

**Committee: Special Political and Decolonization Committee**

**Issue: The Uyghur Muslim in China issue.**

**Student Officer: Serafeim Iakovou**

**Position: Co-chair**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Dear delegates,

My name is Serafeim Iakovou, I am a Year 11 student at Pierce College, and this will be my first time serving as a student officer. It is an honor for me to serve as a Deputy President of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee at the 8th session of ATSMUN. I joined the MUN community in late 2020 and participated in almost every Greek conference ever since. I can honestly say that MUN has been a life changing experience.

This year's conference agenda seeks to strive towards finding solutions about a major issue of recent years concerning the Uyghur Muslim minority in China. Hopefully, this study guide will provide you with all the necessary information you will need in order to understand the topic. Of course, you will also have to research to know where your country stands upon this topic, by knowing its policy. Furthermore, your research and the solutions that you will come up with, will hopefully help us have a fruitful debate. If you have any questions, or you need any help, do not hesitate to contact me through my email, [S.iakovou@acg.edu](mailto:S.iakovou@acg.edu).

I really can't wait to meet you all in November!

Best regards,

Serafeim Iakovou

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### Great Leap Forward

The Great Leap Forward was a policy implemented by Mao Zedong in the late 50s (1958-1960) which intended to transform the Chinese society from an agrarian one to a more industrialized, modern one, in 5 years. The results were, however, ineffective.

### Han

The Han (or else ethnic Chinese) is the largest ethnic group in China, taking up a total of 90% of the Chinese population<sup>1</sup>. They count 20% of the global population, but the vast majority of them live in China. Their history dates back to 206 BC when the Han dynasty took over the area of modern China, and great breakthroughs in culture and science followed. The dynasty ended 400 years later, but the terminology is still used today.

### Sinicize

To Sinicize is defined as: “to modify by Chinese influence”<sup>2</sup>. Thus, sinicization is when non-Chinese cultures are forced to adopt ethnic Chinese (Han) culture.

### Xinjiang province

The Xinjiang region is located in the northwestern region of China, it has a population of 21 million people and is considered to be the largest administrative division of the country. It consists of multiple ethnic groups such as Han, Hui, Kazakh, Uyghur and Mongols. Xinjiang is considered to be a ‘provincial-level autonomous region’ and is separated into 13 ‘prefecture-level divisions’. Its full name is ‘Uyghur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang’.

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<sup>1</sup> “Who Are the Han Chinese People?” *WorldAtlas*, [www.worldatlas.com/articles/who-are-the-han-chinese-people.html](http://www.worldatlas.com/articles/who-are-the-han-chinese-people.html).

<sup>2</sup> “Definition of SINICIZE.” *Www.merriam-Webster.com*, [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sinicize](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sinicize).



**Figure 2:** Xinjiang's location in China

### **The “Strike Hard” Campaign**

The “Strike Hard” or “Yanda” is a campaign organized by the Chinese authorities to tackle terrorism and crime, which has been separated in 4 rounds (1983, 1996, 2001 and 2010). According to the Chinese Ministry of public security, the campaign’s goal is ‘targeting extreme violent crime, gun and gang crime, telecom fraud, human trafficking, robbery, prostitution, gambling and drugs’. The campaign is usually criticized as a means to oppress minorities, especially by western media.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **Historical development**

#### **3rd century-19th century**

The Uyghurs are first mentioned in Chinese records during the 3rd century CE. They rose to prominence during the 8<sup>th</sup> century when they established a kingdom in modern-day Mongolia. Soon they migrated in the Turfan Depression region, creating a kingdom which was soon, however, under Mongolian control in the 13th century. Thus, the village-dwelling Turkic group soon ended up in the province of Xinjiang, where the vast majority of Uyghurs still resides.

### First East Turkestan Republic

The First East Turkestan Republic was a state, created as an independent entity from the Chinese state, established in Kashgar on Nov. 12, 1933, founded by Sabit Damolla. The republic was short-lived, as, 3 years after its creation, Chinese militants executed its government and reclaimed its land.



Figure 3: Map of East Turkistan

### The Second East Turkestan Republic

The second East Turkestan Republic was established on Nov. 12, 1944, by Alihan Tore, in Gulja. The second republic had a similar fate to the first one, as it was again recaptured by the Chinese 5 years later, who had the assistance of the Soviets. Its President and Prime Minister were executed in the USSR under Stalin's orders.

