

A Summary of Beijing's Policies in Xinjiang

Written Testimony for the joint Senate hearing on “Atrocities in Xinjiang: Where Do We Go From Here?” on June 10, 2021, of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women's Issues and the Subcommittee on East Asia, the Pacific, and International Cybersecurity Policy

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1.0 Background, Expertise and Methodology

The author's relevant expertise and list of publications are shown on his institution's website at <https://victimsofcommunism.org/leader/adrian-zenz-phd/>.

The author's research methodology consists in the analysis of a wide range of documents. Most of these consist of publicly-accessible material obtained through government websites or the Chinese internet in general, such as: government reports, state media reports, government budgets, procurement and construction bids, recruitment notices, propaganda accounts that reflect the implementation and/or effect of relevant policies; as well as a cache of about 25,000 internal (non-public) government documents obtained through local government social media networks (without hacking), that contain information such as spreadsheets of locals in ethnic minority regions by villages with their internment, education or labor status. On two occasions, the author was given internal leaked government documents from Xinjiang: the “China Cables” and the “Karakax List”.

The analysis of these sources proceeds from a basis of understanding key terms and their etymology (e.g. terms that identify different types of internment facilities), as well as the wider ethnic minority policy framework. Relevant sources are identified through extensive searches based on relevant terms (keywords) and whether they fit into the related policy framework. Sources are triangulated through comparison of different types of sources and comparisons with available relevant witness testimony. The analysis also includes state propaganda material, reading between the lines of propaganda statements to glean crucial additional evidence.

Generally, the approach is to: a) identify and establish the general overarching or wider regional policy framework; b) identify specific evidence for the local adaptation and implementation of this policy, in individual counties, townships, villages or relevant entities (such as factories, family planning entities or schools); c) identify related examples where statements made by affected individuals are included or cited in propaganda reports.

2.0 Overview of Published Material

Starting in late 2016, Xinjiang's new Party Secretary Chen Quanguo established one of the world's foremost police states in this restive region dominated by Turkic, predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities, notably the Uyghurs. The related security build-up is detailed in these pieces:

- <https://jamestown.org/program/xinjiangs-rapidly-evolving-security-state/>
- <https://jamestown.org/program/chen-quanguo-the-strongman-behind-beijings-securitization-strategy-in-tibet-and-xinjiang/>
- <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/china-quarterly/article/abs/securitizing-xinjiang-police-recruitment-informal-policing-and-ethnic-minority-cooptation/FEEC613414AA33A0353949F9B791E733>

The context of how Chen was brought to Xinjiang, why he was chosen, and the likely premeditated nature of this leadership transition and the rapid unfolding of the internment campaign is discussed in <https://www.jpolorisk.com/karakax/> (section 3).

In the spring of 2017, Chen Quanguo embarked on an unprecedented campaign of extrajudicial internment, documented as follows:

- Evidence of the origins and genesis of the campaign, its roots in previous Chinese forms of extrajudicial internment, and data from construction bids: <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/4j6rq/> (formally published here: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02634937.2018.1507997>)
- Evidence on the build-up and expansion of the internment campaign from Xinjiang's security budgets: <https://jamestown.org/program/xinjiangs-re-education-and-securitization-campaign-evidence-from-domestic-security-budgets/>
- Evidence from classified, leaked Chinese documents, as well as internal local government spreadsheets listing thousands of detainees, along with an analysis of new state terminology and statements about the true nature of this campaign: <https://www.jpolorisk.com/wash-brains-cleanse-hearts/>
- Evidence of criteria for internment, for release, and new evidence on the inception of this campaign and how it was prepared by Chen Quanguo's predecessor Zhang Chunxian: <https://www.jpolorisk.com/karakax/>

The campaign of extrajudicial internment has been complemented by three related campaigns:

First, of parent-child separation and the weaponization of the education system for cultural assimilation. Publications:

- Main research publication on the topic: <https://www.jpolicy.com/break-their-roots-evidence-for-chinas-parent-child-separation-campaign-in-xinjiang/>
- Overview of internal data from Xinjiang that lists the internment status of parents, and at times the care status of the affected children: <https://adrianzenz.medium.com/story-45d07b25bcad> (see related reporting in the Economist: <https://www.economist.com/china/2020/10/17/how-xinjiangs-gulag-tears-families-apart>)

Second, of different forms of coercive labor, by a) channeling vocational training internment camp detainees into forced labor workshops, b) subjecting large numbers of seasonal rural laborers to internment-style training and indoctrination, followed by work placements, and c) the establishment of smaller workshops in villages, called “satellite factories”, to promote mandatory work placements especially for minority women.

