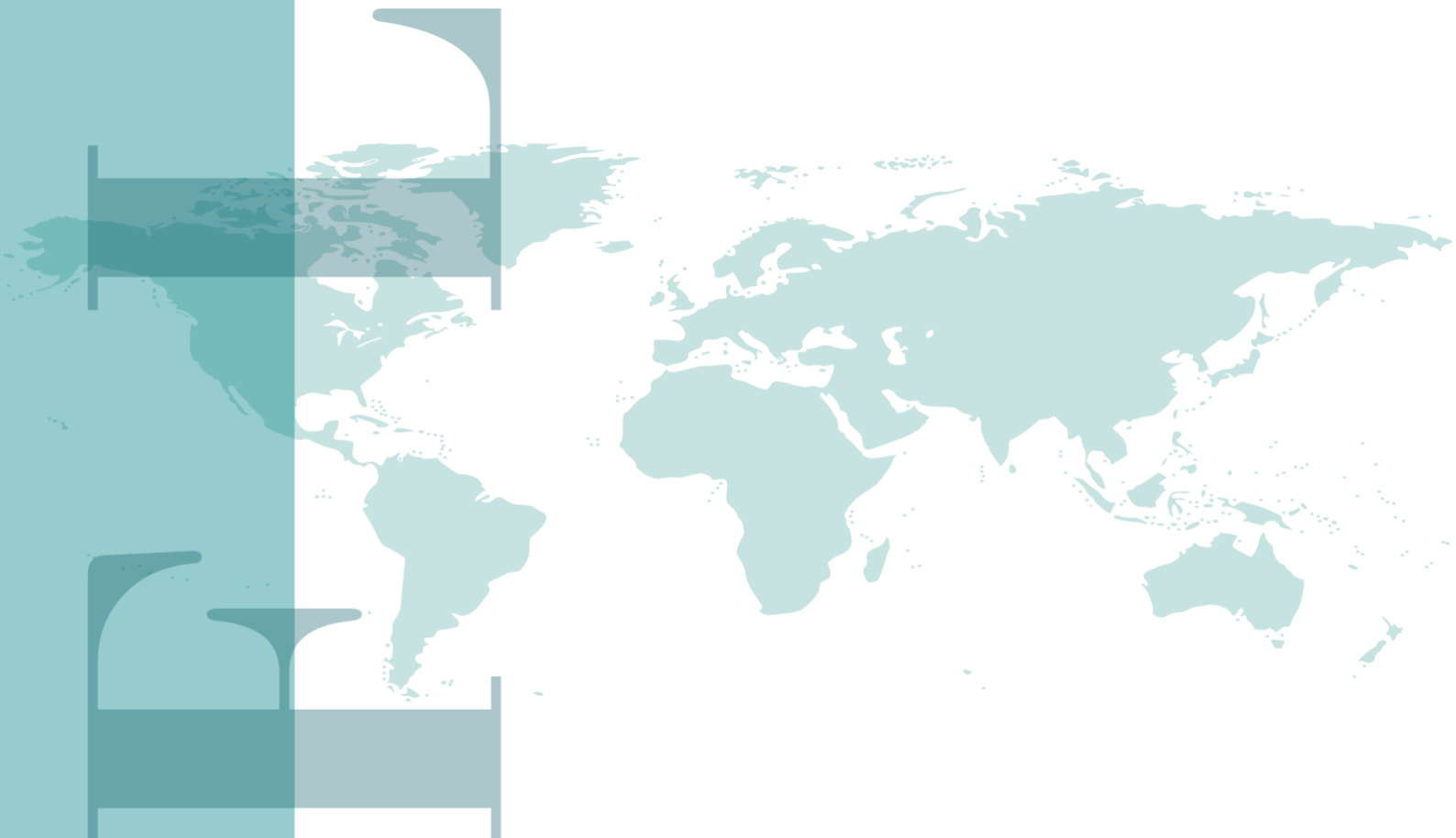


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Crimes Against Humanity: The Relationship Between the Chinese Communist Party and Xinjiang's Uyghur Muslims

Wyatt Pannabecker¹

¹ J.D. Candidate, The Alexander Blewett III School of Law, University of Montana; Research Fellow, Foundation for Law and International Affairs

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Abstract

At the crossroads of East and Central Asia lies a region of immense value to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) - today, it is best known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (hereinafter referred to as “Xinjiang”). Xinjiang is the largest provincial-level subdivision in China, and it is rich in economic assets. Since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the CCP has enjoyed control over Xinjiang, utilizing the region to stimulate economic development.¹ Historically, however, Xinjiang was not Chinese territory. Before China’s westward expansion in the late 19th century, Xinjiang mainly existed separately from China. The region of Xinjiang, originally known as “Turkestan,” is the homeland of the Uyghurs - a Muslim, Turkic-speaking ethnic group who have resided there for thousands of years.

In 2012, Xi Jinping became General Secretary of the CCP with a vision to challenge the U.S.-led world order by capitalizing on the unprecedented economic growth that China has experienced in recent decades. However, the primary resources that stimulated China’s economic growth were diminishing, and China has had to find new ways of developing its economy. Xinjiang has filled the void, and China has since become reliant on the region to sustain the level of economic growth necessary to advance a challenge against the United States.

However, friction existing between Uyghurs and the CCP since the PRC’s establishment has prevented Xinjiang from solving China’s resource depletion problem. The CCP views Uyghurs as a threat to its control over the region. Today, that “threat” jeopardizes China’s aspirations for global dominance, and it has decided the “Uyghur threat” cannot be tolerated. Consequently, the CCP has undertaken a systematic campaign to eradicate Uyghurs from Xinjiang.

Foreword

As information continues to emerge regarding the CCP’s abuse of Uyghur Muslims, many western scholars and journalists have attempted to identify the motive(s) behind the CCP’s actions. Some have accepted the CCP’s justification that Xinjiang is a breeding ground for violent separatists and terrorists. Others have cited the CCP’s economic interests in Xinjiang’s fossil fuel reserves and/or Xinjiang’s role as a logistical center for China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

These explanations fail to comprehend a bigger picture. Xi Jinping came into power with ambitious plans to reform world order, and Xinjiang is essential to those plans because it has quietly become the beating heart of China’s economy. While the CCP does have interests in Xinjiang for fossil fuel extraction and as a logistical center for the BRI, these interests do not, by themselves, explain the motives behind the CCP’s abusive campaign against Uyghurs. In this report, I explain how the CCP is brutalizing Uyghur Muslims because it fears the “Uyghur threat” jeopardizes its capacity to reap the overall benefits of Xinjiang’s economic value which is fundamental to the CCP in fulfilling its greatest political objectives.

This is the story of an ethnic minority helpless to preserve their way of life against a powerful and autocratic government seeking to remove them from their homeland to exploit its

¹ Edward Wong, *China Invests in Region Rich in Oil, Coal, and also Strife*, New York Times (December 20, 2014), <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/21/world/asia/china-invests-in-xinjiang-region-rich-in-oil-coal-and-also-strife.html#:~:text=China%20is%20investing%20more%20than%20ever%20in%20the,transport.%20That%20is%20happening%20despite%20soaring%20ethnic%20violence.>, (Accessed: 06/23/2022) (Note: Because China is a one-party state, all political power is concentrated in the CCP, and referring to the CCP is synonymous to referring to the Chinese government. Therefore, the terms “CCP,” “China,” and “Chinese government” are used interchangeably throughout this report in reference to the Chinese government of the PRC).

economic resources. It is the story of the relationship between the Chinese Communist Party and Xinjiang's Uyghur Muslims.

Part 1. What and Why: Abusing Uyghurs to Protect Economic Interests

Introduction

Since expanding its borders westward to encompass Xinjiang in the 19th century, China has utilized the region as a force for stimulating economic development and prosperity. However, China's control over Xinjiang has not come free of resistance; it has been complicated by Uyghur Muslims, Xinjiang's native people. China has governed Xinjiang with disdain for Uyghur customs and disregard for Uyghur interests, and Uyghurs have resented, and, at times, resisted China's rule of their homeland. Consequently, the CCP considers Uyghurs to be a threat to its control over Xinjiang and thus its capacity to exploit the region for its economic value. For decades, the CCP has simply subdued the "Uyghur threat" through repression and persecution. However, more recently it has attempted to eradicate Uyghurs from the region altogether by advancing a campaign consisting of mass incarceration, invasive surveillance, and population control.

1.1 A Campaign Against Uyghurs

1.1.1 Mass Incarceration of Uyghur Muslims

58 miles southeast of Urumqi, Xinjiang, in the urban district of Dabancheng, stands a highly secured CCP compound.² It covers 220 acres, and is composed of prison dormitories and police barracks enclosed within 25-foot-high concrete walls. Rifle-wielding guards wearing military camouflage look on from strategically located watchtowers, while facial recognition cameras constantly scan every inch of surface area inside the compound.³ A large sign bearing the words "detention center" in big red Chinese characters hangs at the main gate of the facility.⁴ It is "Urumqi Detention Center No. 3," a massive detention center that can accommodate more than 10,000 prisoners.⁵ It is the largest detention center in China, but not by much.⁶ Southwest of Dabancheng, in Kashgar, Xinjiang, stands another overbearing detention camp.⁷ Covering 60 acres, it comprises 13 5-story buildings enclosed within 45-foot-high concrete walls covered in razor wire.⁸ It also has the capacity to hold 10,000 prisoners.⁹

In Xinjiang, detention centers such as those in Dabancheng and Kashgar are not unique. 400 other internment camps just like them have been erected in the region since the CCP began a mass campaign of arbitrary incarceration against Uyghur Muslims.¹⁰ Since 2017, between one

² Dane Kang, *Room for 10,000: Inside China's Largest Detention Center*, AP News (July 22, 2021), <https://apnews.com/article/business-religion-china-only-on-ap-3696c2fb845ca98e26cd60db7153f96b>, (Accessed: 07/29/2022).