### Great leap forward

The industrialization policy had terrible effects on the Chinese economy, politics and environment. Its most bold result was the feeling of discontent in the lower social classes, especially outside cities. Just seven years after the implementation of the plan, Mao lost control over his government, an event that illustrates that the frustration of the public was enough to make a ruthless dictator lose power. It is essential to understand that the Xinjiang province was one of the victims of economic failure. Its habitants had already tried twice to gain independence, only to end up under Beijing's jurisdiction a couple of years later.

The goals were the following: China had to import less to none steel and machinery, increase its agricultural output and increase its manufacturing output. Thus, millions were

moved to communes that focused on the production of specific materials, where they performed collective tasks (even children were taken from their parents to childcare that was performed by other workers). Mao implemented some Soviet farming ideas that were practically illogical, like planting crops close together so that they can support each other and grow bigger.

The results were much worse than expected by Beijing: the steel produced was of terrible quality, all made by inexperienced farmers, the soil was exhausted after the first year thus being unable to produce large quantities for years, the logistics did not allow harvest of the only successful crop production (during the first autumn of the plan), while huge environmental damage was caused in China (whole forests burnt down, leaving land open to erosion).

Commune leaders vastly exaggerated their production abilities to gain favor of the communist party, which led to officials transferring more goods to cities, and thus, leaving farmers to starve. 20-48 million Chinese died<sup>3</sup> during the implementation of the plan, usually because of starvation. The plan was cancelled 2 years too early and is known in China as “3 bitter years”. It resulted in a terrible political backlash to Mao, who was eventually sidelined from power in 1967.

### **The Great Leap west/ Sinicization of the Uyghurs**

Beijing quickly understood, however, that the Uyghurs would not wish independence from the Chinese government if they were Chinese themselves. Thus, it initiated a campaign of unprecedented scale, whose goal was to transform the Uyghurs to Han.

8% of the Chinese population consists of 55 different minorities<sup>4</sup>, and Uyghurs are one of them. One of the means to achieve Sinicization was the installation of Han

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<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia Contributors. “Great Chinese Famine.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 18 Mar. 2019, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Chinese\\_Famine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Chinese_Famine).

<sup>4</sup> /5/6/7/9]Ishfaq, Sarmad. “The Sinicization and Suppression of China’s Muslim Uyghurs.” *Foreign Policy Journal*, 23 Nov. 2018, [www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2018/11/23/the-sinicization-and-suppression-of-chinas-muslim-uyghurs/](http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2018/11/23/the-sinicization-and-suppression-of-chinas-muslim-uyghurs/). Accessed 10 Sept. 2022.

populations in Xinjiang. In 1949, Turkic-speaking groups made up 95% of the Xinjiang population, but in the present, 45% of the population is ethnic Chinese<sup>5</sup>. Should the Han be the majority in Xinjiang, Beijing might remove the “autonomous” status of the province.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Chinese government decided to improve the living conditions of the Turkic group, in order to prevent any attempts for independence. Ergo, Beijing opened up the local Xinjiang market to international markets, especially to other Central-Asia states. However, this measure backfired: the Uyghurs started contacting other ethnic groups that formed themselves some of the newly founded Asian Republics, thus generating a brand-new resolve for ethnic independence, inspired by the stories of other Asians. The Chinese government managed to neutralize, however, Uyghur advocacy groups with its new trade allies.

During the 1990s, infrastructure programs were initiated by the Chinese administration, building highways, industrial complexes, and public transport. However, these improvements benefited mostly the Han migrants, who were more educated than the Turkic groups; thus, the Uyghurs ended up occupying the lower parts of the social pyramid.

Sinicization was not achieved; major religious restrictions were implemented, which continue to the present day. Some of which did not allow women to wear hijab, men to grow beards, minors to participate in prayers, public servants to participate in Ramadan fasting and Friday prayers to last more than 30 minutes.

Still, these measures backfired again; the socially marginalized Uyghurs, practically unable to practice their religion, grew more and more frustrated towards their Chinese administration. Escalation soon was to take place.

