

Responding to the Crisis in Xinjiang

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

In the face of such significant human rights violations, the U.S. must go beyond mere condemnation and move quickly toward action.

What is taking place in Xinjiang is eerily reminiscent of events during the Chinese Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s.

Political re-education camps are a part of the Chinese government's efforts to Sinicize religion to ensure alignment with the Communist Party's goals.

Over the past 18 months, terrifying reports of mass detention have emerged from Xinjiang, China. Situated in the western region of China, Xinjiang has historically been home to one of China's largest Muslim populations, known as Uighurs. Uighurs have long faced persecution at the hands of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), but reports of human rights abuse are escalating.

The Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) estimates in its 2018 report that between 800,000 to 1.1 million people, predominately Uighurs, are currently held in political re-education centers.¹ The CECC notes that this is a *conservative* estimate and that persons continue to disappear. Assistant Secretary of Defense, Randy Schriver, for example, says the U.S. government believes that closer to 3 million Uighurs may be held in political re-education facilities today.²

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There is no denying the existence of these camps. Firsthand testimony and satellite imagery confirm their existence, as well as their rapid development.³ The Chinese government has devoted significant resources to their continued development; reports document a 217 percent increase in spending from 2016 to 2017 on security-related apparatus.⁴ The increase can only be attributed to significant funding going toward the development of additional re-education camps.⁵

For a while, Chinese officials attempted to deny the existence of political re-education facilities. But since around August 2018, Chinese officials acknowledged their existence, claiming that these facilities exist for the sole purpose of teaching—primarily Uighurs, although Kazakh Muslims are also detained—the precepts of the CCP. Political re-education camps are a part of a broader effort to address perceived extremism in the Muslim community, but in reality are a part of the Chinese government's efforts to Sinicize religion to ensure alignment with the CCP's goals.⁶

Political re-education facilities are not the vocational training centers the Chinese government claim they are. Previously detained persons describe enduring torture, overcrowded prison-like conditions, and being subjected to indoctrination sessions on how to practice Islam.⁷ According to the CECC's 2018 report, there have been a number of detention-related deaths, some principally due to old age or health challenges—but deaths nonetheless.⁸

The international community responded with strong condemnation of China's persecution of Uighurs. Multiple figures in the U.S. government—including Vice President Mike Pence and Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, Sam Brownback—issued strong condemnations of human rights abuses occurring in Xinjiang.⁹ Executive-level figures as well as Members of Congress called for sanctions against high-level officials, such as Chen Quanguo, who are responsible for carrying out these atrocities. Co-chairs of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Representative Chris Smith (R-NJ), even called on the International Olympic Committee to revisit plans to permit China to host the 2022 Winter Olympics.¹⁰ The U.N. also sounded the alarm when it decried the existence of these camps, setting off a firestorm. Nongovernmental organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have unequivocally issued condemnations of the Chinese government's horrific human rights abuses.¹¹

Condemnations of the situation in Xinjiang have been swift: There is a deep desire not to see history repeat itself. What is taking place in Xinjiang is deeply reminiscent of events during the Chinese Cultural Revolution of

the 1960s and 1970s. However, action has not followed. In the face of such significant human rights violations, the U.S. must go beyond mere condemnation and move quickly toward action. The hundreds of thousands, *if not millions*, detained deserve a response.

The National Security Strategy and the free and open Indo–Pacific strategy both highlight values as an important priority for the U.S. in Asia. Despite these commitments, the values component of the Indo–Pacific strategy remains under-developed. Events transpiring in Xinjiang today represent among the worst human rights abuses in Asia—if not in the world. The U.S. government should turn words into action with a strong response to the Xinjiang crisis, one that holds Chinese officials accountable for the role they play in abuses taking place in Xinjiang. In short order, the U.S. government should sanction top Chinese officials for rights violations in Xinjiang, address reports of forced labor in the region, and raise concerns regarding persecution of Uighurs in regular diplomatic efforts with China.

