

Xinjiang Population Dynamics and Data

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Contents

Preface

I. Population Growth in Xinjiang

II. Latest Demographics of Xinjiang

III. Demographic Changes in the Uygur Population

IV. Factors Contributing to Xinjiang's Demographic Development

V. Xinjiang's Population Prospects

VI. Falsehoods Fabricated by Anti-China Forces

Conclusion

Preface

A healthy population is essential for the existence and development of human society. All economic and social activities are closely related to population. Its growth influences economic and social development, and national security and prosperity.

Lying in northwest China and central Eurasia, Xinjiang has been a place inhabited by multiple ethnic groups since ancient times. In 60 BC, the Western Han Dynasty established the Western Regions Frontier Command to govern the Xinjiang area, officially incorporating the area into the Chinese territory. Over the following 2,000 years and more, various ethnic groups have emerged, divided and mixed there. Today they live together in harmony and have formed a diverse unity.

Work to remedy the backward economic and social situation in Xinjiang began immediately after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. The population of Xinjiang, particularly that of its ethnic minorities, has grown fast in both size and quality, and life expectancy has seen a substantial increase. Today, the region enjoys rapid growth in all areas and a stable and secure society. The ethnic groups there live in peace and contentment, and its population is experiencing healthy and balanced development.

I. Population Growth in Xinjiang

Before the founding of the People's Republic of China, the mode of production in Xinjiang was backward and its productivity was low. Oppressed by foreign invaders, feudal exploiters, and a privileged religious hierarchy, people of all ethnic origins in the region led an extremely hard life with little security.

The population grew very slowly. Historical data show that the population in this vast region never exceeded one million during the 1,800 years from 60 BC to the mid-18th century. When the Qing government set up the post of Ili General as governor of the region in 1762, the local population was less than 300,000, mainly because of the turmoil of war. The region became a province during the Qing Dynasty in 1884. According to *Records of the Xiang Army*, the population in Xinjiang was 1.84 million in 1887. It had grown to 4.33 million by the time of the peaceful liberation in 1949.

Xinjiang entered a new period of rapid population growth after the founding of the PRC. On the one hand, following its economic and social development, living standards

and health care improved, so that the mortality rate fell rapidly and the population growth accelerated markedly. On the other, large numbers of intellectuals and young people streamed into Xinjiang from other parts of the country in response to the government's call to support the development of border areas and areas with large ethnic minority populations. According to data from the first national census conducted in 1953, Xinjiang had a population of 4.78 million, and by the time the second national census was conducted in 1964, its population had increased to 7.27 million, a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.88 percent. The number had grown to 12.33 million by the time China launched reform and opening up in 1978, an increase of 8 million compared to 1949, with a CAGR of 3.67 percent.

Xinjiang's population continued to grow steadily after 1978. According to data from national censuses, the region had 13.08 million people in 1982, then up by 2.08 million to 15.16 million in 1990 with a CAGR of 1.86 percent, and up by a further 3.3 million to 18.46 million in 2000 with a CAGR of 1.99 percent.

The steady growth trend has continued into the 21st century. According to data from the sixth national census conducted in 2010, the population in Xinjiang was 21.82 million, an increase of 3.36 million with a CAGR of 1.68 percent over 2000. Preliminary data from the seventh national census conducted in 2020 showed that the number increased by 4.04 million to reach 25.85 million with a CAGR of 1.71 percent. From 2000 to 2020, Xinjiang's population growth slowed down, but was still 1.15 percentage points higher than the national average in CAGR.

The national censuses show that the ethnic minority population in Xinjiang has grown rapidly over the past seven decades.

Ethnic Minority Population Growth in Xinjiang

Census	Year	Ethnic Minority Population	Increase from Previous Census	CAGR from Previous Census
1st	1953	4,451,500	--	--
2nd	1964	4,948,900	497,400	0.97%
3rd	1982	7,797,500	2,848,600	2.56%
4th	1990	9,461,500	1,664,000	2.45%
5th	2000	10,969,600	1,508,100	1.49%
6th	2010	12,985,900	2,016,300	1.70%
7th	2020	14,932,200	1,946,300	1.41%

II. Latest Demographics of Xinjiang

According to preliminary data from the seventh national census in 2020, the total population of Xinjiang was 25.85 million, among which the Han ethnic group numbered 10.92 million, and ethnic minorities 14.93 million.