Publications:

- This publication includes evidence based on an internal government spreadsheet of mandatory labor placements along with wage data: <https://www.jpolicy.com/beyond-the-camps-beijings-long-term-scheme-of-coercive-labor-poverty-alleviation-and-social-control-in-xinjiang/>
- Forced labor in cotton picking: <https://newlinesinstitute.org/china/coercive-labor-in-xinjiang-labor-transfer-and-the-mobilization-of-ethnic-minorities-to-pick-cotton/>
- Forced labor in labor transfers of Uyghurs within Xinjiang and across China, based also on new evidence (“Nankai Report”), and includes a legal analysis that such labor transfers may constitute the crimes against humanity of forcible transfer and of persecution: <https://jamestown.org/program/coercive-labor-and-forced-displacement-in-xinjiangs-cross-regional-labor-transfer-program/>
- A report on forced labor transfers in Tibet, with comparisons to Xinjiang: <https://jamestown.org/program/jamestown-early-warning-brief-xinjiangs-system-of-militarized-vocational-training-comes-to-tibet/>

Third, by a campaign to drastically decrease birth rates and natural population growth rates, even mandating growth rates for some regions that are near or below zero:

<https://jamestown.org/product/sterilizations-iuds-and-mandatory-birth-control-the-ccps-campaign-to-suppress-uyghur-birthrates-in-xinjiang/>

Xinjiang's campaign to suppress minority population growth has been complemented with efforts to boost its Han population through increased births and in-migration. Additionally, regional authorities appear to encourage interethnic marriages ([SupChina](#), 2019). In tandem, these three strategies appear to undergird a wider game plan of ethno-racial domination.

“End the Dominance of the Uyghur Ethnic Group”: An Analysis of Beijing's Population Optimization Strategy in Southern Xinjiang. Accepted after peer review for publication with the journal *Central Asian Survey*. Preprint of the author's original manuscript published via SSRN: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3862512

This most recent research documents Beijing's intent to commit slow genocide in Xinjiang through birth prevention, and estimates that by 2040, between 2.6 and 4.5 million lives could be prevented as part of a strategy to “optimize” the ethnic population and increase the Han Chinese population share, for counterterrorism purposes (see also the Appendix). Compare a related overview and legal argument for genocide published by the author together with an expert in international law: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/06/08/genocide-population-xinjiang-uyghurs/>

3.0 Summary of the Evidence and of Beijing's Intent with Xinjiang's Ethnic Minority Populations

Overall, we can see that Beijing carefully prepared its campaign of subjugating the Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang through an unprecedented build-up of different types of police forces, complemented by an advanced surveillance system based on the latest technologies. Chen Quanguo was selected for his expertise and innovation in repressing minority dissent in Tibet. Chen used the first 9 months of his reign in Xinjiang to prepare the ground, then embarked on the internment campaign in tandem with sending another wave of cadres to the countryside to act as informants.

The internment campaign mainly targeted middle-aged males, especially heads of households and other social influencers. Their release is dependent on the “good behavior” of their family members. Once released, they are being carefully monitored and liable to return to the camps if their behavior is not up to par. Most are released into different forms of coercive labor. The internment campaign serves as an intermediate, medium-term effort to break the soul of the minorities, render them impotent and docile, and pave the way for the long-term strategy. Many important intellectuals and cultural influencers have been sentenced to long prison terms to eliminate their socio-cultural influence.

