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THE DAY AFTER TIANANMEN

A Special Jamestown China Brief on Human Rights in the PRC

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Living in the Day after Tiananmen: An Introduction to the Special Issue

A note from the Jamestown Foundation on the occasion of our first issue on human rights in the PRC:

June 5, 2018 marks twenty-nine years since the day after Deng Xiaoping ordered the PLA to forcefully put down pro-democracy protests in central Beijing. A great deal has changed since then. But despite the passage of twenty-nine years, we—all of us—still live in the day after Tiananmen, in real and increasingly important ways.

The PLA's entry into Tiananmen Square signaled the end of a decade of gradual political liberalization. The subsequent freeze in political reform and free discourse has persisted over the intervening twenty-nine years. That freeze has deepened under Xi Jinping, the current CCP General Secretary, as he has consolidated power within the Party, with him at the center. Progress on what are typically called "human rights"—freedom of expression, freedom of religion, freedom from arbitrary detention and arrest, among others—has moved in retrograde (China Brief, March 5). Even today, the people of the People's Republic of China still live under the legacy of Tiananmen.

They are not the only ones. Of the many things that have changed in our world since 1989, arguably the most important may be the spectacular economic, diplomatic, and technological rise of the PRC. As a result, far from being a matter of concern only for the people of China, the legacy of Tiananmen now has global implications. In the years since the Square, the CCP has acted ruthlessly to insulate its hold on power from all threats, foreign and domestic. There is no reason to expect that, as its power grows, those efforts will remain confined by its borders.

Where the United States once talked about respect for human rights as one of the preconditions for China's acceptance into the international community, China now increasingly has the ability to shape what the international community is, and what it stands for. More than ever before, those of us outside China have also come to inhabit the day after Tiananmen.

We therefore ask you to consider the essays in this special issue, the majority of which concern China's treatment of its own people, in a global light. As China edges towards superpower status, what does China's treatment of its human rights lawyers, its women, and its Uighur minority—each the subject of one of this issue's essays—presage for its engagement in other parts of the world? And what do its efforts to build support for its international cybergovernance—the subject of the remaining essay—presage for online freedom of expression everywhere? These are questions we would do well to keep in mind, as we confront the increasingly difficult task of engaging with China in the day after Tiananmen.

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The Human Rights Record of the CCP Under Xi Jinping

By Joseph Yu-Shek Cheng

The mass protests of May-June 1989—which ended with the killing of unarmed protesters commonly referred to as the "Tiananmen Square Massacre"—were, in all likelihood, the most significant grassroots challenge to Communist Party control in the 69-year history of the People's Republic of China. Many of the concerned citizens who took to the streets during those months hoped for a government that would implement political reforms, combat corruption, and embrace human rights.

Since the suppression of the Tiananmen Incident, despite soaring economic growth, little or no progress has been made on any of the protestors' aspirations. The Party regime has introduced no serious political reforms, and China's liberal intelligentsia have obviously given up hope on CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping, whose rule has

become increasingly authoritarian (China Brief, March 8). The CCP's attempts to bury any public memory of the Tiananmen Incident are emblematic of this backsliding; many young people in China today have little idea what happened that night in Beijing, while the people of Hong Kong—who are supposed to enjoy freedom of speech and expression—were recently issued a warning against any public calls to "end one-party dictatorship" by former top PRC administrator for the territory (SCMP, April 25).

Xi very evidently believes that absolute loyalty to the CCP is closely linked with social and political stability. As a result, he has greatly tightened state control over the Internet and social media, and demanded that official mass media swear political loyalty to the CCP, even going so far as to say that they should be "surnamed Party" (VOA Chinese, February 26 2016). He and the CCP have used their strengthened tools of repression to target groups seeking to assert the individual's right to justice and autonomy in the face of Party control.

Three groups in particular stand out, both in their willingness to stand against Xi's emphasis on ideological orthodoxy, and in the consequences they have been made to suffer as a result: human rights lawyers, autonomous labor groups, and underground churches. Under the Hu-Wen administration, all three were subject to regular state harassment, but still enjoyed some space to operate. As part of the Xi administration's crackdown on organization and expression, they have been viewed as threats to the Party regime, and treated accordingly.