Compared with the data from the sixth national census in 2010, Xinjiang ranked fourth among 31 provinces and equivalent administrative units on China's mainland in terms of the population growth rate. It ranked eighth in terms of the actual increase in population over that period. By 2020, Xinjiang's total population ranking had risen from 25th to 21st in the country.

Gender composition: Of Xinjiang's population in 2020, 13.35 million (51.66 percent) were male while 12.5 million (48.34 percent) were female. The male to female ratio was 106.85:100, basically the same as in 2010.

Age breakdown: In 2020, there were 5.81 million in the 0-14 age group, accounting for 22.46 percent; 17.13 million in the 15-59 age group, accounting for 66.26 percent; and 2.92 million in the age group of 60 and above, accounting for 11.28 percent. Compared with 2010, the proportions of people in the age groups from 0 to 14, and 60 and above were up by 2.01 and 1.62 percentage points.

In 2020, Xinjiang's share of people in the 0-14 age group was 4.51 percentage points higher than the national average of 17.95 percent; and its share of people in the age group of 60 and above was 7.42 percentage points lower than the national average of 18.7 percent. The aging of its population was relatively moderate.

Education: The average years of schooling for people aged 15 and above rose from 9.27 years in 2010 to 10.11 years in 2020, 0.2 years higher than the national average of 9.91, and ranking 10th across the nation.

Compared with 2010, the number of people with university education rose from 10,613 to 16,536 per 100,000 persons; those with high school education grew from 11,669 to 13,208; those with middle school education dropped from 36,241 to 31,559; and those with primary education fell from 30,085 to 28,405.

Health: The average life expectancy of people in Xinjiang was 74.7 in 2019, up 2.35 years from 2010. Infant mortality rate, mortality rate for children under five years of age, and maternal mortality rate went down from 26.58 per 1,000, 31.95 per 1,000, and 43.41 per 100,000 in 2010 to 6.75 per 1,000, 10.91 per 1,000, and 17.89 per 100,000 in 2020.

In 2019, practicing doctors and hospital beds per 1,000 persons numbered 2.7 and 7.39, up 0.58 and 1.93 over 2010.

Rural, urban and floating populations: In 2020, there were 14.61 million people living in the urban areas of Xinjiang, accounting for 56.53 percent; 11.24 million living in the rural areas, accounting for 43.47 percent. Compared with 2010, the urban

population increased by 5.28 million and the rural population decreased by 1.24 million. The share of urban population went up by 13.73 percentage points.

As of 2020, the floating population in Xinjiang numbered 8.05 million, with 4.66 million moving within the autonomous region and 3.39 million moving to Xinjiang from other parts of the country. Compared with 2010, the floating population grew by 4.06 million, an increase of 101.78 percent.

Regional distribution: Xinjiang now has 14 prefectural-level areas – 9 in northern Xinjiang and 5 in southern Xinjiang. In the past, there was a big population gap between north and south. The population of southern Xinjiang once accounted for over two thirds of the region’s total. This gap has been gradually bridged thanks to economic and social development.

In 2020, the population of northern Xinjiang was 13.31 million, making up 51.48 percent of the total, up by 1.96 million from 11.35 million in 2010. The population of southern Xinjiang was 12.54 million, accounting for 48.52 percent of the total, an increase of 2.08 million from 10.46 million in 2010.

III. Demographic Changes in the Uygur Population

Xinjiang has enjoyed peace and development since 1949. After the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region was established in 1955, the CPC and the central government implemented regional autonomy to ensure the equal status of all ethnic groups, and adopted a series of preferential policies to assist and support regional development. Ethnic minority groups in Xinjiang, including the Uygurs, entered an optimal period for development.

The Uygur population in Xinjiang has continued to grow.

Uygur Population Growth Between National Censuses

Year of Census	Uygur Population	Increase from Previous Census	CAGR from Previous Census
1953	3,607,600	--	--
1964	3,991,600	384,000	0.92%
1982	5,955,900	1,964,300	2.25%
1990	7,191,800	1,235,900	2.38%
2000	8,345,600	1,153,800	1.50%

2010	10,001,300	1,655,700	1.83%
2020	11,624,300	1,623,000	1.52%

These data show that since the founding of the PRC, the Uygur population has maintained a relatively high growth rate, a trend shared with the total population growth of the region.

