From Policy to Genocide: How Has Chinese Counterterrorism Policy in Xinjiang Targeted Uyghur Muslims?

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How has China targeted its Uyghur population through Xinjiang's regional counter-terrorism policy? Throughout the Global War on Terrorism era, Western responses to terrorism have been thoroughly researched and critiqued for their targeting of Muslim populations. By contrast, critical literature on Chinese counterterrorism is lacking. Although scholars have written extensively on China's repression of minority groups, literature on how repression of minorities has expanded to include mass surveillance and internment of Uyghurs in "re-education" centers as part of regional counterterrorism policy is virtually non-existent. This paper adds to the current literature by researching China's securitization of the Uyghur ethnic group and subsequent targeting of the Uyghurs through a repressive counterterrorism policy. It builds on Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS), securitization theory, and literature regarding Xinjiang's geopolitical context and regional identity politics to holistically capture the persecution of Uyghurs. First, the paper draws on secondary literature discussing regional ethnic and geopolitical dynamics to identify underlying motivations for China's targeting of the Uyghurs: Xinjiang's strategic and economic importance, history of Uyghur separatism, Islam, and Uyghur identity. Second, the paper examines leaked and official government documents within a securitization theory framework to highlight the rhetoric deployed in securitizing the Uyghur group. Third, it relies on leaked government documents and investigative reports to uncover the result of China's securitization of the Uyghur group: mass surveillance, involuntary detention within "re-education" centers, and the systematic elimination of the Uyghur group and its identity.

INTRODUCTION

The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), formerly East Turkestan, is China's largest province and lies on the country's northwest border (Rogers 2018, 492). The region is ethnically diverse with a large Muslim minority population, among whom the Uyghurs make up the largest ethnic group (Liu and Peters 2017, 269). During a trip to Xinjiang in 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping responded to recent terrorist events by stating that "[t]here must be effective educational remolding and transformation of criminals" (Ramzy and Buckley 2019). Following this statement, the construction of what has officially been labelled "re-education" or "vocational education and training" centers began in 2016 in Xinjiang to detain those "influenced by religious extremism" ("Vocational Education and Training in Xinjiang"). Since 2016, more than one million Uyghurs have been detained within "re-education" centers in Xinjiang based on charges of following "The Three Evils": separatism, terrorism, and religious extremism (Nebehay 2018; Topal 2021, 7). This establishes detention within "re-education" centers as an integral part of Chinese counterterrorism policy

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in Xinjiang.

A state's counterterrorism policy relates to the specific measures deployed by the state with the objective of enhancing non-combatants' physical and psychological security through decreasing terrorism (Romaniuk et al. 2017, 26). Within an official white paper on counterterrorism, the State Council of the People's Republic of China ("Vocational Education and Training in Xinjiang.") identifies China's counterterrorism policy as "[g]iving top priority to a preventative counterterrorism approach" and states that "[u]pholding the principle of fighting and preventing terrorism at the same time, the autonomous region has been taking aggressive action against violent terrorist crimes, and at the same time, addressing the problem as its source." Stating that "[r] ural residents in Xinjiang have a relatively weak sense of the rule of law, lack understanding of the law, and are vulnerable to instigation and intimidation by terrorist and extremist forces, resulting in criminal behavior," the document illustrates China's focus on counterterrorism in Xinjiang. In particular, the white paper highlights the importance of education in the region and states that "[e]ducation and training centers have been established with the goal of educating and rehabilitating people guilty of minor crimes or law-breaking and eradicating the influence of terrorism and extremism, in order to prevent them from falling victim to terrorism and extremism." Furthermore, the document emphasizes China's opposition to connecting terrorism and extremism with "specific countries, ethnic groups or religions." Conversely, China's "re-education" of potential terrorist threats has, in particular, targeted the Uyghur ethnic group due to its connection to former East Turkestan and Islamic religion. Furthermore, it has caused Uyghurs' subjection to involuntary detention in the "re-education" centers, restrictions to reproduction, forced labor, torture, and incessant scrutiny through methods of hi-tech surveillance.

This paper will critically examine China's counterterrorism approach in Xinjiang. However, because it is written while the situation develops, there is limited literature discussing China's persecution of Uyghurs as part of its regional counterterrorism strategy. In addition, the Chinese government's secrecy regarding the situation limits access to reliable information. Therefore, the paper relies on obtainable academic sources, newspaper reports, and leaked government documents in order to understand how the Uyghurs have been targeted in Chinese counterterrorism and the factors motivating China to target the Uyghur group.

A brief review of the existing literature on Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS), securitization theory, and identity politics in Xinjiang will primarily identify a gap in terms of critical literature on Chinese counterterrorism policy in the XUAR. Section 1 will provide a timeline of the XUAR's geopolitical history and assess the impact of identity politics on regional stability. Section 1 will also explore regional religious diversity and Islam's significance for Uyghur identity. Section 2 will analyze China's securitization of the Uyghurs based on their connection to Islam, East Turkestan, and a series of violent clashes and attacks that involved Uyghurs. Section 3 will investigate the conditions surrounding detention of Uyghur in "re-education" centers.

Here, surveillance, restrictions to reproduction, and conditions under which Uyghurs live in the region will also be discussed. Section 3 will also argue that restrictions to Uyghur reproduction meet the criteria for genocide. Finally, this paper will conclude that China has securitized the Uyghur group due to its strong identity, connection to Islam, and history of separatism. Furthermore, this illustrates China's direct targeting of an ethnic Muslim minority group by systematic elimination of the group within its counterterrorism approach.

Literature Review

CTS are useful in order to examine China's counterterrorism approach as they apply a critical lens to states' responses to terrorism. CTS emerged within the context of the Global War on Terrorism, around 2007, after a rise in studies on terrorism during the post-9/11 period. They attempt to provide a theoretical framework which a) explores responses to political violence and b) challenges states' manipulation of terrorist threats to create fear among civilian populations (Jackson et al. 2020).

The critical agenda of CTS is fueled by a set of fundamental epistemological and ontological commitments. Essentially, these commitments center around CTS' critical stance on state-centric, problem-solving approaches to terrorism characterized by states' failure to maintain objectivity (Gkoutziouils 2020, 56). Central contributions therefore argue that the majority of studies on terrorism have a problem-solving approach which assesses current or imminent threats as defined through the state without analyzing them through a wider social or historical lens (Gunning 2007; Jackson 2007a). Resultantly, states attempt to minimize threats based on generalizations rather than on a holistic understanding of wider contexts. Many CTS primarily establish a critical view towards Western efforts of combatting terrorism within the context of the Global War on Terrorism (Qureshi 2020; Miller 2019; Herring and Stokes 2011). Scholars argue, inter alia, that the U.S.' counterterrorism approach has resembled state terror in the form of state political violence rather than non-violent deradicalization methods (Poynting and Whyte 2013). Additionally, they argue that Muslim populations through Western narratives are depicted as the Other and subsequently targeted by counterterrorism strategies based on community-group generalizations (Mamandi 2002; Jackson 2007b). Building on this, when violently targeting Muslim minority groups within counterterrorism operations, states exacerbate the symptoms of violence rather than treat causes that often relate to minority marginalization (Al Olaimy 2019). Therefore, targeting Muslim minority groups through violent counterterrorism approaches is highly problematic.