The CCP's long-term strategy in Xinjiang consists first in an internment and imprisonment campaign that intimidates the population and removes key influencers by eventually

sentencing them to long prison terms ([Deutsche Welle](#), 2020). Second, of parent-child separation. Children are reared by the state in highly securitized boarding school environments where they must speak Chinese, cannot practice religion, and are raised as loyal followers of the Party. This is designed to win over and domesticate the young generation. Third, of coercive labor, by which men and women are made to work in full-time, labor-intensive factory work. This makes the expensive security apparatus financially more sustainable, separates the nuclear family, gives the Party greater control over and more time with each family member, maximizes state control over the young generation, and breaks the intergenerational chain of transmitting the cultural and religious heritage. Fourth, this strategy is coupled with a drastic reduction of birth rates to slow ethnic minority population growth, contain or even decrease total population size, rendering the population easier to control. Significantly lower numbers of children make it easier for the state to focus resources on indoctrinating the young generation, to promote more social control and assimilation by subjecting minority populations to greater ethnic mixing with the Han, and to reduce the need for policing and security. Fifth, this strategy is secured at the international level through various pressure strategies and a global elite capture of multilateral institutions, including the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the European Union.

In sum, Beijing's population control strategy consists of a combination of internment and imprisonment, coercive labor, parent-child separation, and birth prevention. All four of these operate in tandem. Key intellectuals and community influencers have been sentenced to prison terms of often around 20 years, removing their influence and curbing intergenerational cultural transmission. Forced labor separates families and enables greater state control over the next generation. Birth prevention is the cornerstone of raising Han population shares and neutralizing minority groups through embedding and dilution. Over the next 20 years, all of these aspects will be operating in tandem. Within this time frame, we can expect a substantial destruction in part resulting from birth prevention together with a severe impact on the distinct identity and unique characteristics of these groups as groups.

The most concerning aspect of official and academic discourses about these minorities is that they are demonized and framed as a "problem" that threatens an otherwise "healthy" society. Some Chinese scholars even called it a "human problem". This language is akin to purported statements by Xinjiang officials that problem populations are like "weeds hidden among the crops" where the state will "need to spray chemicals to kill them all". While this statement itself refers to re-education in camps and not directly to mass slaughter, the framing of Uyghurs and others as a human problem, and their concentrated population and growth as a threat to China's national security, is a cause for grave concern.

APPENDIX: The Author's Testimony to the Uyghur Tribunal on Beijing's Population Optimization Strategy in Southern Xinjiang (June 7, 2021)

Previously, we have been able to gather substantial evidence of a campaign of birth suppression and mass sterilization from Chinese documents and witness statements, together with official data showing dramatic declines in birth rates, especially in Xinjiang's ethnic minority regions. This evidence raised but did not quite answer the question of the ultimate intent with which the Chinese state is pursuing these policies, besides inferring that this would make the Uyghur populations easier to control by reducing their size. If these policies continued, they would depress the ethnic minority population. But will they, and what population loss would this suppression potentially cause?

Today, I would like to attempt to provide evidence regarding these urgent questions by presenting new research that provides evidence of the Chinese state's likely intent to substantially reduce ethnic minority natural population growth in Xinjiang in the longer-term by "optimizing" (Chinese: *youthua*) the ethnic population. This refers to a targeted dilution of populations deemed problematic by the state with Han Chinese, through in-migration, which can result in so-called processes of "embedding" (Chinese: *qianru*).

Besides providing substantial evidence of intent, my work also seeks to quantify the "destruction in part" resulting from this intent. I broadly estimate that between now and the year 2040, Beijing's intent to neutralize the Uyghur population through targeted dilution and increased Han population shares is likely to result in the loss of 2.6 to 4.5 million lives through birth prevention measures in southern Xinjiang alone (not including other ethnic minority regions in Xinjiang).

Between 2015 and 2018, combined natural population growth rates in the four prefectures of southern Xinjiang declined by 73 percent. In 2019, rates continued to decline – in ethnic minority counties, birth rates declined by 50 percent, in Han counties by 20 percent, national only 4%. These birth rate reductions have a leveraged effect on natural population growth, because natural population growth is birth rate minus death rate, and if birth rates decline but death rates stay roughly the same, then when birth rates approach death rates, the natural population growth rate percentage-wise declines much faster than the birth rate.