In particular, the Uygur population grew at a CAGR of 1.67 percent during the first two decades in the 21st century, which was much higher than that of the country's ethnic minority population, which stood at 0.83 percent.

The Uygur population is on average younger than the overall region. In 2020, in the 0-14, 15-59, and 60 and above age groups, the Uygur proportions were 30.51 percent, 60.95 percent and 8.54 percent, while the overall figures for the region were 22.46 percent, 66.26 percent and 11.28 percent.

The education level of the Uygur population has also continued to improve. According to data from the seventh national census in 2020, 8,944 per 100,000 Uygurs had received a university education, an increase of 6,540 compared to 2000. The average years in education for those aged 15 and above also grew from 7.06 to 9.19.

Xinjiang's Uygurs are mainly distributed in Kashgar Prefecture, Hotan Prefecture, Aksu Prefecture, and Kizilsu Kirgiz Autonomous Prefecture in the southern part of the region. According to data from the 2020 national census, Uygurs accounted for 83.74 percent of the population in these four prefectures, representing 74.01 percent of the total Uygur population in Xinjiang. The Uygur population has surpassed 2 million in both Kashgar and Hotan, and is approaching 2 million in Aksu.

IV. Factors Contributing to Xinjiang's Demographic Development

Along with the process of industrialization, urbanization, and modernization, Xinjiang's demographic development went through three periods of growth:

- high birth rates, high death rates and low growth rates;
- high birth rates, low death rates and high growth rates;
- low birth rates, low death rates and low growth rates.

This trend results from a combination of factors such as economic and social development, evolving policies and regulations, and changes in views on marriage and

childbearing. It conforms clearly to general trends of demographic development elsewhere in the world.

Economic and social development: Commendable results have been achieved in many fields in Xinjiang since the founding of the PRC. From 1952 to 2020, Xinjiang's GDP grew from RMB791 million to RMB1.38 trillion, and per capita regional GDP increased from RMB166 to RMB53,593.

Steady progress has been made in education. In 1949, Xinjiang had only 1 college, 9 secondary schools, and 1,355 primary schools. Only 19.8 percent of school-age children were receiving education at school and the illiteracy rate was over 90 percent. In the 70 years since, a complete education system with institutions providing education from preschool through higher education has been put in place. By 2020, Xinjiang had kindergartens in all villages, and 3,641 primary schools, 1,211 regular secondary schools, 147 secondary vocational schools (excluding skilled workers schools), 56 higher education institutions, and 6 adult colleges across the region. The gross enrollment rate of preschool institutions was over 98 percent, the net enrollment rate of primary schools was almost 100 percent, the completion rate of nine-year compulsory education was over 95 percent, and the gross enrollment rate of high schools was over 98 percent. In Kashgar, Hotan, Aksu, and Kizilsu prefectures, 15-year free education lasting from preschool to high school is available. From 1951 to 2020, Xinjiang produced a total of nearly 2.12 million college graduates, of whom 767,000 (36.3 percent) are ethnic minorities.

A significant improvement has been seen in public health. Before the founding of the PRC, Xinjiang was poorly provided with medical services. It had only 54 medical institutions with 696 beds, placing the medical service capacity at 0.16 beds and 0.019 doctors per 1,000 people. By 2019, a basic health care system had been set up, with 18,376 medical institutions covering urban and rural areas, providing a total of 186,426 beds. The infant mortality rate dropped from over 400 per 1,000 in 1949 to 6.75 per 1,000 in 2020. The average life expectancy rose from less than 30 in 1949 to 74.7 in 2019.

Evolving policies and regulations: The application of family planning measures in China was gradually extended from coastal and inland to border regions, from urban to rural areas, and from the Han people to ethnic minorities. Preferential policies were implemented for ethnic minority groups.

In line with local conditions and in accordance with state laws and regulations, Xinjiang formulated its own family planning policies. Family planning was first applied to the Han people in the region in the early 1970s, and ethnic minorities were exempt until the mid and late 1980s. The Measures on Family Planning released by the autonomous region in 1992 stipulated that urban Han residents could have one child per

couple and those residing in farming and pastoral areas could have two, while for ethnic minorities, urban residents could have two children per couple and those in farming and pastoral areas could have three. Ethnic minority groups with smaller populations were not required to follow the family planning policy. This was one of the main reasons why the ethnic minority populations in Xinjiang maintained a rapid growth rate.