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Anna Fifield, *China is Building Vast New Detention Centers for Muslims in Xinjiang*, Washington Post (September 23, 2020, 10:00 PM EDT), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/china-muslims-detention-centers-xinjiang-crackdown/2020/09/23/44d2ce50-f32b-11ea-8025-5d3489768ac8_story.html, (Accessed: 07/30,2022).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ Emma Graham-Harrison, *China has Built 380 Internment Camps in Xinjiang, Study Finds*, The Guardian (September 23, 2020, 10:00 PM EDT), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/24/china-has-built-380-internment-camps-in-xinjiang-study-finds>, (Accessed: 07/03/2022); Kate Ng, *China has Built Nearly 400 Internment Camps in Xinjiang, Study Finds*, Independent (September 24, 2020, 12:41 PM),

and two million Uyghurs have been detained in Xinjiang's internment camps.¹¹ It has been the largest forced incarceration of an ethno-religious group since the genocide of European Jews in World War II.¹²

The CCP asserts that these efforts are all part of an “anti-terror campaign” against violent Muslim terrorists and separatists.¹³ However, most prisoners are being convicted of terrorism and separatism for engaging in completely non-violent behavior that most would consider customary.¹⁴ Uyghurs have been sentenced to years in prison for downloading e-books in the Uyghur language, attending services at mosques, travelling abroad to one of 26 countries considered sensitive by the CCP (Predominantly Muslim countries, such as Turkey, Kazakhstan, and Afghanistan.), and having children.¹⁵ Uyghurs are not being imprisoned for engaging in wrongful conduct, they are being imprisoned because they are Muslim.

The CCP describes the detention centers as “re-education camps” used to “transform” people corrupted by extremism and maintains that no human rights infractions have occurred.¹⁶ However, evidence reveals that detainees are routinely subjected to forced labor, torture, and sexual abuse. Satellite imagery shows factories being constructed inside the perimeter walls of many detention camps, which former detainees have confirmed are being utilized for forced

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/china-xinjiang-internment-camps-uyghur-muslims-australia-think-tank-b571896.html>, (Accessed: 07/03/2022).

¹¹ Lindsay Maizland, *China's Repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang*, Council on Foreign Relations (March 1, 2021), <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-repression-uyghurs-xinjiang>, (Accessed: 06/20/2022); *One Million Muslim Uyghurs Held in Secret China Camps: UN Panel*, Al Jazeera, (August 10, 2018), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/8/10/one-million-muslim-uyghurs-held-in-secret-china-camps-un-panel><https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/8/10/one-million-muslim-uyghurs-held-in-secret-china-camps-un-panel>, (Accessed: 06/29/2022); Mathew Hill, David Campanale, & Joel Gunter, ‘*Their Goal is to Destroy Everyone*’: Uyghur Camp Detainees Allege Systematic Rape, BBC (February 2, 2021), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-55794071>, (Accessed: 07/01/2022); Ben Westcott, Rebecca Wright, *First Independent Report into Xinjiang Genocide Allegations Claims Evidence of Beijing's 'Intent to Destroy' Uyghur People*, CNN (March 9, 2021), <https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/09/asia/china-uyghurs-xinjiang-genocide-report-intl-hnk/index.html>, (Accessed: 07/20/2022).

¹² Joanne Smith Finley, (November 19, 2020), Why Scholars and Activists Increasingly Fear a Uyghur Genocide in Xinjiang, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 21(3), p. 348-370 (2021), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/>.

¹³ Rebecca Wright et al., *Some are just Psychopaths: Chinese Detective in Exile Reveals Extent of Torture Against Uyghurs*, CNN (October 5, 2021), <https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/04/china/xinjiang-detective-torture-intl-hnk-dst/index.html#>, (Accessed: 07/15/2022); Sigal Samuel, *China's Genocide Against the Uyghurs, in 4 Disturbing Charts*, Vox (March 10, 2021), <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/22311356/china-uyghur-birthrate-sterilization-genocide>, (Accessed: 07/22/2022).

¹⁴ Dane Kang, *supra* note 2.

¹⁵ *Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots: China's Crimes Against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims*, Human Rights Watch (April 19, 2021), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/19/break-their-lineage-break-their-roots/chinas-crimes-against-humanity-targeting>. [hereinafter *Break Their Lineage*]; *Eradicating Ideological Viruses: China's Campaign of Repression Against Xinjiang's Muslims*, Human Rights Watch (September 9, 2018), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/09/09/eradicating-ideological-viruses/chinas-campaign-repression-against-xinjiangs>; Maizland, *supra* note 11.

¹⁶ Nectar Gan, Mimi Lau, *China Changes Law to Recognize Re-education Camps in Xinjiang*, South China Morning Post (October 10, 2018), <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/2167893/china-legalises-use-re-education-camps-religious-extremists>, (Accessed: 07/02/2022). Maizland, *supra* note 11.

labor.¹⁷ Over 135 detention camps contain completed factories within their confines, while countless others have factories under construction.¹⁸

Former detainees have also described a campaign of systematic torture that occurs inside the camps.¹⁹ Sources within the CCP have revealed that “every detainee is interrogated and beaten,” including women and children.²⁰ Electrocution, waterboarding, sleep deprivation, starvation, and sexual violence are all commonly used interrogation techniques, and the torture does not stop until the “suspect” confesses to the charges against them.²¹

Even more shocking are the horrific stories of sexual abuse that have occurred inside the camps. Several women who fled China after being released from detention centers have shared similar experiences of systematic rape.²² In an interview with the BBC, former inmate Turnsunay Ziawudun recalled how women were removed from their cells every night and taken to an unknown location within the compound where they were raped, sometimes by two or three men.²³ Another interviewee who spent 18 months in the camp system, Gulzira Auelkhan, recalled being forced to “strip Uyghur women naked and handcuff them before leaving them alone with Chinese men.”²⁴ Auelkhan recounted being “powerless to resist or intervene”; she could either assist in the abuse, or face punishment herself.²⁵

1.1.2 Uyghur Repression Outside Detention Camps

The stories from inside Xinjiang’s detention camps are horrendous. However, the abuse is not contained within the camps. Over eleven million non-incarcerated Uyghurs living in Xinjiang face brutal acts of repression every day.²⁶ CCP supervision and control pervades every aspect of life in Xinjiang’s Uyghur communities. Men are prohibited from wearing long beards and women cannot wear veils;²⁷ GPS trackers are required on vehicles;²⁸ Uyghur parents may not give their children “Islamic” names;²⁹ and children are banned from speaking Uyghur in all levels of

¹⁷ Alison Killing, & Megha Rajagopalan, *The Factories in the Camps*, The Pulitzer Center (December 28, 2020), <https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/factories-camps>, (Accessed: 07/15/2022); Samuel, *supra* note 13.

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ Samuel, *supra* note 13.

²⁰ Wright et al., *supra* note 13.

²¹ *Id.*

²² Hill, *supra* note 11.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ Maizland, *supra* note 11; Nectar Gan, Ben Westcott, & James Griffiths, *What’s been Happening in China’s Xinjiang, Home to 11 Million Uyghurs?*, CNN (June 19, 2020, 5:06 AM EDT), <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/19/asia/xinjiang-explainer.html>, (Accessed: 08/15/2022).

²⁷ *China Uyghurs, Xinjiang Ban on Long Beards and Veils*, BBC (May 13, 2017), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-39460538>, (Accessed: 06/25/2022); Katie Hunt, Chieu Luu, & Steven Jiang, *Why China is Banning Beards and Veils in Xinjiang*, CNN (March 31, 2017), <https://www.cnn.com/2017/03/31/asia/china-xinjiang-new-rules/index.html>, (Accessed: 06/25/2022).

²⁸ Chieu Luu & Nanling Fang, *China Orders Xinjiang Residents to Surrender Passports to Police*, CNN (November 24, 2016), <https://www.cnn.com/2016/11/24/asia/china-xinjiang-passports/index.html>.

²⁹ Leigh Hartman, *Beijing’s Attack on Uyghurs isn’t Counterterrorism*, Share American (September 21, 2020), <https://share.america.gov/beijings-attack-on-uyghurs-isnt-counterterrorism/>, (Accessed: 06/25/2022).

education.³⁰ Uyghurs are even prohibited from performing Islamic rituals at funerals and weddings.³¹ Uyghurs must calibrate their every move to avoid breaking the law and facing charges of terrorism or separatism.

Furthermore, to mitigate the growth of the Uyghur population, the CCP subjects Uyghur women to strict birth control measures. Recently, women in other parts of China have been encouraged to have more children.³² However, in Xinjiang, the CCP takes extreme measures to prevent Uyghur births.

To ensure these birth control policies are effective, Uyghur women are forced to comply with pregnancy checks.³³ Women who are not pregnant must submit to sterilization surgery or procedures to implant intrauterine devices to prevent pregnancy.³⁴ If the CCP discovers the woman is pregnant, she must terminate her pregnancy through abortion.³⁵ Compliance with these policies is compelled by the threat of incarceration.³⁶ Unsurprisingly, Uyghur birth rates have dropped. From 2017-2019, total birth rates in Xinjiang, measured by the number of births per 1,000 people, fell from 15 to 7.³⁷ In parts of Xinjiang that are predominantly Uyghur, that number shockingly dropped to 2.5.³⁸

1.1.3 Genocide Allegations

When accounts of China's abuse of Uyghurs began to emerge, experts in international law refrained from labeling China's actions as genocide; that position has changed.³⁹ A report recently released by a committee assembled by the Newline Institute for Strategy and Policy in collaboration with the Raoul Wallenberg Center, two independent nongovernmental organizations, has concluded that the CCP is committing genocide in Xinjiang.⁴⁰ The committee, consisting of more than 50 of the world's top experts in international law, genocide, and the China region, analyzed whether China's actions qualify as genocide as defined by the United Nations Genocide Convention (UNGC).⁴¹

³⁰ Eset Sulaiman, *China Bans Uyghur Language in School in Key Xinjiang Prefecture*, Radio Free Asia (August 4, 2017, 4:25 PM), <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/language-07282017143037.html>, (Accessed: 08/15/2022).

³¹ Hartman, *supra* note 29.

³² Amy Qin, *China Targets Muslim Women in Push to Suppress Births in Xinjiang*, New York Times (May 11, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/10/world/asia/china-xinjiang-women-births.html>, (Accessed: 07/01/2022).

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ *China Cuts Uyghur Births with IUDs, Abortion, Sterilization*, Associated Press (June 28, 2020), <https://apnews.com/article/ap-top-news-international-news-weekend-reads-china-health-269b3de1af34e17c1941a514f78d764c>, (Accessed: 07/01/2022) [hereinafter *China Cuts Uyghur Births*]; *China: Uyghur Women Reportedly Sterilized in Attempt to Suppress Population*, Deutsche Welle (July 1, 2020), <https://www.dw.com/en/china-uyghur-women-reportedly-sterilized-in-attempt-to-suppress-population/a-54018051>, (Accessed: 07/02/2022) [hereinafter *Uyghur Women Reportedly Sterilized*].