Related to CTS' critiques of state-centric problem-solving responses to terrorism is the Copenhagen School's conceptualization of securitization as a state's speech act, or linguistic representation, of a specific issue as an existential threat to the state (Waever 1995). This is because the threat sought to be resolved through counterterrorism may also be securitized by the state. Another significant contribution identifies this speech as intentional and strategic in order to justify and legitimize the potential

use of force in response to existential threats towards the state (Buzan et al. 1998). In discussing securitization in practice, Buzan (2006) highlights the U.S.' rhetoric regarding the Global War on Terrorism as a "long war" in the struggle against anti-liberal, ideological extremists that seek to destroy the West and its values. Through establishing and emphasizing this terrorist threat, the U.S. counterterrorism approach "legitimately" uses force on Muslim populations across the Middle East and North Africa as Western populations perceive the struggle as necessary in order to defend its liberal, democratic values. However, the majority of studies on terrorism focus on the U.S., U.K., and other Western states. The literature lacks contributions that review how authoritarian states, such as China, securitize minority communities through counterterrorism narratives. Furthermore, studying such cases identifies the far-reaching impacts of the U.S.' securitization of Muslims in a post-9/11 context through its effect on counterterrorism rhetoric and strategies in China (Topal 2021, 5).

In terms of China's behavior towards Muslim minorities, research primarily examines Uyghur failure to conform to Han society (Kaltman 2007), Uyghur resentment towards the Chinese state (Holdstock 2015), and Uyghur radicalization in Xinjiang (Rogers 2018). Furthermore, Uyghur identity relative to the Han and interrelated ethnic tensions have been thoroughly outlined by Finley (2013). Others identify increased stigmatization of Uyghurs within the region, based on their adherence to Islam (Kurmangaliyeva and Ercilasun 2017). Building on this, Topal (2021) finds that stigmatization of Uyghur ethnicity and Islam has caused China to securitize the group. Expanding on China's securitization of the Uyghurs, Tobin (2020a, 12) highlights that Uyghur identity is securitized through continuous framing of the group as a threat to the nation's safety and collective sense of unity. Furthermore, Hudayar (2019) argues that Xinjiang's relevance for China's "Belt and Road Initiative" and richness in natural resources, such as oil and gas, contributes to China's targeting of the Uyghur ethnic group specifically. Research on China's treatment of the Uyghurs must therefore acknowledge the region's history and consider regional religion- and identity-diversity in order to holistically understand the dynamics that shape state securitization of the Uyghurs.

The present Western-centered research focus on the impact of securitization and counterterrorism strategies on Muslim populations represents a gap in the literature of critical research into Chinese counterterrorism policy. The present paper therefore contributes to the literature by examining contemporary interethnic tensions between Han and Uyghurs as background for China's securitization and persecution of the Uyghurs within its counterterrorism policy. Collectively, the research into regional interethnic dynamics, securitization rhetoric, and counterterrorism policy serve to answer the central question: how has Chinese counterterrorism policy in Xinjiang targeted Uyghur Muslims?

Section 1. Understanding Identity Politics in Xinjiang
The Geopolitical Context

The XUAR, formerly named East Turkestan, is China's largest province and is located on its northwest border (McMillen 2009, 2). It borders the Russian Federation, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan (Rogers 2018, 491). Therefore, it geographically represents China's most direct linkage to Central Asia and the Caucasus region. This makes the region fundamental for China's "Belt and Road Initiative" which seeks to revive the country's ancient "Silk Road" through connecting Central Asian and Eurasian economies within a "China-centered" trading network (Chung 2018, 186). Additionally, Xinjiang sits on a strategically important economic zone due to its rich oil and mineral supplies, which are among China's major sources of energy (Downs 2000, 3). For example, the Tarim Basin, located in the south of Xinjiang, is China's largest basin and is expected to contain approximately two hundred and forty billion cubic meters of natural gas reserves and eleven billion tons of crude oil reserves (Prudnikova 2019, 158-9; Rogers 2018, 492). Xinjiang's strategic and economic importance for China is pivotal for understanding China's fear for Uyghur separatism. In losing control of the region, China's economy and geopolitical plans in the area would be significantly impacted. Therefore, the government emphasizes the Chinese state's historical ties to the region. While China claims that Xinjiang has been an inseparable part of the country since ancient times, Uyghurs maintain that their ancestors have resided within the region for more than six thousand years (Tschantret 2018, 574). In examining Xinjiang's ancient history, the Chinese Han and Tang dynasties have indeed been among the region's governing powers before the Qing Empire ruled for the second half of the nineteenth century (Mackerras and Clarke 2009, 57-8). Furthermore, in 1884, under the Qing Empire, the region officially became Xinjiang by name and thereby became part of the empire more permanently (Canfield and Rasuly-Paleczek 2010, 40). However, during the first half of the twentieth century, Xinjiang was governed by Chinese warlords (Forbes 1985). In 1933, discontent under the warlord rule resulted in the proclamation of the first Islamic East Turkestan Republic (Klimeš 2015, 163).

During East Turkestan rule, geopolitical pressures from Soviet and Chinese borders threatened the Republic's independence and caused the government's dissolution after merely one year in power (Kurmangaliyeva and Ercilasun 2017, 10). Following this, Xinjiang was also influenced by Soviet rule as its governor actively participated in politics with Chinese and Soviet leaders simultaneously. This facilitated the declaration of a second East Turkestan Republic in 1944, which maintained independence for five years before its dissolution. In 1949, following the establishment of the Communist Chinese government, the political leaders of the second East Turkestan Republic boarded a plane to Beijing. While it was publicly proclaimed that the plane crashed and all passengers were dead, it was later revealed that they had been imprisoned by the Chinese government in Beijing. Following these events, the Chinese army leader of Xinjiang publicly declared the region's subordination to

the People's Republic of China and effectively terminated the second East Turkestan Republic (Kurmangaliyeva and Ercilasun 2017, 10-11). Xinjiang has remained under the rule of the People's Republic of China since its declaration of subordination, with the government formally establishing the XUAR in 1955. However, the years under China have been characterized by resistance from Uyghurs within the region.

