**Solstice Latitude**

I visited Turkey during the Muslim celebration of Ramadan. Ramadan occurs every 11.6 months and is a time of great joy, especially when the sunrise to sunset fast is over each day. There were a lot of tourists visiting Istanbul during the summer day on July 4. They were viewing the Topkapi Palace, and also the Haga Sophia square in front of the palace grounds. There were about 100 fully-equipped riot police lining up there. Then a large bus showed up with loudspeakers and people making speeches in Turkish from the top of the bus. Vendors were selling the red Turkish flag and also a blue version, which is the flag of self-governing East Turkestan in the region of Xinjiang, an autonomous region in the People's Republic of China. The events seemed just like a 1970 era anti-Vietnam war rally. There were about 20 people carrying various flags, and a chorus of people that responded to the speakers. Many of the attendees were women dressed entirely in black with their children. About half the people present seemed to be the tourists who had no idea about the proceedings. What was this all about? An article about the event with a picture stated:

Uighurs living in Turkey and their supporters chant slogans as they stage a protest in Istanbul, Saturday, July 4, 2015, against what they call as oppression by Chinese government to Muslim Uighurs in the province. Hundreds of people have marched in Istanbul to protest China over reports of its repression of its minority Muslim Uighur community. Turkey has ethnic and linguistic ties to the Uighurs, members of a Muslim ethnic minority in Xinjiang. Relations between China and Turkey have been strained over Turkish reports that Uighurs were banned from worshipping and fasting during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. (The Associated Press)

During the event, a mob of about a hundred 20 year-old boys rushed off to the Topkapi Palace grounds nearby, closely followed by the riot police squad. To quote Buffalo Springfield: *“There's something happening here. What it is, ain't exactly clear. There's a man with a gun over there. Telling me I got to beware.”* Later Internet research found the following description:

The protesters on Saturday carried flags representing the Uighurs' homeland and called for a boycott of Chinese goods. The demonstration was peaceful but the Dogan news agency said a group of nationalists tried to attack a group of Korean tourists which they mistook for Chinese nationals. Police rescued the tourists. Relations between China and Turkey have been strained over Turkish reports that Uighurs were banned from worshipping and fasting during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. China expressed displeasure after Turkey this week took in 173 Uighur refugees from Thailand.

Latitude: Since June 21 is about the longest day of the year in the northern hemisphere, I decided to see what the time was from sunrise to sunset at various latitudes on that day:

Sanaa, Yemen, 15.3483° N --- 13 hours 02 minutes 22 seconds

Mecca, Saudi Arabia, 21.4167° N --- 13 hours 26 minutes 24 seconds

Istanbul. Turkey, 41.0136° N --- 15 hours 07 minutes 42 seconds

Korla, Xinjiang, 41.6500° N --- 15 hours 12 minutes 53 seconds

Arctic Circle, 66.5628° N --- 24 hours (Consider nearest major city or Mecca times)

The time difference due to latitude of various areas is not as large as I expected. Fasting is obligatory once Muslims reach puberty. However, children can fast if they wish. Those exempt from fasting include the elderly, the sick, people who are travelling, and women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or menstruating. However, in some ISIS areas, children who do not fast have reportedly been killed. The fast does not work well for children in very hot unshaded areas, due to lack of water intake when needed.

China Policy: However, the Chinese government policy is anti-religion. The imposition of such dietary constraints on the population by a religious group is not approved by the Chinese government, even in the locally autonomous region where the Uighurs live in Xinjiang province. The surprising item about the Istanbul rally was the passion displayed by the participants about this issue. Since 1923, Turkey is officially a non-sectarian state, but religion still can incite the population. The role of religion in political issues remains an issue for much of the world, including the United States.