The Situation in Xinjiang

In order to comprehend events taking place in Xinjiang today, it is important to understand the priority China places on Xinjiang, as well as to put current events in the historical context of the Chinese government’s persecution of Uighurs.

How China Views Xinjiang. As Andrew Nathan and Andrew Scobell argue in their book *China’s Search for Security*, China’s foreign policy is largely motivated by vulnerability to threats.¹² China’s vulnerability is not merely limited to external threats, but also includes internal ones. Internal threats—emanating primarily from Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang—are the regions China identifies as most threatening to its territorial integrity and internal stability. As a consequence, the Chinese government has taken extreme measures to tamp down on these regions, making them among its top foreign policy priorities. This backdrop should frame perceptions of current policy toward Xinjiang.

China does not view Xinjiang as a peripheral issue. What takes place in Xinjiang affects China’s core interests. Therefore, maintaining control in Xinjiang is of utmost importance.

In the post-9/11 era, China increasingly began describing Uighurs as a separatist, terrorist, and extremist threat.¹³ This framing was used as a justification for repression of Uighurs, as well as for increasingly draconian policies ushered in during the Xi Jinping era.

China grossly exaggerates the threat of terrorism in Xinjiang. In March 2019, for example, China issued a report falsely claiming it had arrested 13,000 terrorists from Xinjiang since 2014.¹⁴

It is inaccurate, however, to claim that Uighurs *never* carry out acts of terrorism. The first major attack in Xinjiang took place in 1997 when three bombs, allegedly set off by Uighurs, killed three people and injured 60.¹⁵ Uighurs allegedly carried out a knife-and-explosives attack in a railway station in Xinjiang in April 2014 that killed three people and wounded 74.¹⁶ And in May 2014, Uighurs also allegedly killed 31 people and injured 94 in a car bombing that took place in Urumqi.¹⁷ There are a number of other isolated incidents, including when a car ploughed into a crowd in Tiananmen Square in October 2013 and another knife attack in Kunming, both of which the Chinese government blamed on Uighurs.¹⁸

In recent years, Uighurs also reportedly attempted to or successfully joined ISIS.¹⁹ The Bush Administration even designated the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, a Uighur separatist group with alleged ties to various terrorist groups, as a terrorist organization in 2002—a decision former Administration officials now say they regret.²⁰ All reported attacks by Uighurs, however, have limited information attached to them; most are provided by the Chinese government news services. All alleged terrorist incidents attributed to Uighurs should be viewed with utmost scrutiny.²¹ The terrorist threat posed by Uighurs should not be overstated—those engaging in terrorism are an infinitesimal minority of the 8 million to 10 million Uighurs in Xinjiang—but the threat cannot be overlooked, either.²²

To illustrate China's mischaracterization of what constitutes terrorism, it is important to turn to a modern example. In broader efforts to address religion, the Chinese government began "Sinicization"—a policy that seeks to ensure that religion serves the CCP's ends.²³ Sinicization is often described as "religion with Chinese characteristics."²⁴ New regulations on religion went into effect in February 2018 that specifically characterize *all religion* as extremist and lay out a number of onerous regulations on persons of faith.²⁵ Synonymous with the institution of these regulations, persecution of Uighurs intensified.

China is within its right to develop a response to real terrorist threats emanating from Xinjiang. Its current approach could not, for obvious reasons, be described as a legitimate anti-terrorism strategy.

Recent History of Crackdowns in Xinjiang. Uighurs in Xinjiang have long faced discrimination from the Chinese government. Over the past several years, crackdowns have intensified.

Starting in 2015, the Chinese government ramped up efforts to seize passports of Uighurs to impede freedom of movement.²⁶ This was a

reinvigoration of tactics used in 2006 as an alleged means of cracking down on terrorism and extremism in the country. In late 2017, reports emerged that Uighurs were being forced to submit to DNA testing, including fingerprinting, biometric identification, and other invasive forms of collecting private information.²⁷ And in early 2018, reports emerged that Uighurs in Xinjiang were being subjected to quartering—or living with Chinese government officials in their homes.²⁸ Over the past several years, Uighurs endured their homes being destroyed, and the consequences resulted in a form of collectivization.