Various Uyghur uprisings against the Chinese leadership have occurred since the People's Republic of China seized control of the region in 1949. These uprisings represent Uyghurs' continuous struggle for independence (Rogers 2018, 494-5). Tensions in the region were present throughout the 1980s and 1990s, reflected through both violent and non-violent Uyghur resistance (Rogers 2018, 498-500). Non-violent, symbolic Uyghur resistance in the 1990s included negative stereotyping of the Han, leading to the groups' increased spatial and social segregation (Finley 2013, 235). Here, negative stereotyping is considered non-violent resistance because it exerted pressure among Uyghurs to refrain from interacting with Han people unless absolutely necessary (Finley 2013, 83-4). This created a dynamic which strained Uyghur and Han relations and increased segregation between the groups further (Finley 2013, 84). Although political violence in Xinjiang is not a new phenomenon, the 1990s marked a shift in the official narrative of interethnic tensions in the region (Rogers 2018, 494). While Xinjiang was officially represented during the 1980s as peaceful, the narrative shifted in the 1990s to expressing concern for a long-term ethnic separatism problem (Tobin 2020, 89). In terms of violent resistance, the activity during the 1990s divided into three waves: armed uprisings in Baren in 1990, several bus bombings in 1992 and 1993, and a series of bombings and assassinations between 1996 and 1997 (Tschantret 2018, 576-7). In 1997, these events resulted in demonstrations in Ghulja and the government's violent removal of protesters (Finley 2013, 235). It is also noteworthy that the Baren uprisings in 1990 originally were publicly denied, but after 9/11 were described as a "turning point" for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in its approach to handling the "Xinjiang problem" (Tobin 2020a, 99). The 9/11 attacks represented yet another shift in the official representation of the region; Xinjiang went from the 1990s narrative of struggling with a long-term separatist problem to facing a constant threat of infiltration by terrorism and religious extremism (Tobin 2020a, 89). This reflects the impact of a post-9/11 context which connects Islam with terrorism within Western narratives (Mamandi 2002, 766). In the 2000s, violent, interethnic clashes in Urumqi in 2009, and violent attacks in 2013 and 2014, contributed to the construction of a narrative portraying the entire Uyghur group as a terrorist threat.

IDENTITY AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

Early During the 1949 subordination of Xinjiang to the People's Republic of China, Uyghurs represented more than seventy-five percent of the total population in the region, while today they represent forty-six percent (Liu and Peters 2017, 269). By contrast, the Han population in Xinjiang has increased from six to forty percent over the last fifty years. This has put Xinjiang's Uyghurs at risk of becoming a minority to the

Han population within their own autonomous region (Canfield and Rasuly-Paleczek 2010, 40). Concurrently, there has been a lack of economic development among the Uyghur population, lower rates of Uyghur life expectancy, and general deprivation of Uyghurs relative to Han (Cappelletti 2020, 130-131; Topal 2021, 6). Socio-economic improvement for Han migrants in the region and simultaneous deprivation among the Uyghur population have therefore contributed to interethnic tensions, violence, and attacks motivated by separatism. Furthermore, it has triggered interethnic segregation and exacerbated hostility between the two groups.

Social and spatial segregation enhance cultural differences between the groups. Criteria for cultural differences include factors such as genetic distinctiveness, religion, language, place of origin, and cultural practices such as food, clothing, and traditions (Finley 2013, 131). Considering these criteria, distinguished cultural identities within a context that privileges one over the other provides a background for the separation of, and interethnic clashes among, Uyghurs and Han in Xinjiang. Furthermore, a historical context of struggle for Uyghur independence contributes to interethnic tensions rooted in sentiments of marginalization among Uyghurs relative to a culturally dissimilar, privileged Han population.

In terms of language, Uyghurs and Han are clearly distinguished by the language they utilize. The Chinese Constitution states that each ethnic group may "use and develop their own spoken and written languages" (NPC, 1983). Therefore, the "Uyghur language," a Turkic language with close resemblance to Uzbek but in Arabic script (Kaltman 2007, 2), remains an official language in Xinjiang. However, continued use of Han Putonghua, or standard Chinese Mandarin, as the primary language is encouraged by the government for promotion of interethnic unity (Ma 2012, 34). Han Putonghua also remains an official language in Xinjiang as China progressively has implemented bilingual education systems in the autonomous regions (Ma 2012, 34). However, a clearer hierarchical positioning of languages in Xinjiang has developed from the Uyghur language gradually losing public significance. For example, fluency in Han Putonghua is necessary for those who seek to acquire more well-paid, prestigious jobs, while proficiency in Uyghur is regarded as insufficient to achieve economic success (Kaltman 2007, 16). At the top of this hierarchy, Han Putonghua dominates within areas such as media, administration, and education (Cabras 2017, 98).

With regard to place of origin, the state-led mass migration of Han Chinese into the XUAR since the establishment of the People's Republic of China contributes to segregation in Xinjiang (Rogers and Sidhu 2016, 109). As mentioned above, the influx of Han people into Xinjiang has increased the region's total Han population from six to forty percent over the past fifty years (Topal 2021, 6). Therefore, despite the current, similarly sized Uyghur and Han populations in Xinjiang, the large number of Han migrants into the region reflects Xinjiang's historically predominant Uyghur and non-Han population. In addition, the interethnic divide between Uyghur and Han populations in Xinjiang alongside marginalization of the Uyghur minority

group is strengthened by the Han and government's negative perception of, and rhetoric around, Islam. Furthermore, this is mirrored in the CCP's concern for religious elements of Uyghur culture as motivating forces for separatism (Rogers 2018, 506).

Religious diversity plays a significant role in the segregation of Uyghur and Han groups in Xinjiang (Davis 2008, 15). While the Han tend to be irreligious or follow Taoism, Mahayana Buddhism, or traditional Chinese religions, an overwhelming majority of Uyghurs are Muslim (ibid.). Within Uyghur society, non- or anti-Islamic religions are barely existent and, while there are followers of Buddhism, Christianity, and other faiths in Xinjiang, only a slight percentage of these are Uyghur (Kurmangaliyeva and Ercilasun 2017, 59). Therefore, it is noteworthy that the CCP has not implemented restrictions on these religions but has restricted and criminalized several religious practices connected to Islam. Through closing down mosques, prohibiting religious schools, and criminalizing growing beards and wearing veils, common religious practices connected to Islam have become illegal, criminal acts (Rogers 2018, 505-6; Wood 2020). Furthermore, due to the government's conviction that frequent religious engagement constitutes a primary motivation for committing terrorist acts, the regional leadership has established several religious committees to which Muslim Uyghurs are bound to report their involvement in religious activities (Chung 2018, 188). This also includes participation in activities and events such as circumcisions, weddings, and funerals. Additionally, unauthorized religious activities or trips abroad could result in expensive fines issued by the government, incarceration, or involuntary detention in "re-education" centers (Chung 2018, 188; New York Times 2019, 7). The lack of religious freedom for Muslim Uyghurs reinforces interethnic tensions, as it increases Uyghur sentiments of marginalization relative to the Han.

Despite virtually all Uyghurs following Islamic faith, what it entails to practice Islam varies significantly across the Uyghur population. In particular, the variation is observed through Muslim Uyghurs' level of urban- or rural-ness (Dwyer and Alagappa 2005, 3). While Uyghurs living in urban areas tend to practice Islam more moderately, Islam appears to dominate most aspects of day to day life for more rural Uyghurs (Dwyer and Alagappa 2005, 3). It is also noteworthy that official Chinese narratives tend to depict those living in more rural areas as more backwards. Within Xinjiang, Uyghurs primarily reside in poorer, agricultural rural areas in the south while more urban, developed areas in the north have larger Han populations (Harlan 2009; Kaltman 2007, 10). An official white paper on Chinese counterterrorism states that, "[r]ural residents in Xinjiang have a relatively weak sense of the rule of law, lack understanding of the law, and are vulnerable to instigation and intimidation by terrorist and extremist forces, resulting in criminal behavior" ("The Fight Against Terrorism" 2019). Therefore, they are more frequently selected for "re-education" as part of China's preventative counterterrorism program. Furthermore, the document states that they tend to not have, "received a good education, [be] weak in the use of standard spoken and written Chinese language, slow in acquiring modern knowledge, and have poor communication skills." This illustrates China's depiction of the

Uyghur group as a temporal Other. The concept of temporal Othering relates to the association of industrialization and development with "progress" and marginalized agricultural societies as the "backwards" or "primitive" Other (Hom 2016). With this conceptualization in mind, one may draw a direct connection to China's rhetoric concerning the Uyghurs. Through the white paper's depiction of Uyghurs as backwards, they are portrayed as the temporal Other to the more "progressive" Han and resultantly securitized as a violent threat. The CCP thereby directly creates an association between more religious, rural Uyghurs and the idea of a dangerous Other due to primitive agricultural "backwardness" and interrelated poor understanding of the law.

