of coalescing opposition to the West. Regionally, a parallel process of *inflation* has led to majority violence against minority parties. Hence, Russia has turned its initial support for coalition action against ISIS into deliberate anti-Western assistance to President Assad; while, in northeastern Syria the Arab majority, once backed by the West to fight ISIS, have turned with impunity on the Kurdish, Christian and Yazidi minorities. We will look at the details of the impact of enhanced majority power and profile in v. and vi. below: for now, the point to note is the disproportionate impact major state engagement has on major state diplomacy *and* on minorities. *Inflation* is as corrosive of self-perception and relationships as *diminution*: sensitivity, proportion, identity, and respect are lost in both.

v. *Empowerment and endangerment.* Following on from the last point, the effect of EU and Western Alliance engagement with minorities in the MENA region since the Gulf War, and especially since the start of the Civil War in Syria, can be seen in the deliberate – and, at times, accidental - empowerment of some minorities and knowing endangerment of others. Returning to the Kurds in Iraq and Syria, since 2011 coalition strategy has backed the Kurds and largely ignored the plight of the Yazidis and Syrian Assyrians in Iraq and Syria. Neither policy has benefitted the minorities in question: the Kurds have been tagged as stooges of the West and deserving of the harshest treatment, while the Yazidis and Syrian Assyrians have suffered unprotected. The big picture battle against ISIS has left many to suffer much in local skirmishes. Even the good intention to confront oppressive regimes and jihadist extremism is mired in the mud and blood of increased instability, internecine ethnic conflict, international politics and accusations of opportunism, favouritism and bias: and this, note, despite explicit policy statements to the contrary. Here's the introduction to the EU Foreign Affairs Council's policy statement (23 May 2016) on the future of Syria and Iraq:

The EU reaffirms the commitment it first made in the EU Regional Strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the *Da'esh* threat in March 2015 to achieving lasting peace, stability, security in Syria, Iraq and the wider region, ending the suffering of the people of Syria and Iraq, and preserving the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-confessional character of Syrian and Iraqi societies as well as the rich cultural heritage of the region. In this effort, the EU will mobilise all the political, security and development resources required.¹⁵²

152 <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9105-2016-INIT/en/pdf>

This remains the EU's official position on the future of Syria and Iraq. However, despite repeated approaches, third-party mediation and ongoing protest from human rights groups, representatives of AANES (the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, also known as Rojava) have been consistently excluded from EU conferences on the future of Syria (to which, implausibly to many, Turkish and Iranian delegates have been invited),¹⁵³ despite AANES and the SDF¹⁵⁴ cooperating with coalition forces in the fight against ISIS.¹⁵⁵ Loyalty to friends and allies has been unimpressively absent in major state engagement with ethnic minorities: justified by *real politik*, it can offend local cultural *mores* and compromise trust.

vi. *Conscientization*. As in other situations of socio-political, racial, and economic discrimination, one of the most significant outcomes of EU and Western Alliance engagement with ethnic and religious minorities in MENA since the Gulf War has been what sociologists and political theorists call 'conscientization'; that is, minorities have become (more) politically and culturally self-aware and actively engaged in addressing perceived injustices. Though this process may have begun before 1991, there can be little doubt that its effects have become more marked since. External and internal pressures have intensified minority self-awareness and inspired calls for, and actions to achieve, political autonomy and cultural independence. As we have seen, Kurdish history is interlaced with a longing for an autonomous Kurdistan. This social, political, and cultural narrative continues to this day. However, as the Civil War in Syria reveals all too clearly, self-awareness and a quest for autonomy can legitimate conflict and lead to ethnic competitiveness. Ideology, like identity politics, fragments. As we have seen, cultural sensitivity can be aggressive and defensive. Like the first two Case Studies, Case