Prefectures with data for both 2018 and 2019, and individual counties, were weighted by their respective populations. In the resulting population-weighted sample, the average natural population growth rate fell from 5.19 per mille in 2018 to 1.66 in 2019, around half of the national growth rate. In several regions, recent or imminently planned birth rate reductions result in natural population growth rates that are near zero, or even below zero. It is my view that this growth range is not a coincidence. Rather, I argue that growth rates near or below zero are directly consistent with Beijing's long-term plans for ethnic groups in Xinjiang. Evidence for this claim will now be presented.

An otherwise unremarkable report about an August 2017 health and family planning work promotion meeting held by a Health and Family Planning Commission in a Uyghur region references an unpublished family planning document. Issued in 2017 by Xinjiang's New Population Planning Office, its title is: "Meeting Minutes on Earnestly and Thoroughly Implementing the Spirit of General Secretary Xi Jinping's Important Instructions, Researching and Advancing the Work of Optimizing the Ethnic Population Structure in Southern Xinjiang." This document has not been made public. However, it points us in the right direction, and potentially links Xi Jinping himself with this intention regarding southern Xinjiang's ethnic population.

According to a 2017 research paper by a Chinese academic titled "Research on Optimizing Southern Xinjiang's Population Resources," the central government in Beijing "attaches great importance to the problem of Xinjiang's population structure and population security." Expressions such as "optimizing the ethnic population structure" or just "optimizing the population structure" (in reference to ethnic minority regions) are common to the academic literature on Xinjiang's counterterrorism. They are consistently linked to birth control.

The sentiment behind these terms was bluntly expressed by a dean of Tarim University at a 2015 academic event. When discussing "methods to solve Xinjiang's problems", Liao said that in southern Xinjiang the state must "change the population structure and layout [and] end the dominance of the Uyghur ethnic group" [this refers to their numeric dominance in southern Xinjiang]. In a 2016 academic publication, Liao argued that the "underlying reason" for Xinjiang's unrest was the high concentration of Uyghur populations in southern Xinjiang. Due to a recent exodus of Han Chinese, "the imbalance of the ethnic minority and Han population composition in southern Xinjiang has reached an unbelievably serious degree" (Liao 2016).

Liao's sentiments are echoed by a Xu, senior research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. In 2014, Xu argued in an interview with the Global Times that to counter the terror threat, the state must "change southern Xinjiang's population structure" (Xu 2014).

Xinjiang's most authoritative voice on this subject is arguably Liu Yilei, deputy secretary-general of the party committee of Xinjiang's Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), and a dean of Xinjiang University. At a July 2020 symposium with 300 experts and scholars from across China, Liu noted that despite all progress, "the root of Xinjiang's social stability problems has not yet been resolved." Which is quite remarkable after all they have done so far. To quote from his speech:

...the problem in southern Xinjiang is mainly the unbalanced population structure. Population proportion and population security are important foundations for long-term peace and stability. The proportion of the Han population in southern Xinjiang is too low, less than 15%. The problem of demographic imbalance is southern Xinjiang's core issue (Liu 2020).

Note: In the four Uyghur heartland prefecture of southern Xinjiang, the Han population share in 2018 was actually only 8.4%.

In 2018, Liu had argued that “Xinjiang’s population structure [and] ethnic structure ... are unreasonable”, and that Xinjiang must “afresh analyze [its] population structure [and] ethnic structure...from a viewpoint of national security”.

One of the most sophisticated accounts of this perceived population “problem” is found in a 2017 research paper by Li Xiaoxia, director of the Institute of Sociology at the Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences – who has published major reports and also attack pieces against myself, she is high profile and well known. In her paper, Li argues that

the population gap between ethnic minorities and the Han continues to widen, which has made the concentration of a single ethnic group in certain regions more obvious. The lack of interaction and exchanges between different ethnic groups has caused the three factors of ethnicity, religion and land area to become superimposed, thereby strengthening the viewpoint that one ethnic group owns a [particular] land area, [thereby] weakening national identity and identification with the Chinese Nation, [adversely] impacting peace and long-term stability.

Consequently, controlling the growth rate of the ethnic minority population and adjusting the regional ethnic population structure are considered to be important ways to achieve long-term peace and stability in Xinjiang. (Li 2017a, 68)

Similar to Liu Yilei, Li argues that “the problem of the ethnic population structure in southern Xinjiang” is “one of the roots of the Xinjiang problem” (Li 2017a, 77).