Regardless of Uyghurs' rural- or urban-ness, Islam is embedded in Muslim Uyghurs' daily lives across all of Xinjiang through how they greet each other, their clothing, their consumption of halal food, celebration of Muslim holidays, and their shared connection with Muslims in other parts of the world (Dwyer and Alagappa 2005, 3). Therefore, even in urban areas within Xinjiang where Uyghurs tend to practice Islam more moderately, religion remains a factor for segregation between Uyghur and Han people. This is observable through the practice of Islamic food restrictions, among which abstaining from pork is considered significant for the majority of practicing Muslims (Romi Mukherjee 2014, 27-8). Through interviewing Uyghurs about interethnic relations in Xinjiang, Finley (2013, 133) found that respondents would, under no circumstances, consider eating in a "Hancan restaurant," or a restaurant serving Han cuisine, including pork. Furthermore, abstaining from pork has been framed, along other religious practices, as part of an existential threat to China (Tobin, 2020a, 196). In turn, this framing has caused the government's opposition to Islamic food traditions. For example, reports from Ramadan in 2008 show that the government prohibited Uyghur Muslim employees from fasting and provided free lunches during Ramadan to encourage their breaking of the fast (Rogers 2018, 506). Islamic food restrictions and the disregard for these restrictions in official places construct another element of segregation between Uyghurs and Han through limitations to Uyghur religious freedom.

Economic, political, and cultural discrimination of ethnic minorities directly increase the likelihood of ethnic mobilization (Cederman et al. 2010, 90). State-led mass migration of Han into Xinjiang, and concurrent imbalance of Han and Uyghur socio-economic development, has therefore contributed to interethnic tensions and violent Uyghur resistance. As discussed above, this is reflected through the lack of economic improvement among the Uyghur population, lower rates of Uyghur life expectancy, preferentially of Han Putonghua in public spaces, and disregard for Uyghur Muslims' food restrictions. The interethnic tensions rooted in Uyghur marginalization have led China to securitize the Uyghurs and depict their connection to Islam and East Turkestan as a terrorist threat to the state (Topal 2021, 5-6; Tobin 2020a, 192). The subsequent section will further examine how specific clashes and attacks were utilized in China's securitization, and subsequent persecution, of Xinjiang's Uyghur population.

Section 2. Securitizing the Uyghurs: Identity as an Existential Terrorist Threat

In 2009, what Chinese authorities summarized as interethnic violent clashes occurred in Urumqi, Xinjiang between Uyghur and Han groups (Ryono and Galway 2015, 236). Following the 2009 violence, in 2013 and 2014 two terrorist attacks occurred in China for which Uyghur militants claimed responsibility (Clarke 2019; Wood 2020). This section will argue that 2009 clashes and terrorist attacks in 2013 and 2014 formed part of the reason behind China's securitization of Uyghur identity. Furthermore, it will critically evaluate the language utilized by the Chinese government in the securitization process. For this analysis, the section will use leaked documents from within the Chinese government, including speeches by Chinese President Xi and XUAR regional leader Chen Quanguo, on how to target "The Three Evils." Led by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, the Copenhagen School conceptualizes securitization as a state's linguistic representation of a particular issue as presenting an existential threat (Waever 1995). Furthermore, framing an issue as an existential threat is done by the state to legitimize the potential use of force in response (Buzan et al. 1998). Different social realms, including identity, can therefore be securitized if given existential significance (Tobin 2020a, 12). This is mirrored in China's portrayal of Uyghur religious identity as a separatist and terrorist threat following violent attacks and interethnic clashes. Religious restrictions and increased surveillance of Uyghurs thus reflect how China has taken advantage of the post-9/11 general securitization of Muslim populations.

After 9/11, the aim to defeat "The Three Evils" in China became intensified and considered as part of the Global War on Terrorism (Tobin 2020a, 101). The response to attacks within a post-9/11 context is therefore enabled by the international focus on combatting terrorism (Topal 2021, 5). In 2002, the Chinese Foreign Ministry iterated that "we should be cracking down on these terrorists as part of the international struggle against terrorism" (Tobin 2020a, 101). However, the focus on preventing attacks motivated by separatism within defeating "The Three Evils" illustrates that Chinese counterterrorism efforts are shaped with regard to its national interests of establishing a homogenous unity rather than the prevention of terrorism internationally. As highlighted in Section 1, losing control of Xinjiang would significantly impact China's economy and geopolitical plans in the area due to the region's economic and strategic importance. Resultantly, China has securitized Uyghur identity by portraying it as a security threat to China's identity-security and using "The Three Evils" narrative to explain all historical and contemporary violence in the region (Tobin 2020a, 89). Because of the heightened identity-security focus following 9/11, three violent events occurring within a post-9/11 context will be highlighted in the subsequent discussion of China's securitization and persecution of the Uyghurs.

The Build-Up: Uyghur Violence in Post-9/11 China

The 2009 violent, interethnic clashes between Han and Uyghurs in Urumqi were

sparked by the killing of two male Uyghurs in the Guangdong region in China. Following rumors that they were responsible for the rape of Han girls, they were beaten to death by a group of Han men (Clarke 2019). The incident sparked outrage among Uyghurs in Xinjiang who, on July 6, instigated demonstrations in Urumqi to demand justice for the violence (Ryono and Galway 2015, 235). Although the protests were initially non-violent, they escalated to Uyghur rioters' destruction of Han property and automatic gunfire by People's Armed Police (PAP) units (HRW 2009, 3). In retaliation, Han groups vandalized Uyghur businesses and attacked Uyghurs the next morning with significantly less police intervention than the previous evening (Clarke 2019). On the morning of July 7, security forces in Urumqi began their search for Uyghurs involved in the demonstrations, which resulted in the enforced disappearances of at least forty-three Uyghur men (ibid.). Enforced disappearances are illegal under international law and occur when official state authorities detain a potential perpetrator without releasing information regarding the individual's whereabouts (OHCHR 2006). In turn, the individual becomes positioned outside the protection of law, which increases the risk of torture, extrajudicial execution, and other types of violent abuses (ibid.). Furthermore, in responding to the 2009 events, China implemented sophisticated surveillance-methods to follow Uyghur movements and prevent further resistance and clashes. Such methods included installation of GPS trackers in motor vehicles, facial recognition and iris scanners at checkpoints and stops at places such as gas stations and train stations, and the mandatory installation of apps to remove potentially subversive material from Uyghur smartphones (Clarke 2019). These responses reflect China's increasingly iron-fisted treatment of the Uyghurs post-9/11 as the international counterterrorism focus enabled surveillance and unlawful arrests of Uyghurs through its portrayal of Muslim populations as a terrorist threat. The clashes and subsequent enforced disappearances therefore deepened tensions in Xinjiang due to the scrutinization and targeting of the Uyghur group.