The uptick in persecution of Uighurs outlined above coincided with the inauguration of the Chinese government’s “Strike Hard Campaign Against Violent Terrorism” in May 2014.²⁹ Key features of the Strike Hard campaign include securitization of the region, restrictions on traveling abroad or contacting family members abroad, and identifying and punishing Muslims in Xinjiang.³⁰

Interestingly, the Strike Hard campaign also coincided with an increase in violent acts in Xinjiang.³¹ This comports with patterns observed by religious freedom experts Brian Grim and Roger Finke, who note that government restrictions on religious freedom generally result in greater violence.³² In other words, countries that persecute persons of faith experience greater violence than those that respect religious freedom.

China would do well to take heed of the warnings issued by Finke and Grim and reconsider its policies in Xinjiang.

Why the U.S. Should Take Action in Xinjiang

There are countless reasons why the U.S. government must respond to serious threats to freedom in Xinjiang. These include, among others, the need to prevent history from repeating itself, concerns emanating from the Chinese government’s institution of a mass surveillance state, and the Chinese government’s practice of exporting surveillance technology to other countries. It is in the U.S. interest to counter severe human rights violations—and Xinjiang is as severe a crisis as any.

History Repeating Itself. Human rights violations taking place in Xinjiang—particularly the mass incarceration of predominately Uighur Muslims—is of a scale and scope unparalleled in the 21st century. No other country even comes close to arbitrarily imprisoning such a large population.

While many activists compare what is happening in Xinjiang to concentration camps during World War II or the gulags of the Soviet Union, it is, frankly speaking, neither. In fact, it is not necessary to compare today’s

events in Xinjiang to shocking historical events in Europe to grasp the severity of the situation. It is bad enough on its own merits—and perhaps more historically accurate—to look back into China’s own history to better understand what is taking place today.

What is taking place in Xinjiang bears far greater resemblance to mass collectivization and subjugation prior to and during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The underlying premise of China’s mass incarceration of Uighurs is to re-educate and reorient their lives and culture around the Chinese Communist Party. These are identical to the motivations that animated the Cultural Revolution, in which large swaths of China’s urban population were forced to relocate—or were collectivized—to rural areas. The force applied then was for the purposes of reorienting daily activities of Chinese citizens to ensure that their lives were centered around serving the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese government’s end-state goals.

Similar features include the principle of “re-education” itself—the underlying reason given to justify most of the Chinese government’s mass incarceration efforts. During the Cultural Revolution, persons considered a threat to society were placed in various forms of political prison camps, or re-education facilities, which varied in intensity.³³ The primary goal of incarceration was to get all persons to rectify “wrong thinking” so that it aligned with “Marxism–Leninism, faith in Maoism and socialism, the Communist Party, and the democratic dictatorship of the people.”³⁴

Reports from persons who were let out of these facilities indicate that prisoners are sent to these re-education facilities for merely refusing to drink or smoke (a practice frowned upon in Islam), having a long beard, or attending Muslim call-to-prayer.³⁵ According to the CCP, these may be signs of extremism that they seek to root out from Chinese society. Other groups targeted include Xinjiang residents who spent significant time abroad or have family members abroad.³⁶ Individuals targeted also include intellectuals, like Uighur scholar Rahile Dawut and Uighur Islamic scholar Muhammad Salih Hajim, who died while being held in detention, possibly in a re-education facility. Other well-known figures like Uighur soccer player Erfan Hezim are also being targeted.³⁷

The size and scope of mass arbitrary detention of Uighurs also bears resemblance to the Cultural Revolution. While the Cultural Revolution was far bloodier than the current campaign against the Uighurs, there were an estimated 2.5 million people held in camps during that time.³⁸ This constituted 4.1 percent of the urban population and 1.2 percent of the rural population.³⁹ Some estimates suggest that as many as 2 million people—or *15 percent* of the 8 million to 10 million people living in Xinjiang—may be

currently arbitrarily detained.⁴⁰ The rate of detention is rapid and likely growing, making it difficult to get precise estimates on those detained today.