Human Rights Lawyers

The fate of China's human rights lawyers is perhaps the best example of the new climate. On July 9, 2015, Chinese authorities removed, detained or questioned at least 159 lawyers and activists throughout China, in what rapidly came to be known as the "709 Incident" (RFA, September 24 2015). These 159 individuals were well known for their attempts to use the PRC legal system to protect clients' rights, including clients facing forced evictions and persecution for their religious beliefs.

Previous Chinese leaders sought to support the rule of law, at least nominally, and praised the human rights lawyers who supported them in their goal. [1] The Xi administration has widened the gap between rhetoric and action to a stunning degree. Xi has repeatedly stressed the need for a society "based on laws"; but his administration has designated human rights lawyers a threat, despite the fact that none have sought to challenge the Party regime.

Chinese authorities have deployed ill-defined criminal charges against human rights lawyers and activists, charges with names such as "creating disturbances" and "disturbing social order". Since the mid-2010s, "inciting subversion of state power", a serious charge that can result in prison terms of ten years or more, has been trotted out with increasing frequency. Lawyers and activists are also frequently put on trial on national television, where they are encouraged to "voluntarily" confess to their crimes. These "confessions" are used to justify the arrests and trials, while humiliating the activists. It is believed that some of the "confessions" have been elicited through torture, which is, according to detainee accounts, widely practised by China's public security apparatus.

Official media now characterize these human rights lawyers as a "major criminal gang", accusing them of "stirring up several serious public opinion issues" and "disrupting the legal process". Even today the crackdown persists, and the list of lawyers affected has grown far beyond the initial 159 (China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group, May 17).

Labor and NGOs

Labor movements too have come in for repression, after a brief heyday. A 2014 economic slowdown, coupled with rising wages caused by labor shortages, forced some factories to close or move inland, often without proper compensation for the workers affected. As a direct result, the number of strikes recorded by Hong Kong-based advocacy organization China Labour Bulletin more than doubled from 656 in 2013 to 1,378 in 2014 (China Labour Bulletin, April 2015).

Authorities saw the strikes as mass incidents threatening social stability, and responded by targeting so-called "autonomous labor groups"—organizations dedicated to helping workers organize. The groups were labelled "troublemakers", and many labor activists were driven out of their homes and offices after police had told their landlords that they were politically dangerous (Reuters, 2015).

Here again, the Xi administration has far surpassed the Hu-Wen administration in its determination to stamp out any semblance of an agenda outside its own. Beginning in 2010-2011, Chinese authorities attempted to co-opt autonomous labor groups and NGOs, drawing them into the official orbit by making it easy for them to formally register, and attempting to involve them in the delivery of public social services. (Cheng, 2012 in Chinese). [2] Those groups that agreed gained funding and political support, but lost their autonomy in the bargain. Those that refused, soon became targets of political crackdowns.

Underground Churches and Religion

Christianity, especially family churches, is seen as a threat by the Chinese authorities, both because of their status as a potential vector for foreign influence, and because of their potential to contribute to a process of democratization. Where they operate, family churches have caused significant changes in China's state-society relationship, as have impacted the values and thinking of their attendees (Journal of Comparative Asian Development, 2014). This explains why the Chinese leadership tolerates traditional forms of worship, but has moved to arrest the spread of Christianity. In April 2016, Xi Jinping gave a major speech on religion; he warned against "overseas infiltration through religious means" and called on religions to "Sinicize" or "adopt Chinese characteristics" (Human Rights Watch, 2017: 9) (SCMP, April 25 2016). Apparently, he very much had Christianity in mind.