October 28, 2013, a four-wheel drive vehicle drove through a civilian crowd in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, killing five people and injuring several more (Chung 2018, 194). Chinese authorities identified the driver as Uyghur, and the radical Islamist group, the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), took responsibility for the attack. Furthermore, it warned of Uyghur fighters' ambitions to carry out violent attacks across China (Kaiman 2013). This was revealed by the TIP's leader, Abdullah Mansour, as he claimed that East Turkestan had "awakened", realized who was the "real enemy", and "returned to their religion" (Kaiman 2013). Similar to the riots in 2009, the 2013 Tiananmen attack formed part of the justification for China's strict, post-9/11 Uyghur-focused counterterrorism approach. China highlights the attack as part of several events that have endangered public security ("The Fight Against Terrorism" 2019). However, official documents are very cautious to not associate Uyghurs with terrorism explicitly. Instead, they mention people from Xinjiang with poor education who lack understanding of the law, while highlighting attacks like that on Tiananmen Square. Furthermore, they identify separatism as the "hotbed in which terrorism and

extremism take root in Xinjiang," which, due to the Uyghur connection to former East Turkestan, implies that the threat is predominantly Uyghur ("The Fight Against Terrorism" 2019).

On March 1, 2014, a knife attack at Kunming Station in China killed thirty-one people and injured more than a hundred others (Chung 2018, 194). The attack was carried out by Uyghur violent extremists and culminated with China's significantly increased counterterrorism focus in Xinjiang. In responding to the attacks, the government strengthened its military security in the region and upscaled its already heavy counterterrorism training (Gracie 2014). Furthermore, the 2014 attacks marked the starting point of Xinjiang's persecution of Uyghurs through "re-education." In its efforts to combat terrorism, China has remained unsuccessful in separating potentially radicalized persons from the entire Uyghur group. Rather, it has securitized the Uyghurs through their association with East Turkestan and Islam. Consequently, China has suppressed their religious freedom by closing down mosques, prohibiting religious schools, criminalizing beards, and encouraging people to break their fasts during Ramadan (Rogers 2018, 505-506). Furthermore, actions such as praying, travelling abroad for religious purposes, abstaining from alcohol, performing traditional funerals, or listening to religious lectures could result in incarceration due to their supposed affiliation with violent extremism (Hudayar 2019 180). This has caused human rights groups, scholars, and exiled Uyghurs to state that policies implemented to prevent the spread of religious extremism and separatism have worsened, rather than improved the situation (Kashgarian 2020; Gracie 2014). In the aforementioned clashes and attacks, underlying motivations for violence included sentiments of minority marginalization and subsequent desire for separatism (Gracie 2014). Therefore, attempts to decrease interethnic violence and attacks while disregarding wider social and historical contexts may result in further discontent and violence rather than effective deradicalization.

China's Response

Responding to the discussed clashes and attacks, the construction of "re-education" centers to target "The Three Evils" began in 2016 (Cadell 2019). Leaked government documents, including speeches by President Xi and regional XUAR leaders, reflect how the events discussed above initiated a rhetoric suggesting implementation of harsher regional counterterrorism efforts. Additionally, they demonstrate how regional party leader Chen used counterterrorism rhetoric deployed by President Xi in justifying and initiating construction of "re-education" centers (Ramzy and Buckley 2019). The leaked documents contain more than two hundred pages of internal speeches held by President Xi and several other government officials as well as approximately one hundred and fifty pages of reports and directives regarding the control and surveillance of Uyghurs residing in the XUAR (Ramzy and Buckley 2019). The documents further suggest implementing restrictions on Islam outside Xinjiang. However, the high number of Uyghurs residing within the region has caused the principal focus to remain within the XUAR. The focus on Uyghurs as a separatist and terrorist threat

is observable within leaked speeches held by President Xi.

Responding to the 2014 Kunming attacks, President Xi highlighted the necessity for a strong "struggle against terrorism, infiltration and separatism" through deployment of "organs of dictatorship" (Ramzy and Buckley 2019). He highlighted terrorism as a threat to the state by stating that, "[t]he psychological impact of extremist religious thought on people must never be underestimated" and "people who are captured by religious extremism […] have their consciences destroyed, lose their humanity and murder without blinking an eye." In a separate 2014 speech, he paralleled religious extremism to a contagious virus and an addictive, dangerous drug. He stated that, "the toxicity of religious extremism" is "like taking a drug, and you lose your sense, go crazy and will do anything" (Ramzy and Buckley 2019). This adds to CCP party propaganda which routinely uses similar language when referring to religious extremism (New York Times 2019, 3). In discussing the approaches to defeat this "virus," he additionally claimed that, "[t]he battle to combat violence and terrorism will not allow even a moment of slackness, and decisive actions must be taken to resolutely suppress the terrorists' rampant momentum" (Hudayar 2019, 180). Furthermore, in inspecting the counterterrorism police in Urumqi, he stated that, "[t]he methods that our comrades have at hand are too primitive" and "none of these weapons is any answer for their big machete blades, axe heads and cold steel weapons" (Ramzy and Buckley, 2019). He also claimed that terrorist attacks in the United Kingdom were direct consequences of policies that prioritize human rights above national security. Therefore, counterterrorism should be "as harsh as them" and "show absolutely no mercy" (Ramzy and Buckley, 2019). This reflects the strategic element of securitization theory as securitizing a particular "problem" is often done intentionally to legitimize the use of force. President Xi's statements reflect a rhetoric which intentionally prepares his population for deployment of harsh counterterrorism measures. This strongly resembles the U.S.' intentional rhetoric of the Global War on Terror as a "long war," in order to prepare its population for a harsh, lasting, and violent counterterrorism struggle (Buzan 2006). Identifying terrorism as an existential threat to the state and subsequently connecting terrorism with religion and separatism thereby enables China's harsh counterterrorism policies and targeting of Uyghurs. The responses to terrorist attacks and ethnic clashes in Xinjiang have consequently reflected a clear decline in protection of human rights (Rogers 2018, 487). This is observable through China's attempt to combat violent extremism with chauvinistic securitization of Uyghurs and subsequent implementation of "re-education" centers to permanently remove Uyghur identity (Tobin 2020a, 192).

President Xi has expressed concerns regarding Uyghur militants' influence spreading outside Xinjiang and into other parts of China which would risk weakening the CCP's influence (Ramzy and Buckley 2019). This has occurred alongside the party's heightened focus on counterterrorism measures in light of violence and ethnic clashes within a post-9/11 context. Furthermore, as these clashes and attacks are rooted in identity politics and Uyghur marginalization, insecurity of the party-state has

increased alongside regional political instability (Tobin 2020a, 192). Within a leaked speech, President Xi claimed that the Uyghur militant threat must disappear to avoid shocks to social stability, damages to the unity of people of all ethnicities, and risks to reform, development, and stability (Ramzy and Buckley 2019). This reflects the CCP's concern over Uyghur separatism and radicalization due to the region's geopolitical and economic importance.