In parallel with the region's economic and social development, the different ethnic groups began to develop similar expectations in terms of family structure. Therefore, Xinjiang amended the Regulations on Population and Family Planning in 2017, introducing universal family planning policies for all ethnic groups: two children per couple for urban residents and three per couple for rural residents. In line with future adjustments to national laws and policies regarding population and family planning, Xinjiang will further modify and improve relevant local regulations and policies.

Xinjiang is committed to protecting the health of women and children, preventing and reducing birth defects, and improving the quality of family life in implementing family planning policies. Couples are now better informed on safe, effective and proper contraception, and are choosing their own preferred method. Women of childbearing age are entitled to voluntary tubal ligation surgery and intrauterine devices to avoid unwanted pregnancies and frequent childbirth.

Changes in views on marriage and childbearing: In the past, under the prolonged, pervasive and toxic influence of religious extremism, the life of a large number of people in Xinjiang and particularly in the southern part of the region was subject to severe interference – early marriage and childbearing, and frequent pregnancy and childbirth were commonplace among ethnic minorities.

In recent years, law-based deradicalization has been implemented in Xinjiang. The interference of religious extremism has been eradicated in administration, judicature, education, marriage and health care. The public has become more aware of the dangers of religious extremism. Their views on marriage, childbearing and family have changed accordingly.

The economic, social and family status of women of all ethnic groups has improved, allowing them more opportunities to obtain secondary and higher education, and take an active part in economic and social life. The number and proportion of women in employment have significantly increased. In 2019 for example, 228,100 women joined the workforce in cities and towns across Xinjiang, accounting for 47.43 percent of the total newly employed in urban areas.

Late marriage and childbearing, and sound maternal and child care have penetrated deep into the hearts of local people and become the mainstream social attitude.

V. Xinjiang's Population Prospects

Benefiting from consistent social stability, Xinjiang's population, in particular that of ethnic minority groups, will continue to maintain steady growth in the near term, improving the quality of the population and encouraging greater social and geographic mobility.

The ethnic minority groups in Xinjiang have considerable potential to grow as they have a relatively young population and a large number of women of childbearing age. Implementation of China's new childbirth policy that allows a couple to have up to three children, and support measures to boost birth rates will also promote steady population growth in Xinjiang.

As a result of steady economic and social development, further reforms will also improve the quality of Xinjiang's education system. To raise the level of educational attainment, Xinjiang will:

- ensure universal access to preschool education focused on public and non-profit kindergartens;
- balance the development of compulsory education;
- offer universal high school education;
- expand and improve vocational education;
- strengthen higher education.

The health care system in Xinjiang will also expand and improve. Medical facilities in both urban and rural areas will be upgraded, and the people will enjoy comprehensive lifecycle health services. Public health in Xinjiang will improve in all respects.

Xinjiang will strengthen the laws and policies protecting women's rights and interests, and ensure that these are applied and respected. It will fully implement the National Program for the Development of Women, create an empowering environment for women, promote equality between the sexes, and raise the comprehensive quality of women. The region will advocate modern and healthy lifestyles, and encourage women to throw off the shackles of religious extremism and to participate in social and economic activities, so that they can realize their full potential and share development fruits with the rest of society.

All of China's 56 ethnic groups can be found in Xinjiang, with Uygur, Han, Kazak and Hui the largest groups. The ethnic groups generally choose to live among each other, while some live in concentrated communities of their own.

Xinjiang is promoting people-oriented urbanization and will realize basic urbanization by 2035. A group of emerging cities will grow, and the cities will expand and gather more people.

Different ethnic groups will increase exchanges in all areas, further integrate with each other, and form a more cohesive society with diverse neighborhoods. Driven by market and other factors, voluntary movements of people for schooling, employment, business and tourism will increase between urban and rural areas and both inside and outside the region.

With abundant resources and a favorable geographic location, Xinjiang will attract more investors and migrants to grasp the opportunities presented by further development of core areas on the Silk Road Economic Belt and the implementation of the national strategy to develop western China.

In the future, Xinjiang will enjoy a more stable and harmonious society and a more prosperous economy. It will guarantee fuller employment, ensure equal access to public services, and establish a sound and multitiered social security system, so that all people in the region will lead better lives and have a stronger sense of fulfillment, happiness and security.