It is not clear that China seeks to eradicate Uighur Muslims. However, it *is* clear that the Chinese government seeks to eliminate their culture and many aspects of their livelihood. Government officials, for example, have said in recent days that they may eventually close down the massive network of re-education facilities it quickly erected.⁴¹

The re-education facilities themselves share traits in common with facilities established during the Cultural Revolution. In fact, facilities during the Cultural Revolution were often disguised as legitimate industries. For example, the primary internment facilities, also known as *laogai*, were called the Jingzhou Industrial Dye Works and the Yingde Tea Plantation, although in reality both were large prisons.⁴² Forced labor often took place for state-owned enterprises in these *laogai* facilities. In recent months, there have been suspicions that populations held in political re-education facilities in Xinjiang are also subject to forced labor.⁴³

In December 2018, reports emerged that goods produced with forced labor in Xinjiang may have made their way into U.S. supply chains.⁴⁴ According to the Associated Press, the supply chain of North Carolina-based Badger Sportswear may have introduced goods produced by forced labor in Xinjiang into the U.S. market.⁴⁵ Badger Sportswear allegedly sources some of its products from Hetian Taida Apparel, which shares factory space with a re-education facility in Xinjiang.

The U.S. Customs and Border Patrol is currently undertaking an investigation to determine whether goods produced with forced labor from Xinjiang did, in fact, make their way into the U.S. market.⁴⁶ There may be consequences to any U.S. businesses and international suppliers whose supply chains are tainted, and imports may be suspended pending investigation.

There is still much that is unknown regarding what takes place in the re-education facilities in Xinjiang today. What we do know of what is taking place, however, strongly indicates that history is, in fact, repeating itself. Even if forced labor is not taking place, or it is taking place on a small scale, we know from interviews with previously detained Uighurs and Kazakhs that their livelihoods are being reoriented, with re-education focusing strongly on replacing white collar and intellectual pursuits with manual trades, specifically factory work.⁴⁷

What is taking place in Xinjiang today bears a striking resemblance to the Cultural Revolution. History ought not repeat itself, and if it has, the individuals carrying out such acts should not get away unscathed. This is one of the many reasons the U.S. government should take swift action.

Exporting the Tools of Authoritarianism. There is a strong sense that China's motivations for undertaking such strong efforts to reform the population in Xinjiang is directly tied to one its most important foreign policy undertakings: The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI, also known as One Belt, One Road, is an intentionally amorphous web of infrastructure and investments China is making across the globe to connect global markets directly to itself. Investments are believed to top more than \$900 billion and exceed 900 projects in 60 countries, according to the China Development Bank.⁴⁸

If Belt and Road is China's house, then Xinjiang is one of the doors to that house. Due to its geographic location, Xinjiang and certain parts of Kazakhstan are where many of these investments meet and enter geographic China. Given its ambitious BRI undertaking, ensuring stability and control over the Xinjiang region likely has become an even more important objective.

Rather than quietly tamping down on the population in Xinjiang (which would be equally bad from a human rights standpoint, although less embarrassing for China), however, China created a PR disaster. The story of Xinjiang is not limited to horrific mass incarceration. It is also about what it took for China to collectivize a massive group of people in a relatively short period of time. The answer to that question relates to the deployment of its mass system of surveillance.

Surveillance Society. The rate at which modern technology has been deployed for the purpose of repression is breathtaking. As German researcher Adrian Zenz notes, there are marked similarities between the system of surveillance deployed previously in Tibet and the system of surveillance in Xinjiang today.⁴⁹ It is no surprise, considering that the current administrator of the Tibetan Autonomous region, Chen Quanguo, is the same official currently overseeing Xinjiang.⁵⁰