³⁵ *China Cuts Uyghur Births*, *supra* note 34.

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ Samuel, *supra* note 13.

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ Westcott, *supra* note 11; Samuel, *supra* note 13.

⁴¹ Westcott, *supra* note 11; Samuel, *supra* note 13.

The UNGC defines genocide as the “commission of or attempt to commit acts with an intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.”^{4 2} It may be done by “killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the group’s physical destruction; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; or forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”^{4 3} While violating just one of these enumerated acts is sufficient to constitute a finding of genocide, the committee found that the CCP has committed every act listed in the convention.^{4 4} This report demonstrates that China’s oppression of Uyghurs has escalated to unprecedented levels, and that this behavior can no longer be classified as simple discrimination.^{4 5}

Western Governments are also beginning to recognize China’s actions as genocide.^{4 6} The Trump administration became the first government to publicly declare that China was committing genocide in January 2021 (the Biden administration has since adopted this position.).^{4 7} In February 2021, the Canadian and Dutch parliaments also passed motions officially recognizing China’s actions as genocide.^{4 8} Nevertheless, the Chinese government adheres to the narrative that its detention centers are “re-education” camps where people corrupted by extremism are “rehabilitated.”^{4 9} It continues to maintain that it has not committed any human rights violations.^{5 0}

1.2 Crimes Against Uyghurs: Protecting the Beating Heart of China’s Economy

1.2.1 Xinjiang: The Beating Heart of China’s Economy

Despite China’s assertions, neither terrorism nor separatism are related to its campaign to eradicate Uyghurs from Xinjiang. Rather, China’s abhorrent treatment of Uyghur Muslims is a means of maintaining control over Xinjiang and its economic assets, which have become essential to China’s capacity to grow and diversify its economy.

With 1.66 million square kilometers of land area, 40% of which are suitable for agriculture and forestry, Xinjiang has great potential for agricultural development.^{5 1} It is already one of the

^{4 2} UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, December 9, 1948, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 78, p. 277.

^{4 3} *Id.*

^{4 4} Newline Institute for Strategy and Public Policy, Raoul Wallenberg Center for Human Rights, *The Uyghur Genocide: An Examination of China’s Breaches of the 1948 Genocide Convention*, (March 2021), <https://newlinesinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/Chinas-Breaches-of-the-GC3-2.pdf>.

^{4 5} *Id.*

^{4 6} Samuel, *supra* note 13.

^{4 7} Qin, *supra* note 32; Edward Wong, Chris Buckley, *U.S. Says China’s Repression of Uyghurs is ‘Genocide’*, New York Times (July 27, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/19/us/politics/trump-china-xinjiang.html>, (Accessed: 07/19/2022).

^{4 8} *Canada’s Parliament Declares China’s Treatment of Uyghurs a Genocide*, BBC (February 23, 2021), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-56163220>, (Accessed: 07/19/2022); Reuters Staff, *Dutch Parliament: China’s Treatment of Uyghurs is Genocide*, Reuters (February 25, 2021, 9:51 AM), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-netherlands-china-uyghurs-idUSKBN2AP2CI>, (Accessed: 07/19/2022).

^{4 9} Wright et al., *supra* note 13.

^{5 0} *Id.*

^{5 1} *Natural Resource Plan (Chinese to English Translation)*, Statistic Bureau of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, June 24, 2015, <https://web.archive.org/web/20151222152943/http://www.xjtj.gov.cn/html>; Xu Jianying, *China’s Hard-Fought Successful Governance in Xinjiang a Resolute Response to “Three Evil Forces”*, Global Times (May 27,

greatest cotton-producing regions in the world, and it is a major producer of wheat, corn, and rice.^{5 2} Furthermore, it abuts 8 different countries on China's northwest border (Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Mongolia, and India), making it China's gateway to Central Asia.^{5 3} Trade routes linking China with Central Asia and the Middle East pass directly through Xinjiang.^{5 4}

Xinjiang also has an abundance of natural resources, including large mineral reserves.^{5 5} The region is internationally known for its muscovite and asbestos, which are useful minerals in the manufacturing and construction industries.^{5 6} It also contains an abundance of gemstones and Khotan Jade, which have high monetary value and are used to make jewelry.^{5 7}

Perhaps most importantly, Xinjiang is the foundation of China's fossil fuel industry. China accounts for nearly half of the world's coal production, and 40% of China's coal comes from Xinjiang. This makes Xinjiang one of the greatest coal-producing regions in the world.^{5 8} It also means Xinjiang is fundamentally important to China's economy, as coal accounts for nearly 60% of China's energy consumption.^{5 9}

Xinjiang is also China's greatest producer of oil and gas, two resources that, together, account for another 30% of China's total energy consumption.^{6 0} Xinjiang's Tarim Basin contains

2022, 9:34 PM), <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202205/1266728.shtml>, (Accessed: 08/02/2022); China.org.cn, *Xinjiang's Natural Resources*, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/MATERIAL/139230.htm>, (Accessed: 07/25/2022).

^{5 2} John Sudworth, *China's Tainted Cotton*, BBC (December, 2020), <https://www.bbc.com/news/extra/nz0g306v8c/china-tainted-cotton>, (Accessed: 06/29/2022); Global Times Staff Reporters, *Domestic Grain Supply Guaranteed by Upgraded Tech, Favorable Conditions Despite Challenges*, Global Times (May 18, 2022, 9:07 PM), <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202205/1265985.shtml>, (Accessed: 08/15/2022); Cyril Ip, *The Past, Present, and Future of Oil in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Region*, *South China Morning Post*, (February 12, 2022, 2:00 pm), <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/3166036/past-present-and-future-oil-chinas-xinjiang-uygur-region>, (Accessed: 07/18/2022).

^{5 3} Abhishek G Bhaya, *Xinjiang: A Gateway to China's Belt and Road Initiative*, China Global TV Network (August 16, 2021, 7:00 PM), <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2021-08-18/Xinjiang-A-gateway-to-China-s-Belt-and-Road-Initiative-12OLMoV97Wg/index.html>, (Accessed: 07/01/2022).

^{5 4} *Id.*; Candice Song, *The History of the Silk Road in China*, China Highlights (March 17, 2022), <https://www.chinahighlights.com/silkroad/history.htm>, (Accessed: 08/12/2022); Andrew Chatzky, James McBride, *China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative*, Council on Foreign Relations (January 28, 2020, 7:00 AM EST), <https://www.cfr.org/background/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>, (Accessed: 07/15/2022).

^{5 5} *Other Natural Resources of Xinjiang*, Global Times (February 28, 2011), <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/628349.shtml>, (Accessed: 08/15/2022).

^{5 6} *Xinjiang's Natural Resources*, *supra* note 52.

^{5 7} *Id.*; Andrew Jacobs, *Jade From China's West Surpasses Gold in Value*, New York Times (September 20, 2010), <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/21/world/asia/21jade.html>, (Accessed: 08/15/2022); Xinjiangtravel.org, *Khotan Jade – Xinjiang Travel*, Xinjiang Travel Experts, <https://www.xinjiangtravel.org/attraction/khotan-jade.html>.

^{5 8} Wong, *supra* note 1; *Global Coal Production Distribution 2021, by Country*, Statista Research Department (July 20, 2022), <https://www.statista.com/statistics/265638/distribution-of-coal-production-worldwide/>, (Accessed: 07/22/2022).

^{5 9} China Power Team, *How is China's Energy Footprint Changing?*, China Power (March 17, 2022), <https://chinapower.csis.org/energy-footprint/>, (Accessed: 08/15/2022); *Share of Coal in Total Energy Consumption in China 2010-2020*, Statista Research Department (June 14, 2022), <https://www.statista.com/statistics/280888/consumption-of-coal-as-a-share-of-total-energy-consumption-in-china/>, (Accessed: 07/19/2022).

^{6 0} *Share of Petroleum in China's Total Energy Consumption 2010-2020*, Statista Research Department (May 10, 2022), <https://www.statista.com/statistics/280896/consumption-of-crude-oil-energy-in-china/>, (Accessed:

over 16 billion tons of oil and gas and is the largest oil and gas bearing area in China.^{6 1} North of the Tarim Basin is the Junggar Basin, which has China's second-largest reserve.^{6 2} It is home to Karamay Oil Field, China's first large oil field, which produces over 10 million tons of oil and gas every year.^{6 3} Oil production from the Tarim and Junggar Basins will increase as PetroChina (China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), China's primary state-owned oil corporation, has recently discovered untapped reserves in both regions, each estimated to contain at least 1 billion tons of oil and gas.^{6 4} Overall, Xinjiang's oil and gas accounts for over 25% of China's total, and that will increase as more reserves will likely be discovered.^{6 5} As China's main producer of the three resources that support almost 90% of China's energy consumption, Xinjiang is the backbone of China's energy economy.

Having access to Xinjiang's resources provides China with the means to ensure high levels of economic growth for decades. However, China's access to these resources has been complicated by the government's relationship with the region's Uyghur Muslims. Due to historical differences and a lack of cultural understanding between Uyghur and Han civilizations, friction has always existed between China's government and the Uyghur people. Consequently, the CCP considers Uyghurs to be a threat to its rule over Xinjiang, and its access to the region's economic resources.

1.2.2 “The Uyghur Threat”

1.2.2.1 The Historical Disconnect between Han Civilization and Uyghur Civilization

While the exact length of time that Uyghurs have existed in Xinjiang is uncertain, it is uncontested that they have been there for thousands of years.^{6 6} Xinjiang is where Uyghurs have developed their way of life and established a culture consisting of distinct customs and beliefs.^{6 7} It is also the only region in the world where the most commonly spoken language is “Uyghur,” a Turkic language written using a version of the Arabic alphabet specific to Uyghur.^{6 8} Historically,

07/19/2022); U.S. Energy Information Administration *Country Analysis Executive Summary: China*, (September 30, 2020), https://www.eia.gov/international/content/analysis/countries_long/China/china.pdf.

^{6 1} *Id.*

^{6 2} *Id.*

^{6 3} *Id.*; Wong, *supra* note 1.