The southeastern city of Wenzhou, famous for both its entrepreneurship and its ties with the outside world, has become a central front in this new fight. Many of Wenzhou's businessmen are converts to Christianity, and have attempted to live out Protestant ethics through active engagement in charity work in their community (Journal of Comparative Asian Development, 2014). Their reward has been suppression. In 2015, many of Wenzhou's Christians were detained for resisting a provincial attempt to remove crosses from church exteriors, in accord with Xi's Sinicization campaign. Some of the individuals detained were released the following year, and some were not. (Human Rights Watch, 2017: 8-9)

In September 2016, the CCP went a step further, publicizing draft revisions to the PRC's restrictive Religious Regulations, promulgated in 2005. The revisions stipulate that religion must "protect national security", and prohibit individuals and groups that are not "officially approved" religious bodies from attending meetings abroad on religion. (Human Rights Watch, 2017). Prior to 2018, practicing religious organizations had to register with the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), a government body. SARA was dissolved in a sweeping government reorganization in March 2018, and responsibility for oversight of religion was handed over to the United Front Work Department, an organ of the CCP (China Brief, April 24).

A Bleak Future

No indications exist that the human rights situation in China will improve. While Xi has moved against dissenting minorities with a harshness unseen since Tiananmen, his Party regime has been able to maintain a considerable degree of legitimacy through effective governance, economic growth, and the construction of a basic nationwide social security net. The Xi administration has boosted spending on public and social services, and Xi's efforts to combat corruption and enhance China's international influence have proven popular.

In the near future, China is unlikely to experience another Tiananmen Incident, or its own version of the Arab Spring, not least because of the tightening of already-severe restrictions on freedom of expression. In May 2016, the PRC government required internet video companies to sell equity stakes to the government as a means to increase

control over content. Three months later, in August 2016, CCP imposed new requirements on content websites, including a requirement that staff to monitor content around the clock, while the country's top media regulation body released a notice ordering all media "not to promote Western lifestyles" or "to poke fun at Chinese values" when reporting entertainment news.

These and other restrictions continue to place PRC civil society in an increasingly difficult position, without the voice or resources to mobilize. Civil society is in no position to confront the Party regime, and probably will not be able to do so during Xi Jinping's second term. Over the longer term, less is certain. Although Xi has sought to instil a new sense of purpose and backbone, there are telling signs of a lack of faith in his regime. A considerable segment of the political elite have moved their families and wealth to the Western world, where they and their offspring can enjoy the freedom and security they would deny their own people. (Ming Pao, February 18 2014)

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Notes

[1] For more on this subject, please refer to "China's Human Rights Lawyers – Advocacy and Resistance" by Eva Pils.

[2] For a more in-depth treatment of previous administrations' use of NGOs as a delivery mechanism for social services, see 從中共的施政綱領觀察其人權立場 [The Chinese Communist Regime's Human Rights Position Based on Its Policy Programme], by Joseph Y.S. Cheng, in 思與言 [Thought and Words], Vol. 50, No.4 (December), pp. 123-157. (In Chinese).

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Rice Bunnies and Iron Rice Bowls: Women's Rights and National Security in China

By Siodhbhra Parkin

Since January 2018, as part of a movement some experts are calling the largest student demonstration since June 1989, thousands of college students across China have been organizing both online and offline to demand that their universities take action against professors accused of sexually assaulting students (Radio Free Asia, February 9). Participants have made creative use of novel mobilization strategies, including blockchain technologies, and are hopeful that their adaptive, decentralized strategies will allow this latest wave of feminist activism to remain resilient in spite of government efforts to suppress it (China Change, March 27).

It is no coincidence that a new generation of well-educated, politically active, and technologically savvy female activists are emerging as the PRC's demographics enter a period of rapid, destabilizing transition (Xinhua, January 25). As the CCP scrambles to respond to this crisis by enacting policies that pressure China's women to bear additional children and care for aging family members, while it simultaneously denies them the tools to demand equality, it is more rather than less likely that women's rights will become a major determining factor in China's future political stability (Sohu, February 7).

The Politicization and Mobilization of Chinese Women: #MeToo and Beyond

Underlying the recent increase in feminist activism in China is the CCP's failure to address the appalling treatment of women in contemporary PRC society. In a survey conducted by the United Nations Development Programme, over 50% of Chinese men admitted to having committed violence against a woman (UNDP, September 10, 2013).