In discussing the "Uyghur threat," President Xi traced Islamic extremism in Xinjiang to the Middle East and claimed that turbulent political situations in Syria and Afghanistan would increase the risk of extremist violence in China. According to President Xi, Uyghurs have travelled to both countries and could return to China as "seasoned fighters seeking an independent homeland" that they would call East Turkestan (Ramzy and Buckley 2019). This contradicts official Chinese statements claiming that, "China opposes linking terrorism and extremism with specific countries, ethnic groups or religions" ("The Fight Against Terrorism" 2019). Instead, President Xi's rhetoric strongly reflects China's intentional securitization of the Uyghurs as an entire group. This is also observable through the difference in which violent acts by Uyghurs and non-Uyghur persons are described officially. For example, an attempted bombing at Beijing airport in July 2013 and explosions outside the CCP's headquarters in Taiyuan in November 2013 were carried out by non-Uyghurs and not described as terrorism (Holdstock 2015, 166). In comparison, attacks carried out by Uyghurs have been recognized as violent acts of terrorism. This illustrates the selectiveness in China's approach to counterterrorism and illuminates the tunnel-vision focus on combating Uyghur separatism rather than preventing terrorist attacks in general. Uyghur history of shared territory, religion, culture, and identity adds to China's concern for more Uyghurs sharing separatist thoughts, causing the securitization of the entire Uyghur ethnic group. In expressing concern that Uyghurs with connections to religion and the Middle East could carry out terrorist attacks, the persecution of Uyghurs is "legitimised." This illustrates the strategic element of China's securitization of the Uyghur group. In turn, the Chinese government under President Xi, and regional political leadership in the XUAR under representative Chen, utilized attacks carried out by violent extremists to detain more than one million Uyghurs in "re-education" centers designed to suppress their identity and force allegiance to the CCP.

Adding to his response on terrorism and religious extremism, President Xi stated that, "*there must be effective educational remoulding and transformation of criminals*" [emphasis added] and "even after these people are released, their education and transformation must continue" (Ramzy and Buckley 2019). President Xi's statement of educational remolding and transformation reflects the CCP's idea of a preventative counterterrorism approach through "re-education." He subsequently claimed that "ensuring stability in Xinjiang would require a sweeping campaign of surveillance and intelligence gathering to root out resistance in Uyghur society" and that new technology was required as part of the solution to combat terrorism in Xinjiang (Ramzy and Buckley, 2019). This vision has increased implementation of sophisticated hi-tech

surveillance methods in order to maintain constant control of Uyghurs and forcefully detain those regarded as too committed to religion or East Turkestan. Methods of surveillance include facial recognition, genetic testing, and surveillance apps on Uyghurs' smartphones in order to control their actions (Ramzy and Buckley 2019), illustrating the harsh restrictions that are imposed on Uyghurs' privacy and daily lives.

Furthermore, the transferring of regional party leader Chen into Xinjiang in 2016 resulted in more direct persecution of Uyghur Muslims (Zenz and Leibold, 2017). Reacting to the previously discussed speeches made by President Xi, Chen commenced the construction of "re-education" centers across Xinjiang in compliance with the President's statements regarding "effective educational remoulding" (Haitiwaji and Morgat 2021). Among the leaked documents, speeches made by Chen to the regional government in Xinjiang reveal statements claiming that, "the struggle against terror and to safeguard stability is a protracted war, and also a war of offense" and listed "vocational skills, education training and transformation centers" as examples of "good practices" for achieving the President's counterterrorism goals in the region (Ramzy and Buckley 2019). However, rather than promote unity and prevent terrorism, the state securitization of the Uyghur group has been counterproductive as it has promoted conflict between Uyghur and Han communities in Xinjiang and thereby increased societal insecurity (Finley 2019, 81). Furthermore, the generalization of Uyghurs as a threat to the state based on the actions of violent extremists has caused the involuntary detention of more than one million people (Tobin 2020, 301-2). Additionally, the inhumane conditions Uyghurs live under in Xinjiang will likely continue to increase political instability rather than unify the region. Rather than vocational skills and educational training, the reality inside the "re-education" centers reflects severe human rights violations including forced sterilization, torture, deprivation of personal freedom, and forced labor (The Associated Press 2020; Schmitz 2018; NY Times 2019; Ramzy and Buckley 2019; Xu et al. 2020, 3). The following section will analyze how Chinese counterterrorism strategies have impacted Uyghurs as a result of the government's securitization of the group.

Section 3. China's Preventative Counterterrorism Strategy: Inside the "Re-Education" Centers

CTS apply a critical lens to state-centric, subjective problem-solving approaches to counterterrorism (Gkoutziouils 2020, 56). Central CTS scholars have argued that states often approach imminent threats as defined through the state without taking into consideration wider social and historical contexts (Gunning 2007; Jackson 2007a). Furthermore, CTS critique Western depictions of Muslim populations as a dangerous Other and subsequent targeting of Muslims through state counterterrorism strategies (Mamandi 2002; Jackson 2007b). Within the context of the Global War on Terrorism, the counterterrorism approach taken by the U.S. has, according to scholars, resembled state terror in the form of state political violence (Poynting and Whyte 2013). Additionally, persecution and further marginalization of community-groups as

a counterterrorism strategy exacerbate symptoms of violence rather than treat its causes (Al Olaimy 2019, 189). Similarly, China's counterterrorism approach in Xinjiang resembles state political violence through its methods of involuntary incarceration, sterilization, forced labor, and torture. Moreover, this approach is carried out based on the perception of the Uyghur group as a threat to the state rather than an understanding of Uyghur violence as a product of marginalization and discrimination. Instead, China targets Uyghurs based on religious and ethnic markers. Uyghurs are targeted by Chinese counterterrorism policy because their ethnic and religious attributes differ from those of China's Han majority. Because there exists limited critical literature on Chinese counterterrorism, this section critically examines how China has targeted Uyghurs in Xinjiang as part of its counterterrorism strategy in the region.

PERSECUTING THE UYGHURS

Resulting from various violent clashes and attacks, Xinjiang's Uyghurs have increasingly undergone extreme scrutiny through different forms of sophisticated, high-tech surveillance. Methods of surveillance include the installation in motor vehicles of GPS trackers, checkpoints with facial recognition tests and iris scanners, genetic testing, and compulsory installation of surveillance apps with the ability to remove potentially subversive material on smartphones (Clarke 2019; Ramzy and Buckley 2019). Through surveillance of smartphone activity, authorities in Xinjiang have targeted Uyghurs who interact with miscellaneous religious material online. For example, within leaked government documents, it was found that authorities in China have targeted users of Zapya, an application which enables users to download the Qur'an and exchange religious passages and teachings with others (Alecci 2019). Chinese authorities use the app to flag users and carry out more thorough investigations into their internet activity. Successively, such investigations may lead to detention of Uyghurs in "re-education" centers (Alecci 2019). This indicates a Chinese machinery that systematically targets a religious minority group to purposely transform its religious identity.