Soon after Li’s publication, Xinjiang set up new initiatives to implement systematic birth prevention campaigns in ethnic minority regions. An increasingly common outcome indicator of these initiatives was the mandated target to “optimize the population structure”, or more commonly to “balance the population structure”. To this end, county family planning offices are required to:

Formulate the county's mid- and long-term population development plan and annual plan; be responsible for the macro-control of the county's newborn population ...; manage the county's information system for women of childbearing age... (e.g. Kuqa County Government 2019)

By the end of 2018, Xinjiang was fully equipped to control and forecast population growth at an extremely detailed level. The region had created the preconditions for optimizing its ethnic population structure.

A detailed review of this literature shows that the perceived threat arising from concentrated Uyghur populations centers around the following four themes.

1. Excessive ethnic minority population growth creates a growing rural surplus workforce that suffers underemployment, creating risks to social stability. Large numbers of unemployed young Uyghurs constitute a "severely excessive" rural surplus labor population, created by lax family planning policies, that pose a "latent threat to the current regime." (e.g. Zhao and Song 2017, 30)
2. High ethnic minority population density combined with low mobility breeds a "hardened" society with a "dense religious atmosphere," creating a breeding ground for religious extremism and terrorism (e.g. Lu and Guo, 2017, 194).
3. High ethnic minority population concentrations create a dangerous sense of identification with their homeland, weakening identification with the central government (e.g. Li 2017a, 68).
4. High ethnic minority population ratios and resulting low Han population shares are a national security risk in sensitive border regions (which includes southern Xinjiang) (e.g. Liang 2019; Wang 2018).

Other [Chinese researchers](#) have argued that the "foundation for solving Xinjiang's counterterrorism problem" is "to solve the human problem." (Chinese: *rende wenti*). Specifically, this requires "diluting...the proportion of ethnic populations" by increasing the Han population share and reducing the shares of populations with "negative energy," referring to religious and traditionally-minded Uyghurs. This process of targeted ethnic dilution, [first proposed by Xi Jinping](#) in 2014, is referred to as "population embedding" (Chinese: *renkou qianru*).

A 2017 paper published by two researchers from the Xinjiang Police Academy argues that "population embedding" is the key strategy to eradicate terrorism by "rapidly optimizing the population structure" (2017). To quote:

"[T]o completely eradicate terrorist crimes in Xinjiang it is necessary to completely eradicate the soil, the growth conditions and the environment in which terrorist mobs produce crimes. [To do so]..., it is necessary to rationalize the population structure"

Specifically, the academics suggest that the establishment of embedded communities requires a careful balancing of "desirable" versus less desirable populations. To quote:

Therefore, optimizing the proportions of the population and improving and enhancing the quality of the population - which is to solve the human problem - is the foundation of solving Xinjiang's counterterrorism (and

other) problems. Embedding the population is one of the simplest and most direct ways to solve the human problem. ...

This will achieve the goal of diluting the proportion of the poor population, the proportion of the unemployed population, the proportion of the low-educated population, the proportion of [certain] ethnic populations,... the proportion of the population with a criminal history, etc.

Embedding therefore involves a targeted dilution of undesirable population segments, such as low-income, lesser-educated and more traditionally-minded ethnic minorities, who are seen as more susceptible to religious extremism and other so-called “crimes”.

In a 2019 publication, Chinese academic Li Ming argues that the establishment of embedded communities requires “calculat[ing] precise embedding targets.” Han to ethnic minority population ratios should range between 50:50 and 40:60 (Li 2019). The goal of targeted embedding is the creation of a “cultural counterterrorism” (Chinese: *wénhuà fǎnkǒng*) – a multi-ethnic environment where “religious extremism” is unlikely to take root. To quote:

For example, according to the village’s cultural counterterrorism needs, the scope of the population with positive energy in the village should be expanded to 80% or 90% in a planned, step-by-step, and methodical manner, and the scope of the population with negative energy in the village should be reduced to 7%, or less than 3%. (Li 2019, 110)

Here, persons with “positive energy” or a “positive culture” (Chinese: *zhèng wénhuà*) are those who are more highly educated, more secular and more resistant to the creeping influence of “religious extremist thought”, especially Han populations, while those with “negative energy” (Chinese: *fù néngliàng*) are susceptible to “extremist” thought – meaning Uyghurs. Researchers argue that planners must achieve “cultural counterterrorism” outcomes in these problem regions based on specific quantitative ratios and detailed target indicators (Li 2019, 113).