153 NB. without explanation, on 11 April 2018, EEAS (the European External Action Service) cancelled a meeting with a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and gender balanced AANES delegation from Syria. No reason was given. To-date, no AANES representative has been invited to any of the five EU conferences on the future of Syria. The 2019 EU Syria conference praised Turkey for its role in Syria (after Turkish extremists occupied Afrin) despite human rights groups identifying ethnic cleansing in Afrin. The EU has consistently identified the UN peace talks in Geneva as the only road to a political solution for Syria, despite the exclusion of AANES from this process. France has, however, invited AANES to meetings with President Macron. EU Foreign Ministries have consistently avoided engagement with AANES (and the Syrian Defence Force [SDF], the de facto military arm of AANES), while encouraged to do so Parliaments of Member States.

154 Cf. the Syrian Defence Force [SDF], the de facto military arm of AANES.

155 Cf. EU and Western Alliance troops joined with the SDF to fight ISIS. Kurds, Syrians and Yazidis were all part of the military offensive against ISIS. UK and French Special Forces were in action in NE Syria, while other EU states (i.e., The Netherlands) provided air support. Without AANES and SDF, the EU and Western Alliance would not have been able to defeat ISIS and prevent its resurgence. This reality has, it seems, been conveniently overlooked by EU foreign policy makers.

Study III admits appeals by ethnic minorities, and their international allies, for political, cultural, and religious freedom and the (human) right to be heard, respected, settled and safe: calls which have frequently gone unheeded by regional and international ‘majorities’.

Lest the last point be left at the level of generality, three instances of conscientization from the Civil War in Syria deserve note. First, ISIS advances in Iraq, and its genocidal action against Yazidis in Sinjar and Syriac Assyrians on the Nineveh Plain, led to new calls from inside and outside those communities for greater self-governance and powers of self-defense in their historic homelands. Second, in his report for the 12th session of the UNHRC, ‘Persecution and Discrimination against Kurdish Citizens in Syria’ (2009), the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reported:

Successive Syrian governments [have] continued to adopt a policy of ethnic discrimination and national persecution against Kurds, completely depriving them of their national, democratic and human rights – an integral part of human existence. The government imposed ethnically-based programs, regulations and exclusionary measures on various aspects of Kurds’ lives – political, economic, social and cultural.¹⁵⁶

Assad’s Arabization agenda has merely intensified Kurdish ethnic consciousness and loyalty. Third, with the outbreak of war in 2011 many Syriac-Assyrians (but not all) allied themselves with the Assad regime. The Syriac(-Assyrian) Union Party (est. 2005) joined with the Kurdish PYD and the Arab Shammar tribe to work and fight for autonomy for NE Syria. When Assad’s campaign turned to suppress Kurdish western Syria, this new northeastern alliance filled the void despite fierce Islamist attacks. As throughout the Syrian Civil War, ethnically diverse units of the Syrian Democratic Force¹⁵⁷ have united to fight with ever-increasing conscientization of their shared plight at the hands of the Assad regime and other hostile powers.¹⁵⁸ The Social Contract, which emerged from dialogue between oppressed

¹⁵⁶ ‘Persecution and Discrimination against Kurdish Citizens in Syria’, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2009.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. the Syriac Defence Force and its political associates include the Kurdish Democratic Union party or PYD (Kurdish: Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat), the Kurdish People’s Defense/Protection Units or YPG (Kurdish: Yekîneyên Parastina Gel), the Assyrian Syriac Military Council or MFS (Syriac: Mawtbo Fulhoyo Suryoyo), the Syriac Union Party or SUP (Syriac [romanized]: Gabo d’Huyodo Suryo) and multiple Arab self-defense forces.