^{6 4} Ip, *supra* note 53; *PetroChina Strikes Big Gas Find in China Xinjiang's Junggar Basin: State Media*, Reuters, (December 20, 2020), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-gas-discovery-petrochina-idUSKBN28V084>, (Accessed: 08/12/2020).

^{6 5} Thomas Overton, *The Energy Industry in Xinjiang, China: Potential, Problems, and Solutions*, Powermag, (January 1st, 2016), <https://www.powermag.com/energy-industry-xinjiang-china-potential-problems-solutions-web/>, (Accessed: 07/04/2022) ; *Xinjiang's Natural Resources*, *supra* note 52.

^{6 6} Michael Dillon, *A Uyghurs History of China: The Repression in China's Xinjiang Region has Deep Historical Roots*, History Today (January 1, 2020), <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/behind-times/uighurs%E2%80%9999-history-china>, (Accessed: 07/04/2022); Nabijan Tursun, (August 2008), *The Formation of Modern Uyghur Historiography and Competing Perspectives toward Uyghur History*, *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 6(3), 87-100, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/105554/CEFAQ200808.pdf>; *Brief History of East Turkestan*, World Uyghur Congress, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160306105709/http://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/?cat=132>.

^{6 7} *Who Are the Uyghurs and Why is China Being Accused of Genocide?*, BBC (May 24, 2022), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-22278037>, (Accessed: 08/01/2022).

^{6 8} *Id.*; Omniglot.com, *Uyghur Language, Alphabets, and Pronunciation*, (September 26, 2021), <https://omniglot.com/writing/uyghur.htm>, (Accessed: 08/05/2022).

Uyghurs and Chinese had limited contact.⁶⁹ Therefore, Uyghur culture does not contain any elements of traditional Han culture.⁷⁰

In the late 19th century, the Qing Dynasty expanded China's territory westward and established hegemony over Xinjiang.⁷¹ At that time, the region of Xinjiang was known as "Turkestan"; It was not until its annexation by the Qing in 1884 that China began referring to it as "Xinjiang."⁷² The name "Xinjiang" is telling of China's lack of exposure to the region before then. In Mandarin Chinese, "Xinjiang" means "new territory."⁷³ Given that Uyghur civilization had already existed there for thousands of years, referring to the region as "Xinjiang/New Territory" inaccurately represented its history. It was only "new territory" to the Chinese because they were unfamiliar with the region. The name "Xinjiang" is symbolic of the historical disconnect between Chinese and Uyghur Civilizations that existed until the late 1800s. Furthermore, it demonstrates a lack of cultural understanding between Uyghurs and Han Chinese which has always been a source of antagonism in their relationship.⁷⁴

Since annexing Xinjiang in 1884, China has exploited the region to serve its own national interests. Due to fundamental differences between Han and Uyghur civilizations, China's national interests have not corresponded with Uyghur interests, and China's government has operated in disdain for Uyghur customs and disregard for the interests of the Uyghur people. Consequently, Uyghurs have been reluctant to accept Chinese rule, and China's reign over Xinjiang has been turbulent. It has been a history characterized by Uyghur dissatisfaction, resistance, and episodes of rebellion against China's repressive governance.

1.2.2.2 Uyghur Rebellions Against the Chinese Government

For brief periods in the 20th century, Uyghurs broke free from China's control and established independent republics: the First East Turkestan Republic (1933-1934) ("East Turkestan Republic" hereon referred to as: ETR) and the Second ETR (1944-1949). Since the establishment of the PRC, the first and second ETRs have served as reminders to the CCP that the Uyghurs are a threat not to be taken for granted.

The First ETR was established after Uyghurs rebelled against Jin Shuren, a brutally repressive governor of Xinjiang.⁷⁵ Jin came into power after his predecessor was assassinated in 1928.⁷⁶ He instituted harsh policies prohibiting Uyghurs from practicing Islam and replacing local Uyghur leaders with Han Chinese officials.⁷⁷ Furthermore, Xinjiang's fertile lands were seized from Uyghur farmers and allocated to Chinese colonists from the neighboring Gansu

⁶⁹ Mamtimin Ala, Salih Hidayar, *Independence is the Only way Forward for East Turkestan*, Foreign Policy August 11, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/08/11/independence-east-turkistan-china-uyghurs-xinjiang/>, (Accessed: 07/13/2022).

⁷⁰ *Id.*

⁷¹ *Id.*

⁷² *Id.*

⁷³ *Id.*

⁷⁴ *Id.*

⁷⁵ *Id.*; East Turkestan Government in Exile, *The First East Turkestan Republic (1933-1934)*, <https://east-turkistan.net/first-east-turkistan-republic-1933-1934/#:~:text=Following%20heavy%20fighting%20between%20the%20army%20of%20the,withdrawing%20with%20most%20of%20the%20Army%20to%20Atush>, (Accessed: 08/01/2022) [hereinafter *First East Turkestan Republic*].

⁷⁶ *First East Turkestan Republic*, *supra* note 76.

⁷⁷ *Id.*

province, forcing Uyghurs to relocate to the desert.⁷⁸ Resistance movements quickly began to emerge in Uyghur communities and a full-scale rebellion broke out in 1931.⁷⁹ Two years later, Uyghurs declared independence from the Chinese government by establishing the First ETR.⁸⁰ It survived just 5 months but served as the inspiration for a second ETR which would endure for multiple years.⁸¹

The Second ETR was established in 1944 after Uyghurs rebelled against the leadership of Sheng Shicai, another brutally repressive Chinese governor.⁸² After suppressing a Uyghur uprising in 1937, Sheng instituted a campaign to purge Xinjiang of any Uyghur he deemed a threat to his power.⁸³ Overall, roughly 200,000 Uyghurs were arrested and executed.⁸⁴ This precipitated another Uyghur separatist movement against the Chinese government known as the Ili Rebellion.⁸⁵ This time, the uprising would not be suppressed; a coalition of Uyghur rebels who resented the brutal Chinese regime quickly overthrew China's Xinjiang forces and established the Second ETR.⁸⁶

The Second ETR had all aspects of a functioning government including departments, ministries, a judicial system, a national army, and even its own currency.⁸⁷ It was founded with the objective of "driving out the Han Chinese colonizers" and "establishing a strong and prosperous independent state with true equality for all ethnicities."⁸⁸ For five years, it succeeded; Uyghurs lived free from China's oppressive rule.

Nevertheless, the respite from Chinese oppression enjoyed by Uyghurs during the Second ETR was short-lived. The CCP established the PRC in 1949 and Xinjiang was quickly recaptured.⁸⁹ Under the leadership of Mao Zedong, the new Chinese government left nothing to chance in reconsolidating China's power: small-scale resistance movements were brutally suppressed, and over 150,000 Uyghurs were deemed "enemies of China" and executed.⁹⁰ Over the following decade, tens of thousands of additional Uyghurs accused of being "counter-revolutionaries," and "foreign agents" were imprisoned and executed.⁹¹

After the First and Second ETRs, the perception of Uyghurs as a threat to China's rule over Xinjiang was deeply ingrained into the CCP when it established the PRC. Consequently, the CCP has always governed Xinjiang with a heavy hand, implementing repressive policies and subjecting Uyghurs to religious persecution. Not surprisingly, these actions have deteriorated the relationship between Uyghurs and the Chinese.

⁷⁸ *Id.*

⁷⁹ *Id.*

⁸⁰ *Id.*

⁸¹ *Id.*

⁸² Ala, *supra* note 70; East Turkistan Government in Exile, *Second East Turkestan Republic (1944-1949)*, <https://east-turkistan.net/second-east-turkistan-republic-1944-1949/>, (Accessed: 08/05/2022) [hereinafter *Second East Turkestan Republic*]

⁸³ Ala, *supra* note 70; *Second East Turkestan Republic*, *supra* note 83.

⁸⁴ Ala, *supra* note 70; *Second East Turkestan Republic*, *supra* note 83.

⁸⁵ Linda Benson, (September 1993), Ili Rebellion: The Moslem Challenge to Chinese Authority in Xinjiang, 1944-1949, *The China Quarterly*, 135, 598-600, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741000014120>.

⁸⁶ Ala, *supra* note 70; *Second East Turkestan Republic*, *supra* note 83.

⁸⁷ *Second East Turkestan Republic*, *supra* note 83.

⁸⁸ *Id.*

⁸⁹ *Id.*; Ala, *supra* note 70.

⁹⁰ Ala, *supra* note 70; *Second East Turkestan Republic*, *supra* note 83.

⁹¹ Ala, *supra* note 70; *Second East Turkestan Republic*, *supra* note 83.

1.2.3 Repressing the “Uyghur Threat”: The Source of China’s Violence

1.2.3.1 Repressive Tactics of the CCP

The standard practice of the CCP in dealing with the “Uyghur threat” is through repression. While this has prevented rebellion, it has also precipitated violence. Foremost among the CCP’s repressive tactics are policies that have alienated Uyghurs from employment and decent standards of living, and policies that prevent Uyghurs from practicing Islam.^{9 2} Since the early 1950s, the CCP has encouraged Han Chinese to move into Xinjiang from other parts of China by offering profitable employment and quality housing.^{9 3} Incoming Han workers have been given priority to jobs in resource development which has alienated Uyghurs from the employment market, relegated them to low standards of living, and created massive inequality between Uyghurs and Xinjiang’s Han Chinese.^{9 4} The CCP has also carried out campaigns in Xinjiang brutally suppressing the practice of Islam. Some of its abuses include destroying Xinjiang’s Mosques and converting them into communist party buildings and destroying important religious texts written in Uyghur.^{9 5} They have even pointlessly humiliated Islamic leaders in the Uyghur community by forcing them to engage in acts against their religion, such as eating pork.^{9 6}

Naturally, many Uyghurs have come to resent the CCP. At times, this resentment has manifested in violence. The CCP argues that such violence constitutes terrorism and is motivated by separatism, and it has used this violence as a pretext for its campaign of mass incarceration (or “mass re-education,” as the CCP puts it) in Xinjiang.^{9 7} The truth is much simpler. Violent acts committed by the Uyghur people are the manifestation of dissatisfaction generated by decades of abuse and cultural oppression by the CCP. With no platform available through which Uyghurs can express opinions, violence is resorted to as a means of voicing dissatisfaction with how they have been treated. The narrative of terrorism and separatism conveyed by the CCP is no more than a cover story used to allow the CCP to continue its economic exploitation of Xinjiang.