Gender-based discrimination in the workplace is both explicit and rampant, with untold economic implications for women (Human Rights Watch, April 23). Preference for male offspring has been so strong over the past thirty years of the brutally enforced one-child policy that, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, the PRC has 33 million more men than women (Xinhua, January 20). Women are pressured to marry early, bear children, and maintain "harmonious" homes, and are often prevented from or punished for seeking to escape bad marriages (Global Times, May 21 2017). Through it all, the overwhelmingly male hierarchy of the CCP has neither raised women to positions of leadership, nor provided any assurances that systemic change at the top may be possible—well-worn government platitudes about women "holding up half the sky" aside.

These trends have come to a head at a time when young women in China are more well-educated and organized than ever before. For the first time in Chinese history, there are more female than male graduates with an undergraduate or postgraduate degree (Ministry of Education, 2017). In spite of widespread discrimination, women in China are earning more and delaying marriage longer than ever before (New York Times, February 20). Further, as in many other countries, grassroots and established civil society groups in China are overwhelmingly staffed by women, with women's rights organizations in particular experiencing success in raising public awareness of gender equality. Ironically, since the founding of the PRC, government-affiliated organizations like the Women's Federation (中华全国妇女联合会) have played a significant role in raising the profile of Chinese women's issues, for all that their vision of modern femininity is deeply conservative and serves an explicit CCP agenda. In short, women in contemporary China—especially the younger generation—are more aware of the injustices they face and command the resources necessary to take action against it than ever before.

In attempting to address the situation, authorities have a made a number of high-profile blunders that have incited advocates at home and abroad. Most notably, this includes the 2015 arrest of a number of feminist activists on the eve of International Women's Day for planning a public event to distribute flyers on sexual harassment. The "Feminist Five," as the detained activists came to be called, were released after 37 days of international outcry, much of which focused on the bitter irony that their imprisonment came as China served as joint host for a U.N. conference on advancing gender equality (VOA, September 23).

Rather than discourage feminist activism, however, the Feminist Five incident has only added fuel to what is clearly a growing movement. In January 2018, after a woman inspired by the global "#MeToo" movement publicly accused her former Ph.D. adviser of unwelcome sexual advances, over 9,000 people participated in a letter-writing campaign urging PRC universities to develop procedures to investigate sexual harassment allegations (China Change, March 27). Online activists managed to stay one step ahead of censors and government reprisal by working through a decentralized and flexible network that encouraged local innovation. To evade keyword-based censorship and keep posts with the relevant Weibo hashtag online as long as possible, organizers introduce artful homophones for "Me-Too" such as "rice bunny" (the characters for which—米兔—are pronounced "mitu", very similar to the pronunciation of the English phrase). Activists also made innovative use of blockchain technologies to prevent posts from being deleted at all, in at least once case attaching an open letter from an activist in the ledger of an ethereum transaction (China Digital Times, April 24).

As of this writing, China's "mitu" movement is still making headway despite ongoing attempts by authorities to intimidate its proponents and silence feminist advocacy. In March, Chinese censors marked International Women's Day by permanently shutting down the Weibo account for Feminist Voices, a prominent and popular alternate media platform that regularly published commentary on the state of women in contemporary China (Hong Kong Free Press, March 9). This contrasts sharply and tellingly with the treatment of LGBT-related content on the same platform a scant few weeks later; though Weibo announced it would be censoring such content, within days, they reversed the decision following widespread outcry on social media and a surprising op-ed in the People's Daily that called for greater tolerance of LGBT people (People's Daily, April 15).

The authorities' actions have thus only served to galvanize Chinese feminists—and not just those based in China. Around the world, Chinese feminist activists have participated in demonstrations to protest the closing of Feminist Voices and voice their support for the women's rights movement (Twitter, 10 April). This development underscores the way that feminist activists in China have been able to build a truly international and popular movement. This fact has not been lost on authorities, whose ongoing efforts to muzzle the movement reveal the extent of what they believe is at stake: the political mobilization of China's women in ways that generate social instability.

The Intersection of Women's Rights and National Security

The CCP's ongoing efforts to silence, discredit, and disarm the newest generation of feminist activists is of course part of its larger project to prevent any form of grassroots mobilization. But this is only part of the story when it comes to the issue of women's rights specifically. Indeed, as been argued powerfully elsewhere, the Chinese government views the prospect of female empowerment as a direct threat to Chinese political stability (Washington Post, March 1).