VI. Falsehoods Fabricated by Anti-China Forces

In recent years, various anti-China forces have been accusing China of actions such as “forced labor”, “mandatory sterilizations”, “parent-child separation”, “cultural genocide”, and “religious persecution”. They smear Xinjiang, demonize China, and vilify China’s governance of the region with accusations of “genocide”.

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, provides a clear definition of genocide – acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group. A country can only be convicted of genocide by a competent international judicial institution with proper jurisdiction, in strict accordance with the requirements and procedures stipulated by the relevant conventions and international law.

The Chinese government protects the rights of the Uygurs and all other ethnic minority groups in Xinjiang in accordance with the law. This fact stands in sharp contrast to the fabrications by anti-China forces.

1. “Forced labor”

Through the lie of “forced labor”, anti-China forces malign China’s actions against terrorism and extremism, suppress the development of industries in Xinjiang such as cotton, tomatoes, and photovoltaic products, and undermine China’s participation in global industrial chain cooperation. Their acts effectively deprive the local people in Xinjiang of their rights to work and development and opportunities to move out of poverty and backwardness, with the intent of stirring up trouble in the region.

Xinjiang is committed to the people-centered philosophy of development, attaches great importance to employment and social security, and implements proactive policies on employment. It fully respects the wishes of workers, protects the right to work in accordance with the law, and applies international labor and human rights standards. It implements labor laws and regulations, safeguards the legitimate rights and interests of workers, and strives to enable people of all ethnic groups to create a happy life and achieve their own development through hard work.

From 2014 to 2020, the total employed population in Xinjiang grew from 11.35 million to 13.56 million, up by nearly 20 percent. The urban employed population grew by an annual average of 470,000, of which 149,100, or nearly 32 percent, were in southern Xinjiang. An average of 2.82 million job opportunities were created every year for the surplus rural workforce, of which 1.73 million, or more than 61 percent, were offered to those in southern Xinjiang.

In its fight against terrorism and extremism, Xinjiang has established vocational education and training centers in accordance with the law. There is no essential difference between these institutions and the deradicalization centers and community correction, transformation and disengagement programs in many other countries. There is a substantial body of evidence showing that this is an effective approach to preventive counter-terrorism and deradicalization, and it fully complies with the principles of counter-terrorism resolutions such as the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

The vocational education and training centers in Xinjiang have improved the trainees’ command of standard spoken and written Chinese and increased their employability. These centers have also strengthened their sense of national identity, citizenship, and the rule of law. By October 2019, all trainees had completed their studies. Most of them have found stable employment, either by choosing their own jobs, by starting their own businesses, or with the help of the government.

Workers of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang, including graduates from the vocational education and training centers, always choose their jobs of their own volition. In line with the principles of equality, free will, and consensus, and in accordance with laws and regulations such as the Labor Law and the Labor Contract Law, they sign labor contracts with employers and receive their salaries. There is no coercion of any kind.

2. “Mandatory sterilizations”

By means of fabrication, unfounded conjecture, and data fraud, false reports have been concocted by anti-China forces, making accusations that Xinjiang is carrying out “demographic genocide” by forcing birth control on the Uygurs and other ethnic minority groups to suppress their birth rates.

China is a country under the rule of law. The Constitution and relevant laws stipulate unequivocally that the state shall respect and protect human rights, and that all citizens have reproductive rights and also the obligation to practice family planning. China follows the principles of government guidance and individual choice in providing technical services for family planning, and all citizens enjoy the rights to know about and to choose their own contraceptive methods.

Xinjiang implements its family planning policy in accordance with the law. Forced birth control and pregnancy tests are strictly prohibited. It is up to individuals to decide whether or not to use contraceptives and how to use them. No organization or individual may interfere with this freedom.

Women are entitled to decide on birth control based on their own physical and family conditions. With the improvement in women’s status and changes in views on marriage and childbearing, an increasing number of women are choosing to marry later and have fewer and healthier children. As a result, they are opting for long-term contraceptive methods.

Statistics show that the Uygur population has been growing steadily and significantly over the decades since the PRC was founded in 1949. Therefore, accusations of “suppression of birth rates” and “demographic genocide” are utterly groundless.

3. “Parent-child separation”

Anti-China forces have created a fabrication that Xinjiang has set up boarding schools to deal with the fallout of its massive internment campaign and seeks to preempt any possibility on the part of Uygur parents, relatives or community members to recover their children, so as to create “intergenerational separation” and “assimilate” the Uygurs.