Similarities include the so-called grid-style social management established in both Tibet and Xinjiang. According to the Jamestown Foundation, this system "segments urban communities into geometric zones so that security staff can systematically observe all activities with the aid of new technologies."⁵¹ Zenz details China's increasing securitization in Xinjiang, documenting "more than 90,000 new police officers and a 356 percent increase in the public security budget."⁵² According to the same study, "the number of advertised police jobs in 2016 exceeded the combined figures from 2008–2012 by 30,000." New recruits were solicited principally to serve in what Zenz calls convenience police stations. These police stations are dime a dozen and play up on the notion that police stations are as ordinary a sight as a corner store. Increased police presence coincided with the

installation of cameras in or near mosques for the purposes of monitoring the comings and goings of the population.⁵³

Xinjiang, in fact, is a testing ground for an eventual nationwide deployment of the Chinese government's so-called social credit system—a system instituted to measure Chinese people's adherence to the values espoused by the CCP.⁵⁴ Each person is assigned a numeric value: 1,000 points. Any deviation from acceptable social norms results in a demerit. The demerit affects an individual's ability to purchase travel tickets (train, bus, and plane) and can affect whether he or she can qualify for a loan from the bank. It is doled out by government officials and has been piloted in numerous Chinese provinces, both as publically and privately managed policies.⁵⁵

The system is described by many as Orwellian and may partially explain how individuals in Xinjiang were selected and destined for political re-education facilities. The social credit system relies on surveillance technology as well as on citizen-based reporting to identify misbehavior and determine subsequent demerits. A Human Rights Watch report was able to reverse-engineer the app the Chinese government uses to monitor the population in Xinjiang and then select those individuals to be interned in the political re-education facilities.⁵⁶ The technology enables the Chinese government to collect information on an individual's car, blood type, day-to-day habits (such as whether he exited his home from the front or back door), and summarily deems behavior suspicious (or not) through this highly invasive system of monitoring.

The social credit system, as well as the surveillance system that ensures its success, are ripe for exportation. In fact, China's exportation of surveillance technology is not merely hypothetical: It is a reality. According to Freedom House's "2018 Freedom of the Net" report, 18 of the 65 countries surveyed in the report were "provided high-tech tools of surveillance that lack respect for human rights."⁵⁷ *All* of the countries received this technology from China.

Specific examples include:

- **Africa.** Under Xi Jinping's leadership, China's engagement with Africa continues to grow.⁵⁸ With continued engagement comes increasing efforts to thwart democracy and promote authoritarianism.⁵⁹ China is using surveillance technology for its own intelligence-gathering purposes, as well as equipping African governments with the tools needed to spy on and regulate their own populations in an invasive manner.

In 2018, the African Union (AU) levied accusations that the Chinese government hacked into computer systems at the AU headquarters

in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Beijing footed the \$200 million bill for the development of AU headquarters, which were built by a Chinese state-owned enterprise (SOE).⁶⁰ The Chinese government allegedly lined the walls with microphones and rigged the system so that they received downloads from AU servers nightly between 2012 and 2017.⁶¹

China is also exporting surveillance technology to African governments to equip them with the tools necessary to spy on local populations. According to one Council on Foreign Relations report, China is exporting its artificial intelligence (AI) technology to Zimbabwe, Angola, and Ethiopia—where they are now using facial recognition software to spy on their populations, allegedly for law enforcement purposes.⁶² According to Freedom House, in addition to permitting the deployment of facial recognition AI surveillance technology, the government of Zimbabwe is permitting the exportation of data on millions of Zimbabweans to the Chinese company CloudWalk so that they can “recognize faces with darker skin tones.”⁶³ As the report notes, this agreement was made without the consent of the citizens whose data is being collected and shared. All of these tools are being used to monitor for political insubordination or behavior the government deems suspicious.

- **South America.** A chilling *New York Times* exposé revealed China’s deployment of ECU-911, a vast system of 4,300 surveillance cameras deployed across Ecuador with the help of the Chinese government.⁶⁴ The system Ecuador deployed was produced by Chinese SOEs C.E.I.E.C. and Huawei. While Ecuadorian authorities sold the deployment of the technology as a “tough-on-crime” measure, in reality, few limits are placed on the scope and scale of the technology’s application and use. Given Ecuador’s long history of suppressing political activists and freedom, the likelihood of it being used for authoritarian purposes is high. Bolivia also deployed a similar system created by the Chinese, known as BOL-110.⁶⁵ Under the same guise as systems deployed in Ecuador, the system was put in place allegedly for law enforcement monitoring purposes.