Leaked documents exposed by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists through a chain of exiled Uyghurs identify four bulletins of secret intelligence briefings from a centralized data collection system, the Integrated Joint Operation Platform (ICIJ 2019). These bulletins demonstrate a direct connection between mass surveillance and the detention of Uyghurs in "re-education" centers (ICIJ 2019). In an official statement, the press office of China's embassy in London stated that, "[t]here are no so-called 'prison camps' in Xinjiang. Vocational education and training centers have been established for the prevention of terrorism" (Embassy of China, London, 2019). The link between surveillance and detention of Uyghurs illustrates China's direct persecution of the Uyghur group and thus directly challenges official Chinese statements of the state's opposition to discrimination based on specific countries, ethnic groups, or religions within its counterterrorism policy ("The Fight Against Terrorism" 2019). Furthermore, the region has constructed three hundred and eighty "re-education" centers within which at least one million Uyghurs have been

detained across Xinjiang since 2016 (Graham-Harrison 2020; Nebehay 2018). This reinforces the contradictions within official Chinese statements.

Inside the Centers

While there exists limited information regarding the "re-education" in Xinjiang, investigative journalism, reports, and leaked government documents contribute to an understanding of what is occurring within the centers. In official statements, Chinese authorities have claimed that they are vocational education and training centers established to prevent terrorism within the region (Embassy of China, London 2019). Furthermore, authorities have emphasized that the implementation of these "re-education" centers as a counterterrorism policy in Xinjiang has been highly successful and the "experience could be borrowed in other countries" (Cadell 2019). According to Chinese officials, trainees take courses in Mandarin, professional skills, and legal knowledge at the centers while they retain their personal freedom (Embassy of China, London 2019). However, leaked government documents, interviews with former detainees, and investigative reports suggest that the reality within the centers is significantly different from what is depicted through official statements.

A leaked "manuscript" for officials to use when explaining the situation for young people whose families are detained suggests that detainees have less freedom than claimed through official statements (New York Times 2019). The manuscript is designed to answer questions from Uyghur students returning to Xinjiang from schools located in other parts of China. With regard to claims that detainees fully maintain their freedom, instructions on how to respond to questions regarding detainees' return home suggest a different reality. For example, if asked by students why family members cannot return home, officials are to reply that, "if you were careless and caught an infectious virus […] you'd have to undergo enclosed, isolated treatment, because it's an infectious illness. If you weren't thoroughly cured, as soon as you returned home you would infect your family with this virus, and your whole family would fall ill" (New York Times 2019, 3). Furthermore, they are instructed to say that, "[p]articipating in study and education is not just the right of every citizen, it is also their duty. No matter what age, anyone who has been infected by religious extremism must undergo study" (New York Times 2019, 6–7). CCP party propaganda frequently deploys rhetoric which refers to "The Three Evils" as an infectious "virus." In turn, this enables the manuscript to construct a narrative of the centers as places where people can "heal" from a dangerous disease.

Furthermore, a government document leak, exposed by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, of a telegram from the CCP's commission in charge of Xinjiang's security apparatus lays out a manual for how the "re-education" centers should run and includes a paragraph on preventing escapes. The document states that escapes are prevented through a set of security measures: "zone separation and individual unit management, […] installation of police stations at front gates, security guard rooms, high guard posts, security guard posts and patrol routes, etc.,

perfect peripheral isolation, internal separation, protective defences, safe passageways […], and […] security instruments, security equipment, video surveillance, [and] one-button alarms" ("Autonomous Region State Organ Telegram" 2017). These security measures indicate that the Uyghurs being "re-educated" within the centers are involuntarily detained in what appears to mirror internment camps rather than "re-education" centers or "schools." Claims of detainees' personal freedom are thereby contradicted within the government's own documents.

Furthermore, detainees who have left "re-education" centers share their experiences of forceful detention. Discussing her time in a "re-education" center, Gulbahar Haitiwaji (2021) narrates her involuntary detention in a center functioning to transform Uyghurs after residing ten years in France. Her detention was based on a photograph of her daughter holding an East Turkestan flag. She was charged for her alleged support for separatism and return to East Turkestan. In the "re-education" center she shared a cell with other female detainees which contained a bucket, a shut, covered window, and cameras. However, there were no mattresses, furniture, or toilet paper, which suggests that the conditions were purposely designed to make detainees vulnerable to psychological manipulation and assist the centers in "transforming" detained Uyghurs through poor living standards. Furthermore, Haitiwaji (2021) describes the "re-education" as brainwashing due to its inclusion of forced participation in hours of "physical training" and "theory classes." For detainees, "physical training" included eleven hours of marching inside a classroom, whereas "theory classes" involved eleven hours of repeating pledges of allegiance to the country and party as well as language training of Han Putonghua for Uyghurs who communicate in Uyghur language. Detainees were told to begin the daily teaching by repeating, "[t]hank you to our great country. Thank you to our party. Thank you to our dear President Xi Jinping" and end the day by reciting, "I wish for my great country to develop and have a bright future. I wish for all ethnicities to form a single great nation. I wish good health to President Xi Jinping. Long live President Xi Jinping" (Haitiwaji, 2021). In particular, the phrase emphasizing the "wish for all ethnicities to form a single great nation" indicates the "re-education" centers' aim to systematically remove Uyghur identity. Additionally, Haitiwaju (2021) states that female detainees were sterilized through involuntary injections of "vaccines." This suggests that the centers do not merely seek to remove Uyghur identity, but the population entirely.

Additionally, reports have described torture of detainees inside the "re-education" centers (Hudayar 2019, 180). Kayrat Samarkand, a Kazakh who grew up in a Uyghur criminal gang, was detained when returning to China after eight years in Kazakhstan. Samarkand narrates that they were forced to memorize a list of "126 lies" related to religion, on which they were regularly quizzed: "[r]eligion is opium, religion is bad, you must believe in no religion, you must believe in the Communist Party," etc. (Schmitz 2018). Similar to Haitiwaji, Samarkand and the other detainees were instructed to recite pledges of allegiance to President Xi and the CCP before they were permitted to eat. Additionally, Samarkand describes how he was tortured after

throwing a mattress on a guard and states that, "[t]hey made me wear what they called 'iron clothes', a suit made of metal that weighed over 50 pounds […] [which] forced my arms and legs into an outstretched position. I couldn't move at all, and my back was in terrible pain" (Schmitz 2018). According to Schmitz (2018), Samarkand was forced to wear the suit for over twelve hours at a time, resulting in his full compliance with anything he was ordered to say or do. Haitiwaji and Samarkand's stories highlight the grim reality within centers that dominate the lives of more than one million Uyghurs across Xinjiang, while illustrating the government's systematic persecution of the region's Uyghur population.

In addition to hi-tech surveillance, forced physical and educational "training," and reports of torture, investigations into the "re-education" centers have demonstrated that they are also used to exploit Uyghur and Muslim minority workforce. According to a report published by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, the Chinese government has transferred at least sixty thousand Uyghurs out of Xinjiang to work in factories across the country (Lehr 2020, 4). Furthermore, while some are forced to work within the centers, others are sent immediately after their release from the centers to privately owned, state-subsidized factories across the country (Kang et al. 2018). Uyghurs are sent from the centers to factories in the supply chain of at least eighty-two global brands within the technology, clothing, and automotive industries where they work under conditions that strongly indicate forced labor (Xu et al. 2020, 3). Furthermore, Uyghurs working in these factories live under similar conditions to those in the centers as they reside within segregated dormitories, undergo language and ideological training outside working hours, are subjected to hi-tech surveillance, and are prohibited from participating in religious practices (Xu et al. 2020, 3). Direct transfer of Uyghurs from "re-education" centers to forced labor factories, alongside reports of torture, forced physical and educational "training," involuntary internment, constant surveillance, and generally poor living conditions within the centers, illustrate several violations of Uyghurs' human rights within China's counterterrorism policy.