China’s Constitution stipulates that citizens shall have the right and the obligation to receive education. The Education Law further provides that citizens shall enjoy equal

opportunity of education regardless of their ethnicity, race, gender, occupation, property, religious belief, etc. The Compulsory Education Law states that where necessary, the people's government at the county level may set up boarding schools so as to ensure that the school-age children and adolescents who are dwelling in scattered areas receive compulsory education.

Establishing boarding schools is a standard practice in China's compulsory education. In 2020, there were nearly 11 million primary school boarders across the country, accounting for about 10 percent of the total number of primary school students, and there were 23 million middle school boarders, or nearly 47 percent of the total number of middle school students.

The vast land of Xinjiang covers a total area of 1,664,900 sq km. Villages and towns are far from each other and residents in some farming and pastoral areas are sparsely distributed, making the daily travel between home and school very difficult for students who live at a distance.

Boarding schools can help consolidate universal access to compulsory education and promote balanced education. They are conducive to concentrating superior education resources and ensuring teaching quality. They can also greatly alleviate the burden on students' families. Boarders live at school from Monday to Friday and at home on weekends and holidays. They can ask for leave whenever necessary. It is up to students' families to decide whether to board or not. Claims of "parent-child separation" are a gross distortion of facts.

4. "Cultural genocide"

Anti-China forces claim that Xinjiang's efforts to promote standard Chinese represent a campaign of "cultural genocide", and that they are a means of "ethnic assimilation", designed to eliminate the spoken and written languages and cultural traditions of ethnic minorities.

The standard language of a country is a symbol of its sovereignty. Every citizen has the right and obligation to learn and use the standard language. This is true not only in China but also in the rest of the world. Learning and using the standard language helps different ethnic groups to communicate, develop and progress.

The Chinese government works hard to promote the use of standard Chinese, but it also protects by law the freedom of ethnic groups to use and develop their own spoken and written languages. China's Education Law prescribes that in ethnic autonomous areas, "schools and other educational institutions dominated by ethnic minority students shall, according to the actual circumstances, use the standard spoken and written Chinese language and the spoken and written languages of their respective ethnicities or the spoken and written language commonly used by the local ethnicities to implement bilingual education".

While carrying out the teaching of standard Chinese, Xinjiang also provides Uygur, Kazak, Kirgiz, Mongolian, Xibe and other language courses at primary and secondary schools, thereby ensuring the right of ethnic minorities to learn and use their own languages and effectively protecting their languages and cultures. Ethnic minority languages are extensively used in such areas as education, judicature, administration and public affairs.

The Chinese government attaches great importance to protecting and developing the best of its traditional ethnic cultures. Xinjiang continues to strengthen the protection and preservation of cultural relics. Six cultural heritage sites, including the Jiaohe Ancient City Ruins and the Kizil Grottoes, have been in the UNESCO World Heritage List; 133, including the Loulan Ancient City Ruins, have been listed as key cultural heritage sites under state protection; and more than 9,000 other fixed cultural relics are well preserved.

Xinjiang has been active in collecting, preserving and rescuing ancient books of all ethnic groups. It has supported the translation and publishing of *Kutadgu Bilig* (*Wisdom of Fortune and Joy*), a Uygur masterpiece on the verge of being lost, and has enabled the publication of works of folk literature, including the Mongolian epic *Jangar*.

The Uygur Muqam and the Kirgiz epic *Manas* have been registered on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and the Uygur Meshrep on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. The region has established four state-level demonstration bases for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage items. They produce ethnic musical instruments, Uygur mulberry paper, Uygur carpets, and Kazak embroidery handicrafts.

Xinjiang embraces cultural diversity and inclusiveness, and upholds mutual learning among cultures. The region fully respects and protects folk traditions, thus realizing the harmonious coexistence of different cultures. Folk festivals are widely celebrated, including the Han Lantern Festival, the Uygur Meshrep, the Kazak Aytes, the Kirgiz Kobuz Ballad Singing Fair, the Mongolian Nadam Fair, and the Hui Hua'er Folk Song Festival.

All of this demonstrates clearly that there is no truth in the accusations of “cultural genocide”.