### **Violent Protests**

In 2008, riots break out in Tibet, another “autonomous” Chinese province. Just a year later, escalation takes place in Xinjiang. In the province’s capital, Urumqi, thousands of protesters clash with the police, Uyghurs with the Han, leaving 200 dead and around 1700 injured<sup>6</sup>. The clash started from a rumor that 6 Uyghur men sexually assaulted a Han woman in a factory close to the city and, as a result, some Han coworkers of hers murdered 2 Uyghurs suspected<sup>7</sup>. A domino effect took place, where the Uyghur community then blamed the authorities for not arresting the men responsible for the murders, and the Uyghurs killed

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some Han people in return. Han mobs then started attacking Uyghurs with hammers and axes while police were deployed in the area. After the riots, hundreds of Uyghurs were not seen again, presumably taken by the authorities.

Other riots consist of the “2010 Aksu bombing” when a man detonated explosives, killing 7 and the “2011 Kashgar attacks” when 2 Uyghurs hijacked a truck after killing its driver, drove over some pedestrians and then moved on by stabbing some 6 people to death.<sup>8</sup>



Figure 4: Photograph of the riots taken by a local citizen

The Xinjiang province is in a vicious circle, where the government started to apply laws to protect the Han, with the backlash of the Uyghurs becoming violent, which leads to more security, more oppression, which in turn leads to more violent riots. The Uyghurs now believe that they are fighting for their existence, since, as they believe, the government has not protected them.

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<sup>8</sup> “April 2014 Ürümqi Attack.” *WIKIMILI*, 1 Sept. 2022, [wikimili.com/en/April\\_2014\\_Ürümqi\\_attack](http://wikimili.com/en/April_2014_Ürümqi_attack).

## Demographics

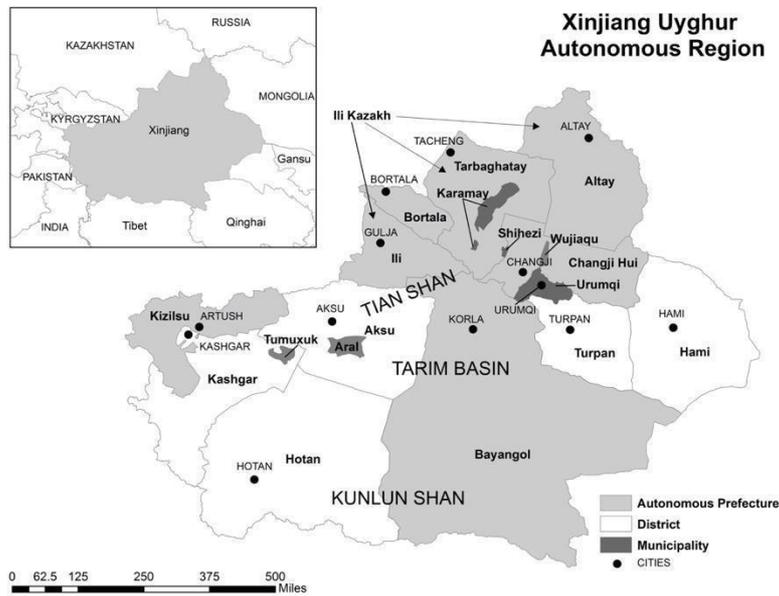


Figure 5: Map illustrating the districts of Xinjiang

As mentioned above, in 1949, Turkic-speaking groups made up 95% of the Xinjiang population, but in the present, 45% of the population is ethnic Chinese<sup>9</sup>.

The total population of the Xinjiang province is 22,1 million people, while the Uyghurs are estimated to be 8 million<sup>10</sup>. The province covers a total of 1,660,000 square km<sup>11</sup> and the two major languages are Chinese and Uyghur. According to the 2010 census in Xinjiang, the population of the province is becoming less ethnically diverse as time progresses<sup>12</sup>. Major population centers appear to be ‘in Urumqi (over 3 M), Shihezi (over 600,000), Korla (over 500,000), Ghulja (over 450,000), Aksu (over 450,000), Kashgar (over 450,000) and Hami (over 400,000)<sup>13</sup>. According to the 2010 census the Uyghur account for

<sup>10/11</sup> “Xinjiang Territory Profile.” *BBC News*, 12 Oct. 2018, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16860974](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16860974).

<sup>12/13/14</sup> “Spatial Results of the 2010 Census in Xinjiang.” *Asia Dialogue*, 7 Mar. 2016,

[theasiadialogue.com/2016/03/07/spatial-results-of-the-2010-census-in-xinjiang/](http://theasiadialogue.com/2016/03/07/spatial-results-of-the-2010-census-in-xinjiang/).