To boost Han population shares, Beijing has to get millions of Han to move to southern Xinjiang. By 2022, it already plans to settle [300,000](#) there. However, the south is also Xinjiang’s ecologically most fragile region. Arable land and water are scarce. Urbanization and industrial development vastly increased the per capita resource utilization. Chinese studies say Xinjiang as a whole was already overpopulated by [2.3 million persons](#) in 2015, significantly exceeding its ecological population carrying capacity. Most of the so-called “overpopulation” is in rural southern Xinjiang – meaning Uyghurs.

Part of the population optimization is achieved through so-called labor transfers of Uyghurs. Labor transfers do not have to imply physical relocation, they primarily refer to a transfer of rural agricultural surplus laborers (Chinese: *fuyu laodongli*) out of the primary and into secondary and tertiary sectors. This program was extended to all of Xinjiang in 2005, and it is conceptually distinct from the forced labor of released internment camp detainees (Chinese:

jiaozhuan renyuan), this latter program began in 2018 and came into full force in 2019. The forced labor linked to the camps targets predominantly men, given that over 85 percent of such detainees are male, whereas the coercive labor transfer scheme targets persons who were typically never detained, with a particular focus on getting women out of household roles and into full-time work, especially in textile industries. According to official figures, Xinjiang had 2.59 million rural surplus laborers in 2019—1.65 million of them in the four southern Uyghur-majority prefectures. In the first 10 months of 2018, 364,000 or 13 percent of all labor transfers were outside people’s home prefectures, and 25,000 or 1 percent were to other provinces. Labor transfers have intentionally and disproportionately displaced persons from Uyghur-majority regions and especially targeted the southern Uyghur heartlands and poor households. In 2018, the overall percentage of labor transfers from Xinjiang to outside provinces was only around 1 percent, while labor transfer efforts targeting poor households and therefore mostly ethnic minorities transferred 11 percent.

Even so, labor transfers that displace ethnic minorities by coercing them to work in regions outside of southern Xinjiang represent comparatively small numbers and are by themselves entirely insufficient to achieve the abovementioned population optimization goals. They help alleviate the pressure on the land by reducing the Uyghur population in southern Xinjiang. A Chinese academic report called the Nankai Report admitted that labor transfers are a method to “reduce Uyghur population density in southern Xinjiang.” However, the numbers of transferred laborers are too small, especially given that annual transfer numbers often involve the same persons who are transferred again each year. Labor transfers do not necessarily constitute permanent relocations and in fact often refer to seasonal labor such as cotton picking and harvesting. Evidence of longer-term relocation does exist but is very limited. Importantly, the Nankai Report notes that Uyghurs with problematic or criminal backgrounds are typically not accepted for cross-provincial transfers, meaning that labor transfers leave so-called “focus persons” concentrated in southern Xinjiang, which is not in line with population optimization needs.

As a result, nearly all of the cited academics and officials strongly urge birth prevention as a primary means to optimize ethnic population ratios. Quantitative analysis confirms that indeed, the only way that the state can significantly increase Han population shares without having to transfer unrealistically high numbers of Han to southern Xinjiang, which would be very expensive, difficult and cause severe overpopulation, is to limit ethnic minority population growth.

My analysis shows that the most ideal range for this growth is in fact negative, around -2.5 per mille. By 2040, the state could boost Han population shares in southern Xinjiang to nearly 25 percent by settling 1.9 million Han there. This would dilute Uyghur population concentrations in line with counterterrorism targets (25% Han means the state can embed half the Uyghur population at a 50:50 ratio, diluting so-called problem populations and neutralizing the “human problem”). This would also align southern Xinjiang’s Han population share to the currently 34 percent for all of Xinjiang.

As a result, ethnic minority population in southern Xinjiang would shrink from currently [9.5 million to 9 million](#) by 2040, a decline that could pass unnoticed by outside observers. A smaller population is also easier to control and to assimilate.