5. “Religious persecution”

Anti-China forces have spread false accusations that Xinjiang restricts freedom of religion, keeps religious activities under surveillance, prohibits Muslims from fasting, forcibly demolishes mosques, and persecutes religious practitioners.

Respect for and protection of freedom of religious belief is a long-term basic national policy of the Chinese government. The Constitution stipulates that citizens shall enjoy freedom of religious belief, and that no state organ, social organization or

individual shall coerce citizens to believe in or not to believe in any religion, nor shall they discriminate against citizens who believe in or do not believe in any religion. It also provides that the state shall protect normal religious activities, and that no one shall use religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the state's education system.

In accordance with the Constitution and relevant laws, Xinjiang protects freedom of religious belief and ensures orderly practice of religion. Believers are free to engage in lawful religious activities, including worship, fasting, and observance of religious festivals, in accordance with religious doctrines, canons and traditions, at religious venues or in their homes. They face no inference and restriction in this regard.

Religious classics have been translated and published, including the Koran and *Selections from Sahih al-Bukhari*, in the Chinese, Uygur, Kazak and Kirgiz languages, so as to facilitate believers' access to religious information.

The region cares for religious practitioners. It includes clerical personnel in the social security system by providing them with medical, old-age, serious illness, and personal accident insurance, as well as arranging for them to have free annual health checks. It attaches importance to the training of clerical professionals. There are 10 Islamic schools in Xinjiang, which have trained a contingent of high-caliber clerics, effectively ensuring the healthy and orderly development of Islam.

To meet believers' legitimate religious needs, Xinjiang has been actively improving the conditions of religious venues and their surrounding environments by means of renovation and relocation, expanding existing facilities and building new ones.

Mosques in Xinjiang have been equipped with running water, electricity, natural gas, telecommunications tools, radio and television facilities, libraries, and easy road access. Washing and cleansing facilities have been installed in congregational mosques for Juma prayers. Mosques also have medical services, LED screens, computers, electric fans or air conditioners, fire-fighting equipment, water dispensers, shoe coverings or automatic dispensers of shoe coverings, and lockers. All this provides greater convenience for religious believers. The accusations of "religious persecution" are completely baseless.

There is a wealth of evidence that the accusations of "genocide" in Xinjiang conjured up by the anti-China forces are devoid of any truth. They are a calumny against China's Xinjiang policy and the successes achieved in developing the region, and a serious violation of international law and the basic principles of international relations.

Posing as "human rights defenders", anti-China forces in some countries such as the United States ignore the dark history of their own countries, where real genocide

was committed against indigenous peoples such as Native Americans. Along with sundry others, they turn a blind eye to the deep-rooted racial discrimination and other systemic problems in their own countries today, and to the stain on human rights spread by their relentless wars in other countries which claim millions of innocent civilian lives. Their hideous double standards, hypocrisy, and hegemonic mindset recall the infamous quote: “Accuse the other side of that of which you are guilty.”

Conclusion

Xinjiang’s demographic development, reflecting the situation across the nation, bears witness to the region’s social progress. It marks the success of a unified multiethnic country in ensuring the healthy population growth of its ethnic minorities.

Over the past 70 years, Xinjiang has seen rapid and steady population growth, improving population quality, higher life expectancy, and faster urbanization and modernization. All the ethnic groups enjoy unity, harmony, common progress, prosperity and happy lives under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

Xinjiang’s evolving demographics are a natural result of local economic and social development, and of industrialization and modernization. This success is unparalleled in history, and is apparent to any person who respects facts. Anti-China forces have fabricated stories of “genocide” in Xinjiang to deceive the international community, mislead international public opinion, and impede China’s development and progress. These malicious efforts will not succeed. Truth will prevail over falsehoods.

The Chinese government will continue to safeguard China’s sovereignty, security, and development interests, and contribute to the common unity, development and prosperity of all ethnic groups. The CPC’s strategy for governance in Xinjiang in the new era will not change:

- governing Xinjiang in accordance with the law,
- maintaining stability through ethnic unity,
- strengthening cultural identity and bonds,
- bringing greater prosperity to the region and its people,
- developing Xinjiang from a long-term perspective.

It will continue to promote unity, harmony and cultural progress and strive for a prosperous and eco-friendly Xinjiang under socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, where people live and work in peace and contentment. Xinjiang’s march towards modernization will not be stopped by any force, and its future is bright and secure.