The Uyghur Genocide

In addition to poor treatment of Xinjiang's Uyghurs, claims of forced birth control, sterilization, and other reproductive restrictions suggest that the Chinese government does not merely seek to eliminate Uyghur religious identity, but it aims to eliminate the Uyghur group entirely. A report published by the Associated Press (2020) illustrates how birth rates in the primarily Uyghur areas of Hotan and Kashgar in Xinjiang have dropped by more than sixty percent between 2015 and 2018 as a direct consequence of the government's regional birth control campaign. The report describes the government's efforts to systematically remove its Uyghur population. It finds that, "the state regularly subjects minority women to pregnancy checks, and forces intrauterine devices, sterilization, and even abortion on hundreds of thousands," particularly in Xinjiang (2020). This report validates Haitiwaji's recollection of involuntary

sterilization by pregnancy prevention injections. In Xinjiang, sterilizations increased more than seven-fold between 2016 and 2018 with over sixty thousand procedures carried out across the region in 2018 (The Associated Press 2020). Furthermore, although the numbers reflect the entire region, policies differ vastly between Uyghur and Han women. While Uyghur-dominated areas account for the majority of sterilization procedures, Han-dominated areas enjoy state subsidized baby formula and hospital services that are intended to encourage Han families to have more children (ibid.). By contrast, Uyghur women who have more than three children may be subjected to detention within the "re-education" centers. Resultantly, the article quotes a claim regarding restrictions to Uyghur reproduction in Xinjiang: "[i]t's genocide, full stop. It's not immediate, shocking, mass-killing on the spot type genocide, but it's slow, painful, creeping genocide. […] These are direct means of genetically reducing the U[y]ghur population" (ibid.).

In order to assess the claim of genocide against the Uyghur population, it is necessary to identify the criteria for genocide as described in the 1948 Genocide Convention. Article 2 of the Convention states that:

> "[G]enocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious groups, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group" (United Nations General Assembly 1948).

Genetic distinctiveness between Uyghur and Han people, separate languages, and cultural practices and traditions, as well as the connection between Uyghurs and an independent East Turkestan, contribute to clearly establishing the Uyghur population as a separate ethnic group within Xinjiang (Finley 2013, 131). Furthermore, as the Chinese government is convinced that religion is a primary motivator for committing terrorist acts (Chung 2018, 188), and the majority of the Uyghur population is Muslim, Uyghurs fit within the target group of genocide through its characterization both as an ethnic and religious group. Moving on to different methods of genocide, Articles 2 (b) and (d) related to "causing serious bodily or mental harm" and "imposing measures intended to prevent births" validate the claim of a Uyghur genocide. Stories of torture and systematic brainwashing within the centers provide evidence of serious bodily and mental harm, while the restrictions imposed on Uyghur reproduction illustrate organized measures to prevent Uyghur births. The plunge in birth rates within primarily Uyghur regions demonstrates the effectiveness of these restrictions. The targeting of Uyghurs as an ethnic and religious group in Xinjiang thereby reveals that the Chinese government, through hi-tech surveillance, detention, torture, "re-education," forced labor, and restrictions on Uyghur reproduction, is not merely discriminating

against the group, but also eliminating it.

The strategic and economic importance of Xinjiang is highlighted by state efforts to prevent Uyghur separatism. State-led mass influx of Han into Xinjiang, restrictions to religious freedom, framing of the Uyghurs as a dangerous, temporal Other, psychological manipulation and identity transformation of Uyghurs through "re-education," and Uyghur genocide illustrate Chinese authorities' efforts to ensure state homogeneity and remain in control of a geopolitically and economically significant province. Although China's transformation through "re-education" counterterrorism policy seeks to prevent "The Three Evils," the developing Uyghur genocide and systematic targeting of Uyghur identity mirror a primary ambition of preventing separatism motivated by a strong Uyghur identity and collective unity.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to unravel both how the Uyghurs have been targeted through Chinese counterterrorism and the factors motivating China to target the Uyghur group. To accomplish this, it has built on the theoretical framework of securitization theory and CTS. Section 1 revealed that Xinjiang's geopolitical and economic significance, the history of Uyghur separatism, Uyghur adherence to Islam, and strong Uyghur identity have all contributed to ethnic tensions between the region's Uyghur and Han populations. Furthermore, the state's efforts to suppress Islam and Uyghur identity have exacerbated regional interethnic tensions. Next, Section 2 argued that the Chinese government has securitized its Uyghur population after violent ethnic clashes and attacks. Furthermore, Section 2 found that Uyghur cultural identity, Islamic faith, and historical connection to East Turkestan are utilized by the government to connect the Uyghur group with "The Three Evils" of separatism, terrorism, and religious extremism. Through this, Uyghur identity is framed as an existential threat to the Chinese state. Additionally, Section 2 acknowledged the influence of a post-9/11 context in enabling the direct targeting of Uyghurs through the synchronous Western securitization of Muslim populations. Following this, Section 3 built on the securitization of Uyghurs and investigated how China is removing Uyghur identity through detaining members of the Uyghur group within "re-education" centers designed to demolish religious adherence and force allegiance to the CCP. Furthermore, Section 3 identified additional human rights violations of forced labor and torture within the centers and found that forced abortions, sterilizations, and reproductive rights restrictions meet the criteria for genocide due to their eventual elimination of the Uyghur ethnic group.

The counterterrorism approach deployed by China illustrates how state-centric policies can, rather than prevent terrorist threats, exacerbate sentiments of marginalization within Muslim minority groups. In particular, this occurs when they target marginalized communities through intrusive methods rather than treat root causes with an understanding of wider social and historical contexts. This paper has illustrated how China targets the Uyghurs within its "preventative counterterrorism policy."

China has securitized and subsequently placed Uyghurs within "re-education" centers designed to remove their identity and force their adherence to the state and the CCP. Systematic state efforts to remove the identity of an entire ethnic Muslim minority group, which comprises the majority of a strategically and economically significant province, suggest that China deploys "The Three Evils" rhetoric within a post-9/11 political framework to camouflage its more covert, primary ambition of defeating "The One Evil": Uyghur separatism.

The situation in Xinjiang continues to develop, which limits access to academic literature on China's counterterrorism approach and related persecution of the Uyghur ethnic group. This paper has attempted to fill a gap in the literature on identity politics in Xinjiang within a counterterrorism context. This was accomplished with the utilization of secondary sources of existing academic literature on Uyghur identity and Xinjiang, investigative reports, leaked government documents regarding the situation in Xinjiang, and official statements by the government. Examined holistically, these sources enabled an understanding of China's use of a post-9/11 context to securitize its Uyghur population and eliminate the group as part of a counterterrorism strategy. Therefore, as the Uyghur genocide continues to develop, this paper provides a useful starting point for further academic research.

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