1.2.3.2 Uyghur-Related Violence: Baren Conflict; Guhlja Massacre; Shaoguan-Urumqi Incidents

Three major incidents have occurred since 1990 that demonstrate the falsity of the CCP’s assertions that Uyghur violence is linked to terrorism and separatism. These incidents clearly show how violence is generated by the repressive policies of the CCP. The first is the 1990 Baren Conflict, which erupted after Uyghur leaders led more than 200 people to government offices in

^{9 2} Isobel Cockerell, *China’s Oppression of Xinjiang’s Uyghurs: a Visual History*, Coda, (March 11, 2020), <https://www.codastory.com/authoritarian-tech/china-oppression-uyghurs-history/>, (Accessed: 06/29/2022).

^{9 3} *Second East Turkestan Republic*, *supra* note 83; Cockerell, *supra* note 93.

^{9 4} *Second East Turkestan Republic*, *supra* note 83; Cockerell, *supra* note 93.

^{9 5} Cockerell, *supra* note 93; Lily Kuo, *Revealed: New Evidence of China’s Mission to Raze the Mosques of Xinjiang*, The Guardian (May 6, 2019, 9:00 PM EDT), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/07/revealed-new-evidence-of-chinas-mission-to-raze-the-mosques-of-xinjiang>, (Accessed: 07/28/2022); Abduweli Ayup, *The Danger of Teaching Uyghur in China*, Pen Opp (November 18, 2019), https://www.penopp.org/articles/abduweli-ayup?language_content_entity=en, (Accessed: 07/28/2022).

^{9 6} Ted Regencia, *Uyghurs Forced to Eat Pork as China Expands Xinjiang Pig Farms*, Al Jazeera, (December 4, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/4/holduighurs-forced-to-eat-pork-as-hog-farming-in-xinjiang-expands>, (Accessed: 07/15/2022); Ayshee Bhaduri, *Uyghurs in ‘Re-education Camps’ Forced to Eat Pork on Fridays as China Pushes to Expand Pig Farms in Xinjiang*, Hindustan Times, (December 4, 2020, 6:03 pm), <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/uyghurs-in-re-education-camps-forced-to-eat-pork-on-fridays-as-china-pushes-to-expand-pig-farms-in-xinjiang/story-rhrWxEJZByEJz8qFYAZIZL.html>, (Accessed: 08/14/2022).

^{9 7} Gan, *supra* note 16.

Xinjiang's Baren Township to protest the mass migration of Han Chinese into Xinjiang.⁹⁸ Violence between protestors and government forces ensued, killing more than 50 Uyghurs and 6 People's Liberation Army (PLA) officers.⁹⁹ This sparked further violence in other cities throughout Xinjiang, resulting in over 100 more deaths.¹⁰⁰ 7 years later, the Ghulja Massacre occurred when Uyghurs protested the government's suppression of attempts by Uyghur leaders to revive traditional Uyghur culture.¹⁰¹ After clashing with protestors for two days, the PLA opened fire on the demonstration.¹⁰² While the exact death toll remains unknown, sources estimate that around 200 people died.¹⁰³

More recently, ethnic tension between Han and Uyghurs caused by CCP policies reached a tipping point with the 2009 Shaoguan-Urumqi riots. A dispute between migrant Uyghurs and Han Chinese began at a toy factory in Shaoguan, a city in the southeastern Guangdong province, after Police responded to allegations that 2 Han women were sexually assaulted by 6 Uyghur men.¹⁰⁴ Police found no evidence of assault, but ethnic tensions continued to simmer, and a violent brawl ultimately erupted at the factory.¹⁰⁵ 2 Uyghurs were killed and another 120, mostly Uyghurs, were injured.¹⁰⁶ News of the clash spread to Xinjiang, sparking protests in Urumqi that quickly turned violent, with Uyghurs fighting police officers and Han residents in the streets of the city.¹⁰⁷ Nearly 200 people died and over 1,700 were injured, most of whom were Han Chinese.¹⁰⁸ In the following months, over 1,000 Uyghurs were detained for their roles in the riots.¹⁰⁹ Among them, more than 400 were charged criminally, and over 25 were issued death sentences.¹¹⁰

The 1990 Baren Conflict, the 1997 Ghulja Massacre, and the 2009 Shaoguan-Urumqi incidents demonstrate that the source of most Uyghur-related violence is dissatisfaction and social problems caused by the CCP's repressive ethnic policy. The Baren Conflict was the result of widespread discontent caused by the mass migration of Han Chinese into Xinjiang; the Ghulja Massacre was the result of anger caused by the CCP's systematic repression of Uyghur culture; and the Shaoguan-Urumqi incidents occurred as a result of ethnic animosity between Uyghurs and Han Chinese created by the policies of the CCP. These were not, as the CCP may suggest, pre-meditated terrorist attacks orchestrated by international terrorist organizations or extremist Uyghur

⁹⁸ Rongxing Guo, *China's Spatial (Dis)integration: Political Economy of the Interethnic Unrest in Xinjiang, Uyghur Unrest in Xinjiang: Narrative*, Chandos Publishing, p. 44, (July 15, 2015).

⁹⁹ *China/Uyghurs (1949-Present)*, University of Central Arkansas Political Science Department, <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/dadm-project/asiapacific-region/chinauighurs-1949-present/>.

¹⁰⁰ *Id.*

¹⁰¹ Guo, *supra* note 99, at 45.

¹⁰² *Id.*

¹⁰³ Gulchehra Hoja, *Uyghurs Still Push for Accountability 25 Years after Ghulja Massacre*, Radio Free Asia, (February 13, 2022), <https://www.radiofree.org/2022/02/13/uyghurs-still-push-for-accountability-25-years-after-ghulja-massacre/>, (Accessed: 07/03/2022).

¹⁰⁴ Guo, *supra* note 99, at 47.

¹⁰⁵ *Id.*

¹⁰⁶ *Id.*; Cockerell, *supra* note 93.

¹⁰⁷ Guo, *supra* note 99, at 47; Cockerell, *supra* note 93.

¹⁰⁸ Guo, *supra* note 99, at 48; Cockerell, *supra* note 93.

¹⁰⁹ Guo, *supra* note 99, at 48.

¹¹⁰ *Id.*

separatists.¹¹¹ They were all incidents of violence that arose from demonstrations protesting the actions of the CCP.

It is true that some Uyghur activists do promote separatism; it is also true that some Uyghur Muslims have made international excursions to join radical terrorist organizations, such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. However, evidence has shown that Uyghurs in Xinjiang simply do not have the strong connections to international terrorist groups that the CCP portrays.¹¹² Evidence also shows that Uyghur separatists do not have a strong presence in Xinjiang's Uyghur communities.¹¹³ The narrative conveyed by the CCP that Xinjiang is a breeding ground for extremist separatists and terrorists is no more than a cover story to hide its deliberate oppression, persecution, and attempted eradication of Uyghur Muslims to allow for the unobstructed exploitation of Xinjiang's economic potential.

1.2.3.3 Ilham Tohti

In 2014, Ilham Tohti was sentenced to life in prison on charges of separatism. The story of his conviction illuminates how the CCP fabricates a false narrative that Uyghur communities are pervaded by violent global terrorists and radical separatists.

Tohti is a Uyghur scholar and economist who formerly served as a professor at Minzu University.¹¹⁴ He opposes Xinjiang's independence and spent his career working to promote peaceful Han-Uyghur dialogue.¹¹⁵ Tohti's position against separatism, expertise in economics, and Uyghur identity made him valuable to the CCP, which is why he was sought out to serve as a professor at Minzu University, a college for China's ethnic minorities that publicly proclaims loyalty to the CCP.¹¹⁶

While Tohti may not be an advocate of separatism, he was a prominent critic of the CCP's ethnic policies.¹¹⁷ Tohti asserts the policies administered by the CCP in Xinjiang have led to the ethnic tensions which have caused China's outbreaks of violence.¹¹⁸ He believes improving Han-Uyghur relations would help alleviate the pressure.¹¹⁹

¹¹¹ *China: New Uyghur Attacks and Alleged Links to the Islamic State*, European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center, <http://www.esisc.org/publications/briefings/china-new-uyghur-attacks-and-alleged-links-to-the-islamic-state>.

¹¹² Philip B. K. Potter (Winter 2013), *Terrorism in China: Growing Threats with Global Implications*, *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, 7 (4), 71–74, https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/SSQ/documents/Volume-07_Issue-4/2013winter-Potter.pdf; U.S. State Department, *Foreign terrorist organizations – East Turkestan Islamic Movement*, 237 (Rep. 2015) [hereinafter *Foreign Terrorist Organizations*].

¹¹³ Yehan (a pseudonym for a Uyghur writer in exile), *Calls for Independence May Not Help the Uyghur Cause*, *Foreign Policy* (July 27, 2021), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/07/uyghur-independence-hurting-case-xinjiang> (Accessed: 07/13/2022) [hereinafter Yehan]; *Foreign Terrorist Organizations*, *supra* note 113.

¹¹⁴ Yehan, *supra* note 114; *Ilham Tohti*, World Uyghur Congress Uyghur Tribunal (September 12, 2016), <https://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/ilham-tohti/>, (Accessed: 08/17/2022).

¹¹⁵ Yehan, *supra* note 114; *Ilham Tohti*, *supra* note 115.

¹¹⁶ Emily Feng, Amy Cheng, *Chinese Universities are Enshrining Communist Party Control in Their Charters*, NPR (January 20, 2020), <https://www.npr.org/2020/01/20/796377204/chinese-universities-are-enshrining-communist-party-control-in-their-charters>.

¹¹⁷ Jonathan Kaiman, *China Accused of Using Ilham Tohti Case to Halt Criticism of Ethnic Policies*, *The Guardian* (September 18, 2014), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/18/china-ilham-tohti-uyghur-criticism-ethnic-policies>, (Accessed: 08/17/2022); Shohret Hoshur, Sarah Jackson-Han, *Uyghur Economist Silenced*, *Radio Free Asia* (March 26, 2009), <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/uyghureconomist-03252009174253.html>, (Accessed: 08/16/2022).

¹¹⁸ Hoshur, *supra* note 118.