Curbing crime is a justification that resonates strongly with populations in Latin America, who have long endured the consequences of crime driven by cartels, drug trafficking, and other illicit activities. However, the deployment of advanced surveillance technology does

not address the root cause of these many problems—a lack of rule of law and the failures of a legal and judicial system that fail to protect vulnerable populations. Instead, new technologies give broken systems of justice increased opportunities for exploitation.

Advocating for Human Rights in Xinjiang: Advancing U.S. Foreign Policy Priorities

It is important to understand how countering human rights challenges in China advances U.S. policy objectives. In order to do that, it is necessary to review the National Security Strategy (NSS) and the Trump Administration’s policy of promoting a “free and open Indo–Pacific.”

The current NSS notes:

China and Russia challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity. They are determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow their militaries, and to control information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence.⁶⁶

The NSS clearly identifies China’s repression of its own citizens as a component of a broader threat posed by China to the U.S. There are few events taking place in China that so clearly embody the threat from repression identified in the NSS than what is taking place in Xinjiang.

Similar to the NSS, the free and open Indo–Pacific strategy sees human rights as a critical component of U.S. engagement in Asia. Traditionally, the Indo–Pacific strategy is invoked for its relevance to promoting security and expanding economic engagement with Asia; however, a little-discussed component of the strategy emphasizes the significance of promoting human rights. In a briefing at the State Department, Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Alex Wong put a finer point on what “free” and “open” mean.⁶⁷

According to Wong, “free” encapsulates a commitment to promoting sovereignty of the U.S. and other countries in Asia, freedom from coercion, and promoting human rights. “Open” means open communications, including Sea Lines of Communication and airways, as well as open trade.

Vice President Mike Pence reiterated these concepts in a *Washington Post* op-ed on the Indo–Pacific strategy saying:

[T]he Indo-Pacific strategy] support[s] transparent and responsive government, the rule of law and the protection of individual rights, including religious

freedom. Nations that empower their citizens, nurture civil society, fight corruption and guard their sovereignty are stronger homes for their people and better partners for the United States. Conversely, nations that oppress their people often violate their neighbors' sovereignty as well. Authoritarianism and aggression have no place in the Indo-Pacific region.⁶⁸

Both modifiers affixed to the Indo-Pacific strategy make clear that promoting freedom and values is a component of the over-arching strategy—yet these receive little attention in practice.

Responding to the crisis in Xinjiang is one of the many cases where the U.S. can turn rhetorical commitment to promoting human rights and freedom in Asia into reality. As argued in the previous point, China is exporting authoritarianism: Therefore, countering China's influence in Asia requires countering China's false narrative that its system of governance and values is superior to the promotion of universal, basic human rights.⁶⁹

There are a few ways that the U.S. can effectively do this:

- The U.S. should highlight its reliability as a partner in Asia. The U.S. model of hub-and-spokes alliances demonstrates a track-record of trustworthiness that China cannot point to.⁷⁰ The U.S. invests in other Asian nations to the benefit of the livelihood of their citizens. In fact, most U.S. investments require basic protections of human rights. These standards improve the lives of citizens who are already benefitting from the economic and security investments made by the U.S. This is demonstrated through U.S. alliance relationships with Japan and South Korea.

In contrast, Chinese investment in the region is a value-less, no-strings-attached form of engagement. There are no standards or expectations for human rights. While some might view this as a net positive, particularly in countries who do not have good human rights track records themselves, it has other negative consequences. Chinese infrastructure development, for example, principally employs Chinese.⁷¹ These are missed economic and job opportunities for the local population that in some cases, like in Africa, come with severe consequences—consequences that compromise the national security of the country and privacy of its citizens.

- The U.S. must do a better job of demonstrating its superiority as a partner. One way it can do this is by defending those who cannot defend themselves in Xinjiang.

