

Central Asia and Xinjiang / China: Governance, Neighborhood Policies, and Regionalization in Wider Central Asia

**A Research and
Capacity Building Project**

conducted by

University of Bielefeld (Germany)

and

TU Dortmund University (Germany)

as a joined initiative of

Europe-Asia Interdisciplinary Research Unit (EA-IRU)

in cooperation with

Xinjiang University, Urumqi (China)

Xinjiang Normal University, Urumqi (China)

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This research and capacity building project on *Central Asia and Xinjiang / China: Governance, Neighborhood Policies, and Regionalization in Wider Central Asia* aims at analyzing the political, economic, and social dynamics in Central Asia from an inclusive regional perspective. By including the Chinese Autonomous Province Xinjiang in the analysis and discussion of regional cooperation in Central Asia – reflected in the cooperation with the local partners Xinjiang University (Urumqi) and Xinjiang Normal University (Urumqi) – the general aim of the project consists in broadening the scope and perspective of regional cooperation in Central Asia by looking at neighborhood policies and relations between China and Central Asia. Based on an inclusive understanding of Central Asia and its inner cooperation structures and dynamics, the project also aims at comparing Central Asian cooperation with regionalization patterns and dynamics in the European Union and wider Europe as well as analyzing interregional cooperation between Europe and Central Asia.

The project combines three objectives:

1. To enhance the interdisciplinary research cooperation in the field of the social sciences, thereby building-up and expanding a sustainable academic international network as well as stimulating further research activities among scholars, political professionals and practitioners from the regions of Central Asia, Xinjiang / China as well as Germany / the EU with regard to the issues of governance, neighborhood policies, civic education, and regional cooperation;
2. to develop an international core group of young scholars able and willing to continue this project in future follow-up activities, but also to improve the research cooperation among the participants and representatives of the academic successor generation in universities and academic research institutions within wider Central Asia, i.e. Xinjiang / China as well as Central Asia, in these fields;
3. to widen the professionalization and expertise of the academic successor generation including selected Master students, Ph.D. students, and post-doc researchers of Xinjiang / China and Central Asia concerning the topics mentioned.

The project presents German and European views, models, and experiences not as the only possible model or as a blueprint for wider Central Asia but as a field of learning and a toolbox to stimulate, broaden, and deepen the Asian debate about such issues. The project aims at mutual learning processes through an open exchange of ideas and experiences based on a thorough scientific debate, which includes both theoretical and empirical analysis. Further, the project cooperates with the EU-Central Asia On-Line Academy for the Master Program “Studies on the EU and Central Asia in the International System” of the Institute for European Politics, Berlin / Germany and the International Centre for European Integration, Nice / France.

The project is based on a concept of governance – including its comparative implications –, which highlights in particular the following four aspects:

1. Governance is considered as a multidimensional issue, i.e. an issue with political, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions, which have to be analyzed not only in a comparative but in an inclusive way. Such an understanding of governance leads to an interdisciplinary approach – in particular towards a research dialogue between social, economic, and law sciences, in which the theoretical-methodological identity, the empirical results, and the recommendations of each science are interrelated into a joint approach.
2. Governance is understood as multi-level-governance including the relations between civil society and the state.
3. Governance is defined not only as a national, but as a regional and global concept to be interrelated with national and sub-national structures and dynamics.
4. The concept of governance is enhanced and widened by the introduction of the aspect of political culture in general and civic education in particular.

The project consists of three interrelated core components:

Component 1: *Summer School on Governance, Neighborhood Policies, and Regional Cooperation in Central Asia and Xinjiang / China* for participants from Xinjiang / China, countries of Central Asia, and Germany, September 20-25, 2010, at Xinjiang University Urumqi, jointly conducted by University of Bielefeld, TU Dortmund University, and Xinjiang University.

Component 2: *Research Conference on Governance, Neighborhoods Policies, and Regional Cooperation: Comparing German / European with Xinjiang / Central Asian Approaches* for participants from Xinjiang / China, countries of Central Asia, and Germany planned for September 2011 at Xinjiang University, jointly conducted by University of Bielefeld, TU Dortmund University, and Xinjiang University.

Component 3: *Research Conference on Governance and Civic Education: Comparing German / European with Xinjiang / Central Asian Approaches* for participants from Xinjiang / China, Central Asian countries, and Germany planned for September 2011 at Xinjiang Normal University, jointly conducted by University of Bielefeld, TU Dortmund University, and Xinjiang Normal University.

The selection of participants is completed in cooperation of the University of Bielefeld and TU Dortmund University as well as with the DAAD Information Centers (IC) in Central Asian countries, based on academic excellence through an open application process.

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