¹¹⁹ *Id.*

In 2006, Tohti founded “Uyghur Online,” a website that was intended to foster cross-cultural dialogue and improve Han-Uyghur relations.¹²⁰ However, the website’s detailed history of the government’s discrimination against Uyghurs quickly drew the attention of Chinese authorities.¹²¹ For years, the CCP closely monitored the website, shutting it down several times before 2014.¹²² Ultimately, it led to Tohti’s arrest, which occurred on January 15, 2014, during a raid on his home.¹²³ Ironically, after dedicating his career to opposing Xinjiang’s independence and working to foster cultural understanding between Uyghurs and Han Chinese, Tohti was accused of “spreading separatist ideas” and “advocating for Xinjiang’s independence.”¹²⁴ Within 8 days of his arrest, he was convicted and sentenced to life in prison.¹²⁵

Tohti’s only real crime was identifying the CCP’s ethnic policy as the source of Uyghur-related violence and creating a platform through which he could spread that knowledge. By doing so, he weakened the CCP’s “cover story” that Uyghur-related violence is a product of terrorism and separatism, and he thus became a threat to the implementation of the repressive policies that pave the way for the CCP’s exploitation of Xinjiang’s economic resources. The CCP would have been fully aware that Tohti opposed separatism as it was likely a primary reason for hiring him as a professor at Minzu University. Convicting Tohti of a sham crime and throwing his life away was an unjust means of dealing with the threat he had become.

Unfortunately, Tohti’s story is not unique. He is one of roughly 2 million Uyghurs who has been labeled a “violent extremist separatist” or “terrorist” by the CCP and locked away in a detention camp. The “violent terrorists” and “extremist separatists” which the CCP uses to justify its horrific actions in Xinjiang are innocent people like Ilham Tohti.

Part 2. Xi Jinping’s CCP and Uyghur Abuse

Introduction

While China’s oppression of Uyghur Muslims is not a new phenomenon, its escalation to current levels is unprecedented.¹²⁶ This escalation coincides with a new era of Chinese leadership under Xi Jinping and is attributed to Xi’s aspirations to reform the American-led international order. Thus far in the 21st century, America has shown signs of decline as a global superpower while China has continued a rise in global standing that began in the early 1980’s.¹²⁷ Xi came into power in 2012 with a vision to exploit these circumstances and challenge U.S. hegemony. Xinjiang is fundamental to this vision as China has become dependent on the region to maintain high rates of economic growth, and the perceived risk of the “Uyghur threat” (See 1.2.2) is now seen as a threat to China’s goal of reforming international order. The CCP’s response is to remove the threat, which is why it is administering a horrific campaign to eradicate Uyghurs from Xinjiang.

2.1 An Opportune Time to Advance Global Standing

¹²⁰ Mihray Abdilim, Joshua Lipes, *Thousands of Articles Restored from Downed Website of Jailed Uyghur Scholar Ilham Tohti*, Radio Free Asia (October 8, 2020), <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/website-10082020162512.html>, (Accessed: 07/01/2022).

¹²¹ *Id.*

¹²² *Id.*

¹²³ *Id.*; Hoshur, *supra* note 118; Kaiman, *supra* note 118.

¹²⁴ *Ilham Tohti*, *supra* note 115; Abdilim, *supra* note 121.

¹²⁵ Kaiman, *supra* note 118; Abdilim, *supra* note 121.

¹²⁶ *Break Their Lineage*, *supra* note 15.

¹²⁷ Martin Armstrong, *The Decline and Fall of USA and the Rise of China*, Armstrong Economics (March 4, 2021), <https://www.armstrongeconomics.com/international-news/china/the-decline-fall-of-the-usa-rise-of-china/>.

2.1.1 U.S. Decline

Thus far in the 21st century, the U.S. has faced challenges politically, economically, and socially which China has perceived as signs of decline. The first major challenge was the 9/11/01 Terrorist Attacks. 9/11 was the deadliest attack ever to occur on American soil and it has had lasting impacts on the American economy. Significantly, it forever changed how economic resources are allocated in the U.S. 9/11 demonstrated the United States' vulnerability to a foreign attack and, after 9/11, resources once used to stimulate production projects started being used to strengthen economic security.¹²⁸ Unprecedented quantities of capital and resources are now used to strengthen security in manufacturing, distribution, finance, travel, and communication.¹²⁹ While the tangible effects of having to reform resource allocation are hard to quantify, it has surely impacted GDP output and the economy has had to adapt.¹³⁰

By 2008, the U.S. economy was finally stabilizing after 9/11 when it was hit with the worst financial crisis since the great depression.¹³¹ Years of excessive risk-taking by global financial institutions and predatory lending to home-income buyers caused the burst of a housing bubble and subsequent financial crisis.¹³² The U.S. economy fell into a state of contraction as U.S. GDP output fell by 4.3% and unemployment more than doubled from under 5% to over 10%.¹³³ Economic growth did not rise above 2% until 2012 and unemployment remained at historically high levels even longer.¹³⁴ 9/11 and the 08' Financial Crisis have caused stagnation of the American economy throughout much of the 21st century.

Most of the negative economic effects caused by 9/11 and the 08' financial crisis have not been permanent. In 2021, the U.S. economy grew by 5.7% which is 9.08% more than it grew in 2000, the year preceding the 9/11 terrorist attacks.¹³⁵ However, due to the periods of stagnation that succeeded 9/11 and the financial crisis, China has been able to make economic gains on the U.S.

In addition to these major economic events, the U.S. has been challenged internally by emerging and re-emerging social issues. Issues related to race and ethnicity have been especially turbulent. The 9/11 attacks precipitated an unprecedented level of islamophobia due to the

¹²⁸ Congressional Research Service, *The Economic Effects of 9/11: A Retrospective Assessment*, RL31617-Version 3, Gail E. Makinen, <https://crsreports.congress.gov>, (Accessed: 07/25/2022); *9/11 Commission, Homeland Security, and Intelligence Reform*, U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/issues/9-11-commission>, (Accessed: 12/18/2022) [hereinafter *9/11 Commission*].

¹²⁹ Makinen, *supra* note 130; *9/11 Commission*, *supra* note 130.

¹³⁰ *9/11 Commission*, *supra* note 130.

¹³¹ Matt Egan, *2008: Worse than the Great Depression?*, CNN Money (August 27, 2014), <https://money.cnn.com/2014/08/27/news/economy/html>, (Accessed: 06/29/2022).

¹³² Bilge Yimaz, David Musto, *Victimizing the Borrowers: Predatory Lending's Role in the Subprime Mortgage Crisis*, Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania (February 20, 2008), <https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/victimizing-the-borrowers-predatory-lendings-role-in-the-subprime-mortgage-crisis/>, (Accessed: 08/01/2022); Mark Williams, *Uncontrolled Risk*, McGraw-Hill Education, 213, (2010).

¹³³ John Weinberg, *The Great Recession and its Aftermath*, Federal Reserve History (November 22, 2013), <https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/great-recession-and-its-aftermath>, (Accessed: 08/01/2022).

¹³⁴ *Id.*

¹³⁵ Macrotrends.net, *U.S. GDP Growth Rate 1961-2022, 2022*, <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/USA/united-states/gdp-growth-rate>, (Accessed: 07/25/2022).

spreading belief that the religion of Islam promoted such acts of violence.¹³⁶ This has led to discrimination, persecution, and abuse of Muslims in American society.¹³⁷ Furthermore, African American advocacy groups, such as Black Lives Matter, have been increasingly active in seeking equality and calling for retribution for the injustices that African Americans routinely experience.¹³⁸ All this has been intensified by the Donald Trump presidency which legitimized white supremacist groups and irritated racial advocacy groups.¹³⁹ Additionally, his implementation of anti-Muslim policies, such as the ban on visitors from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the U.S. and reinstating a database of immigrants from Muslim-majority countries, further escalated Islamophobia.¹⁴⁰

The U.S. government has also struggled to address reoccurring political issues such as immigration, health care, wealth inequality, and gun control.¹⁴¹ These are issues that used to be addressable through the political process. However, ideological differences in American politics have grown to levels that experts say have not existed since before the Civil War.¹⁴² Due to political polarization, common political disputes that are characteristic of a democratic society now cause deep division in the U.S.

Members of the international community, especially Russia and China, have perceived America's difficulties in the 21st century as signs of weakness and vulnerability. Russia has already exploited this vulnerability by meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Now, China seeks to capitalize on these circumstances to advance its international standing.

2.1.2 The Rise of China

In contrast to the U.S., the 21st century has been a period of rising power and prosperity for China. China reformed its economy in 1978 and has been increasing its global standing ever

¹³⁶ Mina Al-Oraibi et al., *Did 9/11 Change the United States?*, Foreign Policy (September 8, 2021), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/09/08/september-11-generation-change-afghanistan-iraq/>, (Accessed: 08/01/2022).

¹³⁷ Farah Pandith, *The U.S. Muslims, and a Turbulent Post-9/11 World*, Council on Foreign Relations (September 1, 2021), <https://www.cfr.org/article/us-muslims-and-turbulent-post-911-world>, (Accessed: 07/28/2022) ; Al Oraibi et al., *supra* note 138.

¹³⁸ Jennifer L Hochschild, *American Racial and Ethnic Politics in the 21st Century: A Cautious Look Ahead*, Brookings, (March 1, 1998), <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/american-racial-and-ethnic-politics-in-the-21st-century-a-cautious-look-ahead/>, (Accessed: 08/01/2022).

¹³⁹ John Haltiwanger, *Trump has Repeatedly Been Endorsed by White Supremacist Groups and Other Far-right Extremists, and They've Looked to Him as a Source of Encouragement*, Business Insider (September 30, 2020, 3:59 pm), <https://www.businessinsider.com/trumps-history-of-support-from-white-supremacist-far-right-groups-2020-9>, (Accessed: 08/09/2022).

¹⁴⁰ Faiza Patel, *The Islamophobic Administration*, Brennan Center for Justice (April 29, 2017), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/islamophobic-administration>, (Accessed: 07/29/2022); Dara Lind, *Donald Trump's Proposed "Muslim Registry," Explained*, Vox (November 16, 2016), <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/11/16/13649764/trump-muslim-register-database>, (Accessed: 07/29/2022); Al Oraibi et al., *supra* note 138.

¹⁴¹ Laura Paisley, *Political Polarization at its Worst Since the Civil War*, University of Southern California (November 8, 2016), <https://news.usc.edu/110124/political-polarization-at-its-worst-since-the-civil-war-2>, (Accessed: 06/29/2022).

¹⁴² *Id.*

since. In 2010, it overtook Japan as the world's second-largest economy.¹⁴³ Now, China seeks to leverage its competitive advantages to challenge American hegemony.