- The Indo–Pacific strategy should supply some answers regarding the values the U.S. stands for in the region. Promotion of values has been one way that the U.S. has distinguished itself from other actors at work in Asia. It should remain a cornerstone of U.S. engagement in Asia.

Next Steps for Addressing the Human Rights Crisis in Xinjiang

The human rights crisis in Xinjiang is by far one of the most gross and severe human rights challenges taking place today. Persecution of Uighurs, their mass arbitrary internment, and the unique application of 21st-century technology as a tool of repression merit a response.

The U.S. has been quick to condemn, but, so far, slow to act. U.S. policymakers should not be left questioning whether there is anything the U.S. can do: There are certainly things to be done.

- **Advance the U.S. National Security Strategy and free and open Indo–Pacific strategy priorities by responding with strength to the crisis in Xinjiang.** While the security components of the Indo–Pacific strategy are becoming clearer and the Trump Administration has taken some economic steps (e.g., the BUILD Act, which created the new U.S. International Development Finance Agency), the values components of the strategy lag significantly behind. It is not clear, for example, who is responsible for making promotion of human rights and values in Asia a priority as a component of the Indo–Pacific strategy. It should be made clearer which agency or inter-agency process is responsible for actualizing the values component of the Indo–Pacific strategy.

The U.S. has intermittently viewed human rights as a luxury issue to be raised when all other diplomatic issues are addressed—but this is *not* the most strategic way to respond to human rights challenges in China. China views Xinjiang as a core issue, central to its continued internal stability. Given the immense priority China places on Xinjiang, the U.S. should place responding to mass arbitrary internment in Xinjiang as a much higher foreign policy priority in its dealings with China than it currently does. Responding to the crisis in Xinjiang should be among the top priorities of the agency or individuals tasked with advancing values in the Indo–Pacific strategy and should be included among

the foreign policy and national security challenges raised with China in other diplomatic settings. Xinjiang is more than a human rights crisis: China's exportation of surveillance technology makes Xinjiang a national security concern to U.S. policymakers.

- **Sanction Chen Quanguo and other known Chinese individuals and entities responsible under Global Magnitsky authorities for oppressing individuals in Xinjiang.** Global Magnitsky sanctions authorities enable the U.S. Treasury to target individuals and entities on human rights and corruption grounds.⁷² Being sanctioned under Global Magnitsky lands individuals or entities on the Specially Designated Nationals list—resulting in the freezing of assets, as well as visa restrictions.

Chen Quanguo designed the police state and system of surveillance in use in Xinjiang; he is also responsible for the internment of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, in political re-education facilities.⁷³ He, as well as other Chinese individuals and entities responsible for abuses in Xinjiang, should be held accountable. Global Magnitsky is a good first line of defense. The Administration allegedly planned to sanction some officials in fall 2018 but has thus far refrained from targeting officials for the role they play in the Xinjiang crisis.⁷⁴ To date, no Chinese official has been sanctioned for his or her repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang.

- **Create a Special Coordinator for Xinjiang.** Similar to the Special Coordinator for Tibet, the Special Coordinator for Xinjiang would be tasked with coordinating the policy and response of the U.S. government on a day-to-day basis and would signify the priority the U.S. places on responding to the crisis in Xinjiang. Job priorities could include identifying individuals to be sanctioned, determining how to respond to China's rapid exportation of surveillance technology, and ensuring that Xinjiang is raised at key diplomatic moments with China. This coordinator could also be responsible for pressing China for access to the political re-education facilities, among other tasks. The Uighur Human Rights Policy Act introduced in both houses of Congress and reported out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee recommends that such a position be created.⁷⁵
- **Target forced labor in Xinjiang.** According to Section 307 of the Tariff Act of 1930, goods produced in whole or in part with forced labor

are restricted from being imported to the U.S.⁷⁶ Goods made with forced labor and imported to the U.S. are subject to seizure and criminal investigations may result.⁷⁷ CBP is currently investigating whether goods produced with forced labor in Xinjiang have made their way into U.S. supply chains. There may be significant consequences to U.S. businesses found to have forced labor in their supply chains from China.