For years, political scientists and demographers have contented that countries like China, whose gender ratios have been skewed by a deeply ingrained preference for male offspring, are far more likely to develop authoritarian political systems. They argue that governments with far-reaching powers to coerce and control citizens can respond more effectively to the threats posed by a population with a large percentage of unmarried and restive men—who are referred to in Mandarin as "bare branches" (光棍儿). **[1]** To ensure the allegiance of these large male populations, such states are also more likely to adopt aggressive foreign policy positions and adopt nationalistic and militaristic rhetoric. It is important to keep these considerations in mind when assessing Chinese foreign policy pronouncements, and to bear in mind their target audience.

The CCP is aware of the gender imbalance, and has already taken steps to address the issue, namely, revising the disastrous "one-child policy" to permit all married couples to have two children. Unfortunately, the policy change has failed to bear the desired fruit; one year later, PRC total fertility rates remain lower than the average for East Asian and Pacific countries (World Bank, 2017). Lower total fertility rates also mean that China's population is rapidly aging, in a society with few support structures in place to ensure the livelihood of elderly citizens. It is possible that the Chinese government believed the two-child policy would solve both problems at a stroke, by disadvantaging women economically vis-a-vis men, and thereby encouraging them to take on a multigenerational caretaker roles within their families (The Guardian, February 24, 2015).

In emphasizing female agency and empowerment, feminist advocates have directly challenged this vision. In their writings and their activism, in addition to targeting the many perpetrators of sexual violence within higher education and government, they have pointed out the inherently sexist nature of much of the government's discourse about women (NetEase, December 25, 2013). They have also pointed out that the two-child policy has only made it easier for employers to discriminate against women on the basis that they may be liable for covering additional maternity benefits (China Digital Times, October 29, 2015). The popularity of their efforts suggests they have a large audience, particularly among younger women. It also suggests their audience has internalized the concept of gender equality, and are unlikely to retreat quietly into the roles of wives and mothers that the state has imagined for them (Global Times, May 30).

Conclusion

Fundamentally destabilizing forces in Chinese demographics and social relations are emerging just as a remarkably well-educated and empowered generation of Chinese women begins to assert its basic rights. The Chinese government's response to recent developments suggests that it believes the intersection of these forces is one with serious and important repercussions for Chinese political and economic stability. The peculiar case of the "rice bunny" movement demonstrates that these concerns are well-founded, and that the future of China's civil unrest is likely to be increasingly female.

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Notes

[1] For an in depth exploration of this contention, see Valerie Hudson and Andrea Den Boer, "A Surplus of Men, A Deficit of Peace: Security and Sex Ratios in Asia's Largest States," International Security, Vol. 26 Issue No. 4, Spring 2002 (pp. 5-38).

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Cyber Sovereignty and the PRC's Vision for Global Internet Governance

By Elliott Zaagman

Over the past eighteen months, major Western media outlets have followed every step of Facebook's slow and painful fall from grace, including the recent Cambridge Analytica scandal. However, while the stories focus heavily on Trump and Putin, it is CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping who may benefit the most from a collective loss of faith in Western cyber systems and institutions. While the world's attention has focused on accusations of collusion and election hacking, the Chinese leader has been promoting a homegrown PRC approach to technology, the internet, and governance, one that seeks to embed the PRC's concept of "cyber sovereignty" (网络主权) in the institutions of global internet governance.

Although progress to date has been patchy and there is disagreement within the PRC as to how cyber sovereignty should be defined, other previous PRC efforts to shape technical standards and norms globally suggest that the cyber sovereignty campaign is likely to grow in scope, specificity, and sophistication. Growing global legitimacy for Beijing's approach to internet management could have concerning implications for online freedom of expression, both within the PRC, and in countries who see it as an attractive alternative to a more open, decentralized US-led approach. Also worth watching are the ways in which the PRC's efforts to build support for its cybergovernance model interact with its growing technical cooperation with Belt and Road partner nations.