45.84%, Han 40.48%, Kazakh 6.50%, Hui 4.51% and the rest account for 2.67%<sup>14</sup>, making the Xinjiang province the second most diverse Chinese province after Tibet.

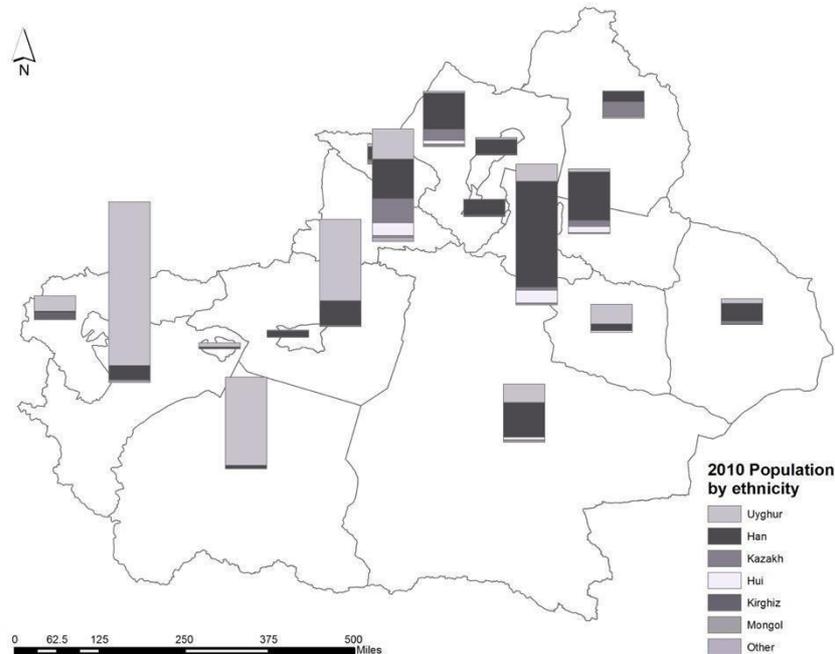


Figure 6: Minority populations in the Xinjiang province

### The “Strike Hard” Campaign

The last Yunda has targeted all groups that are considered to be enemies of the Chinese state. As the Uyghurs have participated in all those mass protests, which sometimes happened to be violent, they are clearly seen as a terrorist group by Beijing. Authorities, however, describe them as extreme religious groups that have to be “eradicated” or “corrected”. According to the Human Rights Watch, the “Strike Hard Campaign’s broad mandate to punish and control Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang because of their identities cannot be justified as part of the state’s responsibility to ensure public security”<sup>15</sup>. Dilxat Raxit, a spokesperson for the World Uyghur Congress, in 2013, said: “The government is stepping up

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<sup>15/16</sup> ““Eradicating Ideological Viruses” | China’s Campaign of Repression against Xinjiang’s Muslims.” *Human Rights Watch*, 14 Mar. 2019, [www.hrw.org/report/2018/09/09/eradicating-ideological-viruses/chinas-campaign-repression-against-xinjiangs](http://www.hrw.org/report/2018/09/09/eradicating-ideological-viruses/chinas-campaign-repression-against-xinjiangs).

these raids, even to the point of armed police shooting Uyghurs who refuse to cooperate and offer some kind of resistance”<sup>16</sup>.



**Figure 7:** SWAT police training in Urumqi, the Xinjiang capital, Dec. 16, 2013.

Religious restrictions are applied, as mentioned in the section “The Great Leap West/Sinicization of the Uyghurs”. According to the same spokesperson, Uyghurs in government jobs are forced to write confessions denouncing Islam, promising that they and their relatives will not engage in any religious activities and should this promise be broken, they will be removed from office. The state administration has initiated some urban renewal projects which destroy low-income areas (where Uyghurs usually live).

Uyghurs are under electronic surveillance and there is reported use of officers following suspects. Many are arrested and sent to detention facilities because of their extremist religious digital footprint, while others are detained if family members are abroad. Those who are not detained are asked by police to remain home and are constantly watched, their biometrics regularly checked by facial recognition surveillance equipment.

Chinese media in Xinjiang are all state-controlled and usually endorse all security measures in the region. Foreign media find it difficult to move freely in the region, according to BBC, and are usually being followed by security dispatches.