Over the past 40 years, China has experienced unprecedented economic growth. Before that growth began, however, Chinese people experienced extreme hardship. In 1978, despite accounting for over a fifth of the world's population (21.03% - most of any country), China produced less than 1.5% of the world's GDP.¹⁴⁴ With over 88% of the population living in extreme poverty, the average life expectancy of a Chinese person was just 65.¹⁴⁵

The China we know today is much different. It is the world's second-largest economy, with its share of the global economy increasing to 16% in 2020, and the world's leading exporter.¹⁴⁶ Since 2007, China has contributed more to international economic growth than any other country.¹⁴⁷ More importantly, 800 million people have been lifted out of poverty, and the standard of living for the average person has increased dramatically.¹⁴⁸ Improvements have been made in providing access to healthcare and education, and the average life expectancy of a Chinese person increased to over 77 in 2020.¹⁴⁹

Thus far, the narrative of international relations in the 21st century has been characterized by China's ascent and America's decline. Xi Jinping's CCP sees this as a window of opportunity to advance a challenge against U.S. hegemony and reform world order.

2.2 Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream"

2.2.1 The Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation

¹⁴³ David Barboza, *China Passes Japan as Second Largest Economy*, New York Times (August 15, 2010), <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/16/business/global/16yuan.html>, (Accessed: 08/09/2022).

¹⁴⁴ Theglobaleconomy.com, *Percent of World GDP – Country Rankings*, (2020), https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/gdp_share/, (Accessed: 07/09/2022); Theglobaleconomy.com, *Percentage of World Population – Country Rankings*, (2020), https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/gdp_share/#:~:text=Percent%20of%20world%20GDP%20-%20Country%20rankings%20Percent,value%20was%20in%20Antigua%20and%20Barbuda%3A%200%20percent., (Accessed: 07/29/2022).

¹⁴⁵ Rob Schmitz, *Who's Lifting Chinese People Out of Poverty?*, NPR (January 17, 2017), <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2017/01/17/509521619/whos-lifting-chinese-people-out-of-poverty>, (Accessed: 08/02/2022); Macrotrends.net, *China Life Expectancy 1950-2022*, (May 2, 2022), <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/CHI/china/life-expectancy>, (Accessed: 08/01/2022) [hereinafter *China Life Expectancy*].

¹⁴⁶ StatisticsTimes.com, *World GDP Ranking 2021*, (Oct. 26, 2021), <https://statisticstimes.com/economy/projected-world-gdp-ranking.php>, (Accessed: 07/25/2022); StatisticsTimes.com, *Comparing United States and China by Economy*, (May 15, 2021), <https://statisticstimes.com/economy/united-states-vs-china-economy.php>, (Accessed: 07/25/2020); WorldAtlas.com, *The World's 20 Largest Exporting Countries*, (April 24, 2022), <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/exports-by-country-20-largest-exporting-countries.html>, (Accessed: 07/25/2020).

¹⁴⁷ Carl Zulauf, Evan Hertzog, *Country Contribution to World Economic Activity and Growth*, Farm Policy Daily News, (October 2011), <https://farmdocdaily.illinois.edu/2012/01/country-contribution-to-world.html>, (Accessed: 07/12/2022).

¹⁴⁸ Theworldbank.org, *Lifting 800 Million People Out of Poverty – New Report Looks at Lessons From China's Experience*, The World Bank (April 1, 2022), <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/04/01/lifting-800-million-people-out-of-poverty-new-report-looks-at-lessons-from-china-s-experience>, (Accessed: 07/15/2022).

¹⁴⁹ *Id.*; *China Life Expectancy*, *supra* note 147.

Xi Jinping was ushered in as the General Secretary of the CCP and Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the CCP on November 15, 2012. In his first act as general secretary, Xi gave a speech recognizing China's transformation from an "impoverished" and "backwards" country, into a "new China" that is "prosperous and strong."¹⁵⁰ He further proclaimed that the CCP has a responsibility to complete the "great rejuvenation" of the Chinese nation.¹⁵¹ This "great rejuvenation", referred to as the "Chinese Dream", includes challenging U.S. hegemony and restoring China as *the* global superpower.¹⁵²

Xi Jinping has emphasized that the Chinese Dream can be fulfilled under the guidance of "Xi Jinping Thought," an ideology that challenges American values.¹⁵³ "Xi Jinping Thought," founded on principles of Marxist-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, is essentially traditional Chinese Communism which is premised on the ideological superiority of communism over capitalism.¹⁵⁴ Mao Zedong always predicted that communism would displace capitalism as the superior ideology, and Xi's reinvigoration of Mao's Communism has been viewed as an ideological challenge to the United States.¹⁵⁵

Any doubt of Xi's intention to challenge the U.S. was extinguished at China's 19th Party Congress in 2017. Every 5 years, the CCP convenes a National Congress to propose possible changes to the constitution and make decisions regarding Party leadership. In October 2017, at the 19th National Party Congress, an amendment was passed incorporating Xi Jinping Thought into China's Constitution.¹⁵⁶ The foreign policy component of Xi Jinping thought, referred to as "Major Country Diplomacy," clearly explains China's goal to "reform international order, engage in ideological competition with the west, and assume greater responsibility in global affairs."¹⁵⁷ Incorporating Xi Jinping Thought into China's Constitution was a crucial step in fulfilling the promise to complete the Chinese Dream, and signified China's intent to challenge American hegemony.

2.2.2 The Chinese Dream: Restoring the Chinese Identity

It is important to understand the significance of recapturing global superiority to the Chinese identity. In Mandarin Chinese, "China" (zhōng guó, 中国) means "middle kingdom." It comes from the ancient Chinese belief that China is literally the center of the universe - the

¹⁵⁰ Full Text: China's New Party Chief Xi Jinping's Speech, BBC (November 15, 2012), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-20338586>, (Accessed: 07/25/2022).

¹⁵¹ *Id.*

¹⁵² *Id.*

¹⁵³ Tanner Greer, *Xi Jinping in Translation: China's Guiding Ideology*, Palladium Governance Futurism (May 31, 2019), <https://palladiummag.com/2019/05/31/xi-jinping-in-translation-chinas-guiding-ideology/>, (Accessed: 06/26/2022).

¹⁵⁴ *Quotes of Chairman Mao*, Speech at the Meeting of the Supreme Soviet Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, (November 6, 1957).

¹⁵⁵ *Id.*

¹⁵⁶ Zhang Ling, *CCP Creates Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era*, Xinhua (October 18, 2018), http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/19/c_136689808.htm, (Accessed: 07/29/2022).

¹⁵⁷ Stephen Smith, (February 16, 2021), China's "Major Country Diplomacy": Legitimation and Foreign Policy Change, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 17(2), <https://academic.oup.com/fpa/article-abstract/17/2/orab002/6139347?redirectedFrom=fulltext&login=false>.

pinnacle of human civilization.¹⁵⁸ This existential understanding was established before China was ever introduced to the world's western hemisphere. Nevertheless, China's historical superiority as a civilization has remained an important element of Chinese identity.

China's defeat in the Opium Wars in the early-mid 1800s ended a history of dynastic greatness, revered in Chinese culture, and began an era of western colonialization and oppression known as the "Century of Humiliation."¹⁵⁹ Since its defeat in the Opium Wars, China has never been close to recovering its global prestige, until now. To the Chinese people, China's rejuvenation represents the return of China to its rightful place as the "middle kingdom." It is a goal that transcends Xi Jinping as a leader, the CCP as an organization, and even the current state of China as a modern country. It symbolizes the restoration of China's historical superiority as a civilization and the redemption of Chinese identity.

2.3 Xinjiang: The Foundation for Completing the Dream

2.3.1 China's Reliance on Xinjiang in Achieving the Chinese Dream

While many experts still contend that China cannot pose a legitimate threat to the U.S., all that matters to Uyghurs in Xinjiang is the perception of the CCP. If the CCP believes China is able to challenge U.S. hegemony, Xinjiang will be the cornerstone of any plan to advance that challenge. It is no secret that China's political power is rooted in its economic strength, and, to achieve the goal of "rejuvenation," China must continue its high rate of economic development. However, China's capacity to continue high levels of economic growth depend on its access to Xinjiang's economic assets. Without Xinjiang, China's growth would slow, the opportunity to challenge the U.S. would pass, and Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream would be dead.

The city of Karamay accentuates the reality of China's economic dependence on Xinjiang. Karamay has an arid climate and is far from the fertile grounds of Xinjiang that are considered suitable for agriculture and forestry. Its average yearly precipitation is less than 5 inches, and temperatures can reach as high as 110 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer and as low as -30 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter.¹⁶⁰ Not surprisingly, it has a relatively small population of fewer than 500,000 people (small by Chinese standards), most of whom are unemployed Uyghurs living in poverty.¹⁶¹ However, Karamay is often referred to as "China's richest city" because it leads the nation in GDP per capita year after year.¹⁶² This is because of Karamay Oil Field, which became China's first large oil field when it was discovered in 1955.¹⁶³ Karamay has since been at the center of China's oil exploitation efforts and has generated mass energy wealth.¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, living conditions for Uyghurs in Karamay remain poor and employment sparse, as the CCP utilizes the money generated from Karamay's oil to stimulate economic growth in other parts of the

¹⁵⁸ Richard Lewis, *Understanding Chinese Perspectives*, Business Insider (July 9, 2014, 12:20 PM), <https://www.businessinsider.com/understanding-chinese-perspectives-2014-7>, (Accessed: 08/17/2019).

¹⁵⁹ Tom Harper, *How the Century of Humiliation Influences China's Ambitions Today*, Imperial & Global Forum (July 11, 2019), <https://imperialglobalexeter.com/tag/tom-harper/>, (Accessed: 08/18/2022).

¹⁶⁰ *China Ground International Exchange Station Monthly Standard Climate Value Data Set (1971-2000) (Chinese to English Translation)*, China Meteorological Administration, 1971-2000, <https://web.archive.org/web/20130921055035/http://old-cdc.cma.gov.cn/shuju/>, (Accessed: 07/09/2022).

¹⁶¹ Wong, *supra* note 1.

¹⁶² China National Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Communiqué of the People's Republic of China on the 2020 National Economic and Social Development*, (February 28, 2021), http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/PressRelease/202102/t20210228_1814177.html, (Accessed: 07/15/2022).

¹⁶³ Wong, *supra* note 1.