¹⁵⁸ In 2013, various anti-government and anti-Western/infidel Islamist groups, including the particularly aggressive Salafist jihadist group Al Nusra Front (otherwise known as Jabhat Fatah al-Sham [Lit. Front for the Conquest of Syria/the Levant] and, from 2016, as al-Qaeda in Syria or al-Qaeda in

minorities in Syria, assigns equal status and dignity to all. Conscientization need not mean societal fragmentation. When the Cantons of Afrin, Kobane and Jazira (Syriac: *Ponyotho d'Gozarto*) were formed under the Social Contract in early 2014, religion was not named, and the rights of women were. AANES is built on a vision of multi-ethnic/-lingual communities collaborating in safety and harmony.

vii. *Regionalism or Localism*. The rise of ISIS, and the allied Western military response from 2014, intensified markedly different expressions of regionalism or localism in Iraq and Syria. In both contexts, the Western response was characteristically ill-informed and inconsistent. In Iraq, the Kurds were courted as a better partner to counter ISIS than Baghdad: but anti-Kurdish sentiment in Ba'athist Syria repudiated the decision, and sullied the reputation, of the West. In Syria, Western allies were slow to cooperate with the Kurdish YPG and MFS when ISIS began to brutalize the Yazidis and besiege Kobane. In time, however, US air cover (e.g., in the Tal-Abyad operation¹⁵⁹) turned into training and equipping the new Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF),¹⁶⁰ AANES's official defense force. Under pressure from Turkish President Erdoğan, who saw affinities between the YPG in Syria and Kurdish nationalist PKK in Turkey, the US restricted its training to a (notional) 'Syrian Arab Coalition' of troops, thus appeasing President Erdoğan but perpetuating ethnic discrimination AANES explicitly opposed. But there are more twists to the tale of EU and Western Alliance engagement with regional and local dynamics in northern Syria. With ISIS a persisting threat, the coalition finally armed Kurds and Syriac-Assyrians in the SDF. They proved to be indispensable in the campaign which ended finally in March 2019, with the loss of ca. 11,000 SDF troops. Only France in the International Coalition recognized the importance of AANES and the value of the SDF. No other EU Member State admitted to cooperating militarily with the SDF or opened the door to dialogue with AANES. Indeed, the policy of appeasing President Erdoğan let him invade and 'cleanse' the Kurds from the NW Syrian Canton of Afrin in 2018. The action was glossed over by European agencies. This did not, however, happen in 2019 when President Trump announced the withdrawal of US troops from Syria and Turkey opportunistically captured two NE Syrian border towns. Surprised by the strength of American Christian sympathy for the Kurds and Syriac-Assyrian Christians, President Trump reversed his decision, while President Putin pres-

the Levant), which sought to establish an Islamic state in and beyond Syria, were driven out of NE Syria.

159 Otherwise known as the Martyr Rubar Qamişlo, this operation (in the northern Raqqa Governorate) in late-May 2015 sought to capture the strategic border town of Tel-Abyad and secure the link between the (historically Kurdish) Cantons of Kobanî and Jazira.

160 N.B. founding members of the SDF were the YPG, MFS and the 'Forces of the Brave', or al-Sanadid troops, of the Shammar tribe.

sured President Erdoğan to withdraw his troops. AANES and the SDF suddenly became more interesting to EU representatives, and aid flowed into the border region.¹⁶¹ How fickle and flawed EU and Western Alliance diplomacy can be. How striking that AANES's cultural and ethnic inclusivity more accurately reflects EU policy. For all its flaws, EU and Western Alliance diplomacy since the start of the Civil War has had to contend with significant, and persistent, regional variations in the attitudes, actions and alliances of individual ethnic minorities. Because of this, a standard approach to the Kurds, Syriac-Assyrians, or Yazidis, for example, has been (virtually) impossible. But that is the price of engagement, and that is why enculturated knowledge is so important.

More could be said of the impact of EU and Western Alliance engagement with minorities in MENA from the start of the Gulf War to the present. In the seven outcomes above, we see some of the risks of unnuanced diplomacy and consequences of unprincipled, inconsistent, and ill-informed Western policymaking. If 'the rest' do not love 'the West', we sometimes have only ourselves to blame.