Chinese Wisdom for a Chaotic Cyber Landscape

Growing concerns over the institutions of the American-led internet order are helping Xi make his case. In addition to its work on the 2016 Trump campaign, Cambridge Analytica faces a backlash for using many of the same tools to influence elections in a series of poor middle-income countries, including Kenya, Brazil, India and Malaysia (China Global Television Network, March 23). Meanwhile, government leaders in those and other countries are evincing increasing concern over the security risks posed by the platforms of an open internet. The Sri Lankan government recently imposed a temporary blocked Facebook, Whatsapp, and Viber, and temporarily shut down parts of the island's internet to curb a wave of sectarian violence (Derana, March 7). Brazil has repeatedly blocked Whatsapp (Digital Trends, July 28 2016).

Amidst growing skepticism that an open, unmanaged internet is inherently beneficial, Xi has projected himself and his ambitions onto the global stage with a confidence that stands in stark contrast to the low-profile approach of his recent predecessors (China Brief, May 9). There have recently been indications that Xi's China views itself not simply as a partner in trade and infrastructure construction, but in governance as well. In a speech to the 19th Party

Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in the fall of last year, Xi stated that the Chinese model was "a new option for nations who want to speed up their development while preserving their independence," adding that China's system of socialism offers "Chinese wisdom and a Chinese approach to the problems facing mankind." (Xinhua, October 18 2017).

Developing the Global Internet on China's Terms

China's stepped-up efforts to promote its vision of global governance include a push to enshrine its version of the internet as a model for other countries. In a statement to China's fourth-annual World Internet Conference, held in December of 2017 and attended by the CEOs of Google and Apple, Xi rallied support for this model, referred to as "cyber sovereignty" (SCMP, December 3 2017).

Close readings of Chinese-language scholarly and policymaker discourse have found that, although Xi Jinping has used the term repeatedly, Beijing's policy apparatus has yet to produce a precise, agreed-upon definition of the term "cyber sovereignty" [1]. However, the term, at least in principle, consistently describes the idea that sovereign nations should be granted control over networks and data within their borders, to manage as they see fit. While this principle may seem unobjectionable on first glance, it must be understood within the context of Beijing's determination to defend its own model of internet management: sophisticated, systematic censorship through a well-developed "Great Firewall," and strict requirements for local data storage imposed upon all firms operating within its borders (SCMP, May 7).

A report released at the December 2017 World Internet Conference by the Chinese Academy of Cyberspace Studies called for an "establishment of a multinational, democratic and transparent global internet governance system" through the United Nations, a theme that has become consistent in statements from Xi and PRC government offices. "Multinational" in this case is a reference to the "multilateral" approach to internet management favored by China, Russia, and other nations, which would give national governments a larger role in managing the global internet. It can be contrasted with the "multistakeholder" model preferred by the EU and the United States, where management of the global internet architecture rests in the hands of a cluster of industry, academic, and non-governmental actors (Global Commission on Internet Governance, January 17, 2017).

Taking Multinational Models to the UN

This language was also echoed in the PRC's first-ever white paper on international cyberspace cooperation, jointly published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Public Security in March 2017 (Xinhua, March 1 2017). Interestingly, in its section on "Reform of the Global Internet Governance System", the white paper says that "China will push for institutional reform of the UN Internet Governance Forum to enable it to play a greater role in Internet governance, strengthen its decision-making capacity, secure steady funding, and introduce open and transparent procedures in its member election and report submission."

The IGF is a UN-convened annual meeting of internet governance stakeholders, with little real decision-making power. Why does it require reform? The white paper does not specify. However, it is worth noting that the IGF has consistently supported the multistakeholder model of governance, and included only two PRC delegates in the Multistakeholder Advisory Group for its 2018 meeting. The US, in contrast, sent three delegates, one of whom was the chair (Internet Governance Forum, 2018)

The UN and its affiliate organizations have been a consistent focus of PRC's attempts to win support for its evolving vision of a nationally managed internet. Another particularly well-known such attempt came at a 2012 meeting of the International Telecommunications Union, the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies, where the PRC and it supporters were headed off by a US-led delegate walkout (Ars Technica, December 12 2012). Some internet governance experts have expressed concern that the next quadrennial plenipotentiary meeting of the ITU, scheduled to begin October 29 of this year in Dubai, may see another such attempt

(Brookings Institution, February 7). Since 2014 the ITU has been headed by Zhao Houlin, a PRC national who worked for the now-defunct PRC Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications prior to beginning a 30-year career with the ITU [2]. Zhao will be eligible for election to a second four-year term at this year's plenipotentiary meeting.