The “destruction in part” resulting from these aims is assessed as the difference between a) projected natural population growth without substantial government interference, and b) reduced growth scenarios due to birth prevention, in line with the state’s intent to achieve counterterrorism goals by “optimizing” the ethnic population structure.

Based on adapted projections that were recently published by Chinese researchers in a [peer-reviewed international journal](#), southern Xinjiang’s ethnic minority population could [increase to an estimated 13.1 million](#) by the year 2040 without severe measures to prevent births, broadly based on existing family planning – all the more now given a universal right to have up to three children.

The 4.1 million discrepancy between 9 and 13.1 million can be understood to constitute the “destruction in part” caused by the state’s intent to “optimize” ethnic population ratios and dilute problem populations. This would reduce the projected ethnic minority population during the coming 20 years by nearly one third (31 percent).

My estimate takes account of labor transfers of Uyghurs out of southern Xinjiang and assumes realistic figures of annual Han in-migration into the region.

How realistic is this plan? Natural population growth in southern Xinjiang is already trending towards zero or just below zero. Recently, Xinjiang has told family planning offices to “optimize the population structure” and to carry out “population monitoring and early warning.”¹ The region has created all the necessary preconditions for “optimizing” its ethnic population structure. It also no longer reports birth rates or population counts by region or ethnic group, leaving researchers in the dark and covering its tracks.

These findings shed important new light on Beijing’s intent to physically destroy in part the Uyghur ethnic group. Other measures aimed at achieving ethnic population changes, such as Han in-migration and [Uyghur out-migration](#) will by themselves not accomplish the goal, due in part to ecological, economic and other practical constraints. As such, the prevention of Uyghur births is a critical and necessary part of China’s overall “optimization” policy – which is considered to be a matter of national security.

Importantly, understanding the role that birth prevention and long-term population reduction plays in this overall policy distinguishes China’s actions against the Uyghurs from its general, national population control measures and from its treatment of other ethnic and religious minorities, such as Tibetans.

The new findings presented today should be seen in tandem with other pertinent aspects:

- The targeted internment and imprisonment of leading community figures and elites. Many intellectuals have been sentenced to long prison terms. Internal spreadsheets listing families by internment status show that the re-education campaign mainly targets the heads of households, the main influencers within families. In some regions, between 30 and 50 percent of heads of households were shown as detained in camps in 2018. This strategy further enables the state to utilize the absence of men, husbands and fathers to separate children from parents and to subject the women to birth control surgeries.
- According to official data, the number of students in Xinjiang who live in boarding facilities increased by 77 percent, from half a million to 880,000. Evidence from non-public Xinjiang government spreadsheets shows over 10,000 children from Yarkand County (Kashgar Prefecture) as having at least one parent in detention, and 10 percent of them have both parents in detention.

Beijing's population control strategy consists of a combination of internment and imprisonment, coercive labor, parent-child separation, and birth prevention. All four of these operate in tandem. Key intellectuals and community influencers have been sentenced to prison terms of often around 20 years, removing their influence and curbing intergenerational cultural transmission. Forced labor separates families and enables greater state control over the next generation. Birth prevention is the cornerstone of raising Han population shares and neutralizing minority groups through embedding and dilution. Over the next 20 years, all of these aspects can be expected to be working in tandem. Within this time frame, we can expect a substantial destruction in part resulting from birth prevention together with a severe impact on the distinct identity and unique characteristics of these groups as groups.

The most concerning aspect of official and academic discourses about these minorities is that they are demonized and framed as a "problem" that threatens an otherwise "healthy" society (cf. Roberts 2020, 16-17). Some Chinese scholars even called it a "human problem". This language is akin to purported statements by Xinjiang officials that problem populations are like "weeds hidden among the crops" where the state will "need to spray chemicals to kill them all" (Zenz 2018, 21). While this statement itself refers to re-education in camps and not directly to mass slaughter, the framing of Uyghurs and others as a human problem, and their concentrated population and growth as a threat to China's national security, is a cause for grave concern.

Note: REFERENCES for citations are listed in the full preprint manuscript published via SSRN at <https://www.ssrn.com/abstract=3862512>.