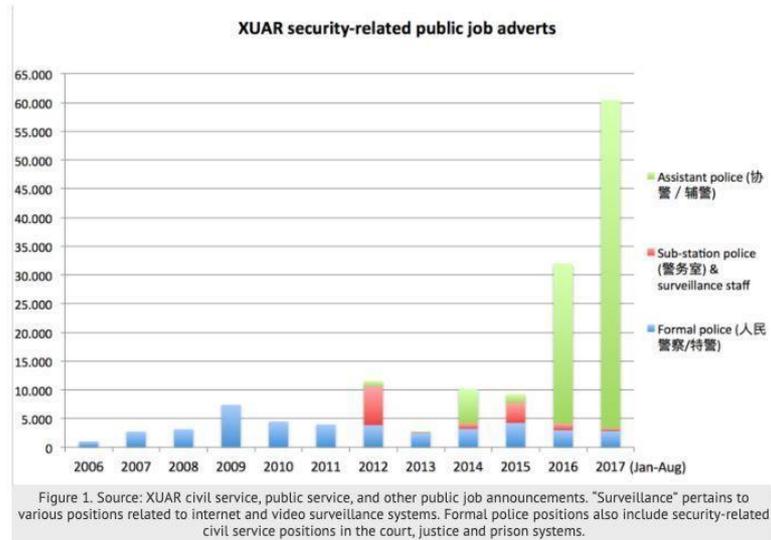


Figure 8: Graph depicting security related public job adverts

### Living conditions

According to BBC, on July 12, 2015, a satellite photographed China's western desert, showing just sand and oasis. But in 3 years, on Aug. 22, 2018, a highly secure compound has been built, with a 2km outer wall and 16 watchtowers.



Figure 9&10: Aerial photographs, showing the area before and after the construction of the camp, outside the city of Dabancheng, just an hour's drive from the capital Urumqi.

A Xinjiang resident said to BBC: “There are tens of thousands of people [at the ‘re-education school’ [...]] They have some problems with their thoughts”<sup>17</sup>. The Guardian states that some of the camps began receiving people in 2014. These areas have medium-security-prison style, and some are forced labor camps.

“Alim”, a young Uyghur who recently returned to China, described the conditions in which he lived. He states that he was starved and was often not allowed to sleep while being subjected to interrogation and verbal abuse. He said to the Guardian: “I was so weakened through this process that at one point during my interrogation I began to laugh hysterically”. Some were tortured with electric shocks or kept in isolation, while when they were dismissed, they were kept in tiny cells with an approximate 20 Uyghurs<sup>18</sup>.

Other sources of information, mainly escaped detainees abroad, say that in the camps, the Muslim groups (not only Uyghurs), are forced to renounce Islam and pledge loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party. Learning Mandarin and signing communist anthems is also part of the program for de-extremefication<sup>19</sup>.

Needless to say, parents are continually being separated from their children, even if they are infants. Mihrigul Tursun, an Uyghur woman detained in China, after escaping one of these camps, said "The authorities put a helmet-like thing on my head, and each time I was electrocuted, my whole body would shake violently, and I would feel the pain in my veins, I don't remember the rest. White foam came out of my mouth, and I began to lose consciousness". However, it is essential to understand that the international community does not know much about these detention facilities.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/bbcnews>. “China’s Hidden Camps - BBC News.” *BBC News*, 2015, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/China\\_hidden\\_camps](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/China_hidden_camps).

<sup>18</sup> Human Rights Watch. ““Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots.”” *Human Rights Watch*, 19 Apr. 2021, [www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/19/break-their-lineage-break-their-roots/chinas-crimes-against-humanity-targeting](http://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/19/break-their-lineage-break-their-roots/chinas-crimes-against-humanity-targeting).

China's Reeducation Camps



Figure 11: Map indicating possible camp locations<sup>20</sup>

### Chinese policy

Beijing started its offensive against Muslim minorities just after 9/11 and G. Bush’s “War on Terror”. Beijing swore to combat the “three evils” of terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism. After the world saw what religious extremism is capable of doing in ground zero, China joined the “War on Terror”, and the Chinese Communist Party decided to fight such terror in the province of Xinjiang. Beijing used the “War on Terror” as a means to evade criticism from abroad on the way it treated the Muslim groups and as a means to gain local support to do so from its people.