C. What lessons can be learned from this Case Study that reinforce, correct, or expand those already identified in Case Studies I and II?

The deeper historical and cultural analysis in Case Study III has provided important resources to reinforce, correct and expand Case Studies I and II. EU policy makers and researchers will draw their own conclusions from the material presented. However, the authors of this report believe three points deserve particular mention in the conclusion to this Case Study.

a. *Ethnic identity is both fixed and fluid.* Focusing on the Kurds has allowed us to see in new ways the importance and impact of history in modern Kurdish consciousness. However, hopes for a 'Greater Kurdistan' and for 'Iraqi Kurdistan' or autonomous Kurdish states in Turkey or Syria, compete for ascendancy in modern Kurdish consciousness. Though the Kurds are rightly identified as a distinct (and substantial) ethnic minority they are wrongly conflated as *one* ethnic minority: theirs is a not uncommon *composite cultural identity*, which is susceptible to local, regional and political variation and adjustment. Enculturated diplomatic intelligence will factor this into policy and planning. Furthermore, the composite character of Kurdish identity sets them apart from the Uyghurs and Baluch in whom cultural coherence and consistency are more marked.

¹⁶¹ Under this heading, we should note how low-key EU diplomatic engagement with AANES included repatriating the children of European ISIS fighters.

b. *Minority behaviour is pro-active and re-active.* Study of minority behaviour in MENA since the Gulf War has helped to show how it is a complex cultural, socio-political and psychological phenomenon. Whereas the protests of Uyghurs in Xinjiang (and elsewhere) are essentially *re-active* (to PRC government abuse), like the Baluch in Pakistan, the Kurds across MENA can be seen to be both *pro-active* (in asserting Kurdish identity and rights) and *re-active* (to various forms of constraint, oppression and violence). In light of this, the fluidity of minority identity should be seen as a dynamic reality that is charged and changed by the forces that surround it. International actors and minority neighbours both contribute to this process; and, as we have seen, *external* international involvement can directly determine *internal* minority consciousness and behaviour. Diplomacy is rightly reminded that actions and decisions cause reactions and consequences. Like a skillful chess-player, engagement with minorities requires foresight and informed anticipation. Too often, EU and Western Alliance engagement in MENA since the Gulf War has been short-sighted and insensitive to potential impacts of its actions.

c. *Context is always a contingent and provisional reality.* The story of the Kurds, in all its diversity and tragedy, is a stark reminder that cultural awareness is not the only resource required of diplomats and politicians. Historians and anthropologists may usefully chart the path of ethnic evolution and identity: other resources are needed to absorb into analysis the vagaries of events and personalities, victory and defeat. As such the concept of 'context' is rightly recategorized as a contingent, provisional reality. Analysis of minority actions and reactions in the Civil War in Syria are, for example, inadequately explained as the product of *either* minority identities *or* national/international decisions: they are essentially *complex* phenomena, better explained by 'complexity theory' or 'game theory' than the antiquated theories of International Relations. A new world requires *and provides* new resources to interpret and engage the random responses of a multi-polar, multi-ethnic context.

CONCLUSION

The three Cases Studies in this report have highlighted the predicament of the Uyghurs, Baluch and Kurds. In the history, culture and dynamics of their present plight, we have discovered clues to sharpening EU foreign and domestic policy-making. Six stand out for the writers of this report.