- **Create a rebuttable presumption that all goods made in political re-education facilities in China are produced with forced labor.**

In 2018, the U.S. Congress passed the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), which created a rebuttable presumption that all goods produced with North Korean labor are forced labor.⁷⁸ Under Section 321(b) of CAATSA, the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) has the authority to freeze all imports of goods produced with North Korean forced labor.⁷⁹ Since China is one of the top sources of forced labor, the U.S. should be more strident in its efforts to restrict imports of forced labor from the country. Taking this action may shift China's risk calculus so that it finally ends its re-education through labor practices.

- **Reiterate in diplomatic negotiations with Chinese officials Secretary Mike Pompeo's request that all arbitrarily detained persons in China be released.**⁸⁰

These calls need not be limited to individuals interred in Xinjiang but can extend to other religious minorities, human rights advocates, lawyers, and activists, among others, who continue to be arbitrarily detained by Chinese authorities. In addition to this request, the U.S. should continue to press for the closure of all political re-education facilities in China.

- **Publically request the International Olympic Committee review China's suitability to host the 2022 Olympics.**

China cares deeply about its image. Publically calling into question the People's Republic of China's ability to host the Olympics sends a strong message that China cannot hold a position of preeminence for an international sporting event—a prized role that should only be given to countries that respect their citizens' rights. Senator Rubio and Representative Smith already requested that the Olympic Committee review plans for China to host the Olympics.⁸¹ The U.S. government would do well to put pressure on the Olympic Committee to consider withdrawing China's ability to host the 2022 Olympics.

- **Put diplomatic pressure on businesses to cut ties with Chinese entities seeking dual-use technologies from U.S. entities for the purpose of expanding their surveillance operations.** Public pressure led Thermo Fisher to stop selling equipment to Xinjiang after media reported that technology it provided was being used to collect DNA of Uighurs.⁸² Ideally, companies would avoid knowingly selling technology being misused for the purpose of repression for China. But the Uighur Act of 2019 introduced by Representative Brad Sherman (D-CA) would impose licensing and declarations procedures to prevent technology useful in China's repression from slipping through. Congress ought to give such restrictions serious consideration. Other ideas include placing Chinese entities responsible for instituting surveillance technology in Xinjiang on the Entity list, evaluating U.S. entities supplying surveillance technology to China through the SEC, and sanctioning companies who knowingly supply such technologies to China.
- **Congress should take the lead in pressing the executive branch to respond to the Xinjiang crisis.** Sherman's Uighur Act of 2019 and the Uighur Human Rights Policy Act introduced by Senator Rubio and Congressman Smith lay out a number of other helpful steps the U.S. government should consider to address the crisis in Xinjiang.⁸³ Among some of the better recommendations include prioritizing the application of Global Magnitsky sanctions, preserving Uighur language, promoting access to Uighur language broadcasting, reporting requirements to monitor the situation's deterioration in Xinjiang, and appointing a special coordinator for Xinjiang at State Department.
- **Factor forced labor in Xinjiang into the calculus made for determining China's ranking in the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report.** China is currently ranked Tier 3 in the TIP report. It should remain on Tier 3—the worst designation a country can receive for failure to comply with minimum standards for eliminating trafficking in persons. The mass arbitrary detention and allegation of forced labor in these facilities should factor into China's ranking in the TIP report.

Conclusion

It is in the U.S. government's interest to respond with strength to the crisis unfolding in Xinjiang. It is a crisis with severe human rights—as well as national security consequences. If left unchecked, the proliferation of

mass surveillance technology across the globe poses a severe threat to civil liberties and freedoms the world around—not to mention that failing to respond to the human rights violations perpetrated against Uighur and Kazak Muslims in Xinjiang sends the wrong message to other bad actors who might consider doing the same to their peoples.

Action is long overdue. The U.S. government should give careful consideration to next steps. Taking action advances U.S. priorities and interests—and is the right thing to do as well.

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