Top Ten Muslim Provinces in China (2010 Statistics)

No.	Muslim Province	Muslim Population	Islam Mosque
No.1	Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region	13.4 million	More than 24000
No.2	Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region	2.5 million	More than 4000
No.3	Gansu province	1.37 million	More than 2500
No.4	Qinghai province	1.15 million	More than 930
No.5	Yunnan province	1.09 million	More than 820
No.6	Henan province	1.02 million	More than 620
No.7	Hebei province	0.6 million	More than 578
No.8	Shandong province	0.54 million	More than 506
No.9	Anhui province	0.33 million	More than 121
No.10	Liaoning province	0.31 million	More than 119

Figure 15: Table depicting the Chinese provinces with the biggest Muslim minorities

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-repression-uyghurs-xinjiang>

Beijing firmly supports its measures, and an official of the CCP said that the security policy in Xinjiang has “saved the area from massive turmoil”; while he stated that the claim that over 1 million people are currently being reeducated is “completely untrue”. The camps have one goal according to the Chinese; “transformation through education” and it is claimed that the detainees have a choice on whether they can join a camp or result in judicial procedures. These vocational training centres, as they are called by the Chinese officials are similar to boarding schools that do not violate the detainees’ rights.

To summarize, Beijing believes that the Uyghur are threatening their national security and they justify all police measures. They confirm the existence of reeducation camps while they deny any brutality inside them, deny the vast numbers of detained individuals and they stand firm on the fact that everyone in custody is there in their own will.

The Chinese are concerned that the Muslim groups are endangering their national security and the camps, together with all security measures, are a way to protect them. The Chinese government blames multiple terrorist attacks in Xinjiang on Uyghur extremists. Beijing recognizes 5 religions – Daoism, Protestantism, Islam, Catholicism and Buddhism- but the atheist government is afraid that religious extremism can lead to terrible scenarios.

Since 2016, there has been a new Xinjiang Communist Party Secretary, Chen Quanguo, who moved in the province from a top position in Tibet. In his previous role, he boosted security in Tibet, by increasing checkpoints, patrols and set all monasteries under state control. In his new position, he has increased security and started using these random detention tactics.

## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

### United States of America

President Bush's "War on Terror" was what allowed Beijing to persecute Chinese Muslims openly. But the US has been in the present criticizing the Chinese government on the treatment of minorities. The US Secretary of State has proposed that American businesses avoid doing business with Xinjiang and he is constantly describing the "great risk" US corporates undergo if they do. He stated that "We watch the massive human rights violations in Xinjiang where over a million people are being held in a humanitarian crisis that is the scale of what took place in the 1930s"<sup>21</sup>.

It is often claimed that American technology is used by Chinese security services in Xinjiang, generating much turbulence in Washington. The US, however, criticizes Chinese methods and has imposed sanctions on Chinese technology products. The US Department of State has announced that "a few" US residents are being detained in Xinjiang camps<sup>22</sup>.

### Turkistan Islamic Party

The Turkistan Islamic Party is an organization whose goal is the establishment of an independent state of "East Turkistan", which is usually considered to be a terrorist group. According to Chinese reports, the group has been responsible for over 200 terrorist attacks and at least 152 fatalities<sup>23</sup>. The group has a prominent Syrian branch that fought in the Syrian civil war alongside the Islamic State.

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<sup>21</sup> "China's Xinjiang an "Enormous Risk" for US Business, Pompeo Warns." *South China Morning Post*, 1 May 2019, [www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3008406/chinas-xinjiang-enormous-risk-us-business-pompeo-warns](http://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3008406/chinas-xinjiang-enormous-risk-us-business-pompeo-warns). Accessed 10 Sept. 2022.

<sup>22</sup> "U.S. Legal Residents May Be among Those Detained in Xinjiang." *Time*, [time.com/5561044/xinjiang-china-camps-us-residents-sam-brownback/](http://time.com/5561044/xinjiang-china-camps-us-residents-sam-brownback/). Accessed 10 Sept. 2022.

<sup>23</sup> ""East Turkistan" Terrorist Forces Cannot Get Away with Impunity." *Www.china.org.cn*, [www.china.org.cn/english/2002/Jan/25582.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/english/2002/Jan/25582.htm).