¹⁶⁴ *Id.*

country.¹⁶⁵ Karamay is illustrative of how China's economy operates: a powerful political organization reaps the benefits from the resources of an isolated region while the local minority inhabitants suffer in poverty.

Since Xi Jinping became general secretary, the CCP has established Xinjiang as its primary energy base and has allocated government funding to capitalize on its abundant resources. Less than two years into Xi's leadership, 53 state-owned oil companies had already invested over \$300 billion in nearly 700 energy projects in Xinjiang, and the government had invested another \$130 billion into Xinjiang's infrastructure.¹⁶⁶ Additionally, the State Grid Corporation of China, China's main state-owned electricity company, invested \$2.3 billion to build high-voltage lines that can export fossil fuel-powered electricity out of Xinjiang to more populated parts of China.¹⁶⁷ With major oil and gas discoveries recently being made in Xinjiang's Tarim and Jungar Basins, this influx of government funding will surely continue.¹⁶⁸

2.3.2 Economic Dependence on Xinjiang: A Product of Resource Depletion

While Xinjiang has always been an economic asset for the CCP, China has only recently become economically dependent on Xinjiang because it has lost its traditional means of developing its economy. China's huge labor force was perhaps its greatest asset for stimulating economic growth throughout the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁶⁹ However, strict birth limits that the Chinese government began imposing in 1979 have caused the rapid aging of China's population and a shrinking labor force. China is currently aging as fast as any country in modern history, and the generation of young people entering the labor force comprises a much smaller percentage of China's population than it did in 1980.¹⁷⁰ For the first time in China's history, its labor supply cannot satisfy labor demands, and China is being forced to find alternative methods to stimulate development.

In addition to a decreasing labor force, China has rapidly depleted natural resource reserves since industrializing its economy. The mines in Shanxi province and Liaoning province that powered China's industrial revolution have been completely depleted of their coal reserves, and both regions have had to invest in alternative enterprises to support their local economies.¹⁷¹ This has become a common problem throughout China. In 2013, China's State Council Identified 262 cities that are dependent on depleting resources and at risk of economic collapse.¹⁷² Regions and cities all throughout China are having to reform their local economies to reduce their dependence on dwindling resources.

The primary mechanisms that China relied on for economic development in the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s are no longer available. The CCP has had to find new ways to sustain

¹⁶⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶⁶ *Id.*

¹⁶⁷ *Id.*

¹⁶⁸ *1-Billion-Ton Oil and Gas Field Discovered in Xinjiang's Tarim Basin*, Global Times, (June 19, 2021), <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202106/1226540.shtml>, (Accessed: 08/01/2022); *Id.*, *supra* note 53.

¹⁶⁹ Statista.com, *Employment in China – Statistics and Facts*, (June 1, 2022), <https://www.statista.com/topics/1317/employment-in-china/>, (Accessed: 07/19/2022).

¹⁷⁰ Reshma Kapadia, *What American's Can Learn From the Rest of the World About Retirement*, Barron's (September 7, 2019), <https://www.barrons.com/articles/how-to-fix-the-global-retirement-crisis-51567808425> (Accessed: 08/09/2022)

¹⁷¹ Muyi Xiao, *These Chinese Cities Depend on Dwindling Resources, Can They Survive?*, National Geographic, (March 28, 2019), <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/china-resources-cities-must-diversify>, (Accessed: 07/03/2022).

¹⁷² *Id.*

economic growth, and Xinjiang has filled the void. Without Xinjiang, China would be unable to sustain high levels of economic growth without becoming dependent on exports from other countries, and it would be unable to challenge the U.S. as a global power. Everything that Xi Jinping has pledged to achieve as general secretary rides on the CCP's ability to exploit Xinjiang's economic assets.

2.4 A Campaign to Eradicate Uyghurs from Xinjiang: A Necessary Cost

To Xi Jinping's CCP, the goal of China's rejuvenation takes greater precedence than the preservation of an ethnic minority that, until recently, most of the world had never even heard of. Consequently, the CCP can justify the eradication of Uyghurs from Xinjiang as the necessary cost of achieving its political objectives. These circumstances have created a perception of Uyghurs as an inferior people. In a secretly filmed interview with PBS, a CCP Official explained how the government has no concern for violating the human rights of Uyghurs because it does not consider Uyghurs to have human rights.¹⁷³ This perspective has led to the horrific campaign being administered against Uyghurs consisting of torture, forced labor, sexual abuse, mass incarceration, and forced sterilization.¹⁷⁴

2.5 The Belt and Road Initiative: An Illuminating Microcosm

In 2013, Xi Jinping and the CCP unveiled the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a massive global infrastructure and development project which aims to bring over a third of the global economy directly within the sphere of China's influence.¹⁷⁵ The BRI illustrates the exploitative nature of the Uyghur – CCP relationship and is a microcosm of the CCP's overall reliance on Xinjiang.

Widely recognized as the most ambitious economic development project in history, the BRI stretches from East Asia to Europe and encompasses over 1/3 of international trade.¹⁷⁶ It is modeled on the ancient Silk Road, which established trade connections throughout Central Asia and into Europe during the westward expansion of China's Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE), connecting eastern and western markets and precipitating the first wave of globalization.¹⁷⁷ Xi Jinping envisions building a vast network of railways, energy pipelines, and highways westward through former Soviet Republics, and south towards Pakistan, India, and Southeast Asia to form a globally connected trade route.¹⁷⁸ To date, more than 60 countries, accounting for two-thirds of the world's population, have signed on to BRI projects.¹⁷⁹

The BRI is a major component of China's plan for rejuvenation as it expands China's economic and political influence across the globe which advances its goal of reforming world order.¹⁸⁰ Unsurprisingly, the project depends on Xinjiang for success. Xinjiang's western border connects China to 8 countries (Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Russia,

¹⁷³ *China Undercover*, Directed by Robin Barnwell, PBS Frontline, 2020, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wM1DjkPWtj0&t=2014s>.

¹⁷⁴ Joanne, *supra* note 12; See also Part 1.1.

¹⁷⁵ Chatzky, *supra* note 55.

¹⁷⁶ Chadwick Hagan, *China's Bid for World Domination: The Belt and Road Initiative*, The Epoch Times (April 26, 2022), https://www.theepochtimes.com/chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-is-the-new-silk-road_4419981.html, (Accessed: 07/17/2022) ; Chatzky, *supra* note 55.

¹⁷⁷ Chatzky, *supra* note 55.

¹⁷⁸ *Id.*

¹⁷⁹ *Id.*

¹⁸⁰ Smith, *supra* note 159.

Mongolia, and India) making it China's gateway to Central Asia and center for trade across the Eurasian landmass.¹⁸¹ Of 6 major BRI land routes, 4 stem from Xinjiang (Including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor which was valued at \$62 billion in 2020 – the highest of all the corridors).¹⁸² Xinjiang has become the largest logistical center of the BRI as the CCP has invested billions of dollars into Xinjiang's infrastructure to exploit the region for distribution, transportation, and commercial dealings.¹⁸³ Highways and highspeed rails connecting Xinjiang to the rest of China have also been built so incoming trade can be distributed throughout China.¹⁸⁴

The CCP fears that the “Uyghur threat” could interfere with plans for Xinjiang as a BRI logistical center and endanger the vitality of the entire BRI. This has contributed to the CCP's ultimate decision to move forward with its campaign against Uyghurs. The initiation of this campaign roughly correlates with the initiation of the BRI.¹⁸⁵ Experts say that China began its large-scale incarceration of Uyghurs in 2014, just one year after the BRI was initiated.¹⁸⁶ As the BRI has grown, more money has been invested into Xinjiang which has coincided with the intensification of the abuse against Uyghurs.

The BRI can be seen as a starting point for the implementation of Xi Jinping's plan to complete the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation.” It is a major component of the plan; however, it is just one component. Billions of dollars are also being invested into Xinjiang to fund fossil fuel extraction, electricity generation, cotton production, and manufacturing and construction projects to exploit the free labor from detention camps. As government money continues to flow into Xinjiang, China's economic dependence on the region increases. As China's economic dependence on Xinjiang increases, so does the significance of the “Uyghur Threat,” as it potentially jeopardizes every economic project being administered in Xinjiang. This is a risk that the CCP is not willing to tolerate, and it has led to a horrific campaign to eradicate Uyghurs from Xinjiang that is finally being exposed to the world.

A Glimmer of Hope

I first wrote about the Uyghurs in 2018 for my undergraduate thesis. In the title of my work, I referred to the CCP-Uyghur relationship as the “Cold Hard Truth” for Uyghurs in Xinjiang. After spending months researching and analyzing the issue, I concluded that Uyghurs had very little hope. Abuse being brought against the Uyghurs was rapidly escalating, but the international community did not seem to know or care. Very little work was being done on the issue, and much of the research that had been conducted accepted the CCP's rationalization that Xinjiang was a hotbed for terrorism and separatism.

The current situation is much worse than it was in 2018; the degree of abuse has rapidly and dramatically escalated. However, there may be hope for the Uyghur people. China's brutal campaign in Xinjiang is no longer a secret. It has attracted the attention of governments, non-governmental organizations, and news agencies across the world. China's horrific actions have

¹⁸¹ Bhaya, *supra* note 54.

¹⁸² Anil Kumar Lar, *The CPEC Challenge and the India-China Standoff: An Opportunity for War or Peace?*, Times of India (August 9, 2020), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/rakshakindia/the-cpec-challenge-and-the-india-china-standoff-an-opportunity-for-war-or-peace/>, (Accessed: 07/30/2022).

¹⁸³ Wei Shan, *Xinjiang Casts Uncertainty Over the Belt and Road Initiative*, East Asia Forum (November 29, 2019), <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/tag/xinjiang-belt-and-road-institute/>, (Accessed: 08/09/2022).

¹⁸⁴ *Id.*

¹⁸⁵ Maizland, *supra* note 11.

¹⁸⁶ *Id.*

officially been exposed, and it will only be able to continue these actions if the world allows it to do so.

Nevertheless, there is a long road ahead. China has tremendous leverage in the international community, and no single country or organization can save the Uyghurs by themselves. There needs to be a concerted global effort to confront China's inhumane treatment of Uyghurs: National governments must unify in condemning China's actions, and news agencies and academic organizations must continue reporting on the issue. The fate of Uyghurs depends on independent nations transcending national borders to unify in stopping the pointless killing and abuse of a helpless and innocent group.

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