Six strategic proposals

i. *Investment in ongoing cultural analysis of minorities.* Rather than dismissing minorities as of peripheral significance and minimal value, the report urges EU Foreign Ministers to ensure that they and their staff are culturally literate with respect to ethnic minorities they encounter on a regular basis. Failure to do this can, as this report reveals, exacerbate foreign and domestic tensions, which could cost the EU far more than the price of a small team of dedicated analysts. We would recommend the EU establish a specialist Secretariat (perhaps within the EEAS) tasked with procurement and management of data, and the *formulation and implementation of policy?* relating to minorities as a resource for every Member State. This intermediary body – perhaps headed by a ‘Special Envoy for Ethnic Minorities’ – would also be charged with safeguarding *continuity in spirit and content* between the EU’s *internal* and *external* policies and practices with respect to minorities. The Special Envoy would also be commissioned to ensure non-state actors and minorities were inducted into EU protocols and structures, kept apprised of EU policy and programmes, and afforded support when voicing concerns and seeking help.

ii. *Inviting specialist regional commentary.* As Case Study I makes clear, there is more to the situation in Xinjiang than the brutal treatment of the Uyghurs. A ‘systems’ approach casts significant light on methods and strategies for engaging the PRC government. As this Case Study reveals, an alternative methodology - and the new data it highlights - offers some new diplomatic options which a more limited Human Rights, or economic, approach misses. Narrow thinking offers limited possibilities: the bandwidth for enculturated, ethical foreign policy is, and must be, broad, joined up and analytical.

iii. *Invoking history, ethics, culture, and religion in diplomatic dialogue.* The crisis for the Baluch is rooted in history and in a host of cultural, ethical and religious issues. The pathway to putting constructive pressure on Pakistan and its regional neighbours and allies, however hard and unattractive, lies in naming and not avoiding these (on this, see further below, #vi). Silence is a poor substitute for honesty and integrity, and a weak basis for trust and accord. Respect from the

Baluch (and other minorities) will be earned more by parties who ‘hear’ their issues and interpret them fairly, than by those who pretend attention, remain unmoved, and/or impose their own solution.

iv. *Challenging terminology.* As we saw in Case Study III, ‘minority’ is misleadingly applied to the Kurds. Words create and destroy worlds. EU Foreign Policy should be as attentive to the ‘diplomatic correctness’ of terms as it is the ‘political correctness’ of terminology within the EU. Consistency in policy and standards between the EU’s international and internal theory and actions is essential. Tension grows when rules are not consistently applied. The training of front-line Member State officials might helpfully employ various forms of intellectual and cultural role-play or gaming with experts, to heighten awareness of potential and probable reactions to EU policy and behaviour.

v. *Checking information flow on minorities in and between EU Foreign Ministers, Foreign Ministries in Member States, the European Council, the Council of Europe and the EEAS.* Careful consideration needs to be given to the construction of ‘early warning’ systems and practical educational toolkits.¹⁶² Both of these can, and should, be developed to ensure high quality, up-to-date data and understanding. A points-based metric might also be developed to assist policy formulation. The metric might relate to:

- i. monitoring reputational and security risk
- ii. the type, rationale, and scope of regional and national impacts of minority actions
- iii. major state attitudes and reactions to minorities in general and in relation to specific issues and patterns of behaviour.

vi. An ‘early warning’ system (to pick up ethnic minority unrest or potential exclusion) should involve quantitative and qualitative assessment. The EU and Western Alliance risk reputational damage and international misunderstanding if they are seen to either believe everything minorities claim when (as in the case of the Baluch) difficult ethical issues arise or dismiss whatever a minority says simply because majority powers and other issues are reckoned more important. An ‘early warning’ system will also alert EU member states to the risks they face if or when they forget to believe and celebrate the gift ethnic diversity offers the EU and the world.

¹⁶² N.B. parallel resources already exist in relation to the abuse of human rights religious freedom.

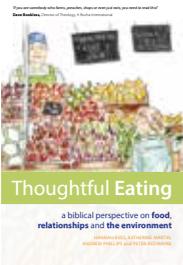
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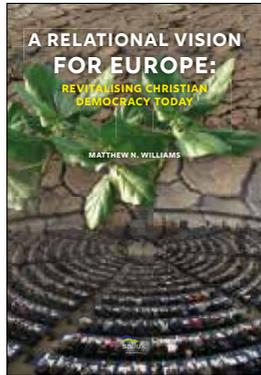


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