## Turkey

Turkey has been supportive of the Uyghurs' efforts and openly critic of the Chinese practices. Turkey's Foreign Ministry called the "concentration camps" a "great embarrassment for humanity" This statement on February 2019 broke a diplomatic silence from the Turkish side. President Erdogan referred to the Xinjiang's Uyghurs as "siblings"<sup>24</sup> and there have been some anti-Chinese protests in Turkey.

However, until February 2019, the Turkish government did not make any official announcements concerning the maltreatment of Uyghurs. The statement made that changed this policy is the following: "In such an environment, we have learned with deep sorrow the passing away in his second year of imprisonment of the distinguished folk poet Abdurehim Heyit, who was sentenced to eight years in prison for one of his songs. This tragedy has further reinforced the reaction of the Turkish public opinion towards serious human rights violations committed in the Xinjiang region."<sup>25</sup>

## European Union

The European Union has criticized the violation of rights in Xinjiang. Multiple EU countries, such as Sweden, grant Uyghurs refugee status, but few actually get to ask for asylum since they prefer to join Uyghur communities in Turkey and Kazakhstan. The EU itself, however, has taken a more conservative approach, planning to send investigators but not taking any immediate action.

## Chinese communist party

The CCP has been the source of the persecution as the most potent administrative tool of the province and the only organization with direct connection to Beijing, with the leadership of Chen Quanguo. There has been a new bureau created by the CCP in Xinjiang to analyze intelligence collected by the various security and surveillance equipment in the province.

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<sup>24/25</sup>Tiezzi, Shannon. "Why Is Turkey Breaking Its Silence on China's Uyghurs?" *The Diplomat*, 5 Mar. 2019, [thediplomat.com/2019/02/why-is-turkey-breaking-its-silence-on-chinas-uyghurs/](https://thediplomat.com/2019/02/why-is-turkey-breaking-its-silence-on-chinas-uyghurs/).

### Uyghur human rights project

The UHRP or World Uyghur Congress is an international organization whose goal is to protect Uyghurs’ rights. It was founded in 2004 and its main goal is to raise awareness and cooperate with other international organizations. It considers itself a “peaceful opposition” to the Chinese government.

### TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
3rd century	Description of the Uyghur people in Chinese records for the first time
8th century	The Uyghur reside in modern-day Mongolia.
840	The Uyghur migrate to an area close to the Tien Shan.
1911	Chinese nationalists overthrow the Manchu empire.
November 1933	The East Turkestan Republic is established (dissolved in 1934).
1949	The Second East Turkestan Republic is established.
1949	The People’s Republic of China is founded by Mao Zedong.
1 October 1955	The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is established replacing the province. According to the first national census in 1953, Uyghurs make-up more than 70 percent of the population.
December 1981	The XPCC is reestablished to counter “separatists, religious extremists and terrorists” in the border areas due to the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan.
April 1990	The Baren Township Riots begin which kill 23 and wound another 21. In July 1990 Chinese authorities announce the arrest of 7,900 people for “criminal activities of ethnic splittists and other criminal offenders.”
February 1997	A series of protests in the northwestern Xinjiang city of Yining result in multiple deaths. This leads to the imposition of a two-week-long curfew and the arrest of over 1,600 people according to sources.

July 2009	The first day's rioting, which involved at least 1,000 Uyghurs, began as a protest but escalated into violent attacks that mainly targeted Han people.
2008-present	Multiple violent protests take place

## UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

### United Nations Convention Against Torture and other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

To read the Convention, click [here](#)

The Convention defines what a refugee is, and the responsibilities of the international community towards such individuals.

### International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination

The convention commits the members of the UN to the elimination of racial discrimination, condemns hate speech and considers the membership in racist organizations a criminal act. To read it, visit:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial>

Other than the abovementioned treaties, some UN experts and councils have taken action too. Some UN experts have written letters after conducting research calling for the international community to act.

REFERENCE:  
OL CHN 21/2018

12 November 2018

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Special Rapporteur on minority issues; Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; and Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 33/30, 36/6, 34/18, 34/6, 31/16 and 31/3.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning the revision of the Xianjian Uyghur Autonomous Region Regulation on De-extremification, which targets Turkic Muslim ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities as well as Kazakh nationals.

Special note is necessary for the efforts of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the UN Human Rights Council. They have both tried to investigate the situation and urged many countries to take action.

## PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

### United States sanctions against China

The United States government has applied sanctions against the Chinese government. On July 9, 2020, the Trump administration imposed sanctions and visa restrictions against senior Chinese officials. With sanctions, they and their immediate relatives are banned from entering the US and will have US-based assets frozen. On September 11, 2019, a version of the bill the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2019 was passed in the United States Senate by unanimous consent. On December 3, 2019, a stronger version of the bill—the UYGHUR Act was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 407–1.<sup>26</sup> On May 14, 2020, the Senate introduced and approved what would be the current 2020 bill. On May 27, 2020,

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<sup>26</sup> Rubio, Marco. "Actions - S.178 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): UIGHUR Act of 2019." *www.congress.gov*, 21 Oct. 2020, [www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/178/actions](http://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/178/actions). Accessed 10 Sept. 2022.

the House passed the amended bill by a vote of 413–1, sending it to President Donald Trump for approval.<sup>27</sup> The bill was signed by Trump into law on June 17, 2020.<sup>28</sup>

### **EU sanctions against china**

The EU added the four Chinese officials, including a top security director, to its sanctions list in March over accusations of human rights abuse in China's Xinjiang region. Beijing responded with its own sanctions on Europeans. Accused of mass detentions of Muslim Uyghurs in northwestern China, those targeted by the EU include Chen Mingguo, the director of the Xinjiang Public Security Bureau. The EU said Chen was responsible for serious human rights violations.<sup>29</sup>

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

### **Facilitation of Investigations**

One's goal has to be the protection of the populations' rights, referring to both to the Uyghurs and the Chinese. The truth must shine, however difficult that may be. However, it is also essential to avoid escalation in the region and avoid bloodshed. Investigations must be facilitated, in order for the international community to find out the truth. It is important for the investigators to be completely non-partisan. These UN-organised investigations also have to be engineered in a way to investigate the living conditions in the camps. Thus, one must have to address the question of whether they should inform Beijing about them or even carry out undercover investigations.

A possible scenario is a reluctant Chinese government on possible investigations. The UN has to take all necessary actions to understand and evaluate the situation, without

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<sup>27</sup> Edmondson, Catie. "House Passes Uyghur Human Rights Bill, Prodding Trump to Punish China." *The New York Times*, 27 May 2020, [www.nytimes.com/2020/05/27/us/politics/house-uyghurs-china-sanctions.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/27/us/politics/house-uyghurs-china-sanctions.html).

<sup>28</sup> "Trump Signs Uyghur Rights Act into Law, Authorizing Sanctions for Abuses in Xinjiang." *Radio Free Asia*, [www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/act-06082020173916.html](http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/act-06082020173916.html).

<sup>29</sup> Emmott, Robin. "EU Extends Human Rights Sanctions, Including on Chinese Officials." *Reuters*, 24 Nov. 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/eu-extends-human-rights-sanctions-including-chinese-officials-2021-11-24/](http://www.reuters.com/world/eu-extends-human-rights-sanctions-including-chinese-officials-2021-11-24/). Accessed 31 Aug. 2022.

causing a possible escalation. Should negotiations fail, economic measures might also be an effective measure. China's economy is based on commerce and boycotting (for example) its products could be persuasive enough for Beijing.

Should the investigations come to a conclusion, the United Nations have to make sure the action required is taken. Should the accusations be proven to be false, the sanctions and/or all other measures must be removed, and the Chinese government congratulated for its cooperation. However, in the scenario of a violation of human rights, Beijing must be made to change its way of treating the minorities, while humanitarian help must be sent.

### **Creation of a protective legal framework for the minority**

The legal part of the situation should also be scrutinized, since the Uyghurs are there, according to Beijing "with their own will". The United Nations must gather as much intelligence as possible on the free will of Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Introducing interviews with Uyghurs is of utmost importance, while the Chinese government is able to communicate its beliefs too.

### **Create Asylum services internationally**

The international community has to do its best to provide shelter to Uyghur refugees, providing all necessary support to them. These refugee groups must also be encouraged to speak up and communicate their problems and daily life. Thus, the Uyghurs will find it easier to face the trauma and the international community will be able to dig deeper into the truth.

### **Creation of Awareness Campaigns**

Raising awareness is also a rather important measure to be taken. Letting the public, including the Chinese, off the accusations is a responsibility of the United Nations, as it will assist in the support of the Uyghur refugees and the investigations. Public support might also urge reluctant politicians to taking the necessary action.

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