Leveraging the Belt and Road

The PRC has also sought to build acceptance of its technical and cyber diplomacy through the technology-focused dimensions of the Belt and Road Initiative, increasingly described in official PRC statements as a "digital Silk Road" (Xinhua Silk Road News, May 17). The joint communique issued at the close of last year's Belt and Road Forum in Beijing announced pledges by participating nations to cooperate on "telecommunications and information and communication technology", so as to "put into place an international infrastructure network over time". The communique also calls for "harmonizing rules and technological standards when necessary" to "maximize synergies in infrastructure planning and development". e-commerce, digital economy, smart cities and science and technology parks" (Xinhua, May 15 2017).

Beyond poorly defined calls for cooperation, Beijing's partnerships with Belt and Road partners has begun to include the sale of technologies that could strengthen authoritarian governments' surveillance capabilities. In Zimbabwe, one of China's closest African partners, a prominent Chinese AI firm will work with Zimbabwean security forces to develop a surveillance system using facial recognition technology (Radii China, April 16). Zimbabwean journalists have already expressed concern that the government is spending money on technology that could be turned against the political opposition, while neglecting hospitals and doctors' pay (TechZim, April 13). Huawei has been promoting "smart city" systems, surveillance-heavy approaches which are billed to assist police in crime prevention, with a high-profile project underway in Nairobi. Huawei's advertising copy emphasizes that the technology "means police forces can have 'eyes' where they didn't before" (BBC). ZTE, the subject of recent enforcement actions by the White House, is promoting such systems, even using the branding "Data Belt, Information Road." (ZTE, May 2, 2016).

The Appeal of the Chinese Approach

Western leaders, journalists, and human rights activists have genuine reason to be concerned about Xi's cybersecurity vision. Many countries along the Belt and Road have histories of brutal dictatorships and poor rights protections for their citizens. Although there are, as of yet, no signs that the PRC's efforts to gain acceptance for its technology and internet governance efforts have extended into direct assistance to countries wishing to turn them towards authoritarian ends, it is not difficult to imagine this as a potential next step.

It is important to understand, however, that these countries' cooperation with the PRC does not take place in a vacuum. They may see the PRC as offering solutions where Western governments have failed. For example, while there is much hand-wringing over automation-driven job loss in developed countries, developing countries are just as concerned over the potential impact of automation on the low-skill, repetitive positions upon which many of their citizens rely (World Bank, 2016). Such an outcome, coupled with a population boom—in Africa in particular—could exacerbate already high levels of youth unemployment. Governments need ways to provide the stability their people demand. For some, support for the PRC's global internet and governance agenda may prove a more attractive means to that end than those on offer by the US and its like-minded allies.

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Notes

[1] An excellent resource on this subject is the article China's Solution to Global Cyber Governance: Unpacking the Domestic Discourse of “Internet Sovereignty” by Jinghan Zeng, Tim Stevens, and Yaru Chen, published in in the June 2017 issue of the journal Politics & Policy.

[2] For more information on Zhao’s career, see his official ITU biography.

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Evidence for China's Political Re-Education Campaign in Xinjiang

By Adrian Zenz

Since summer of 2017, troubling reports in Western media outlets about large-scale detentions of ethnic Muslim minorities (including Uyghurs, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz) in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) have multiplied (The Guardian, January 25). These reports include substantial anecdotal and eyewitness evidence describing a network of clandestine “re-education camps” in which detainees can be held indefinitely without process or recourse (AP News, December 17, 2017; Wall Street Journal, December 19, 2017).

The existence of these camps is denied by the Chinese government. In February of this year, during an interview with the Almaty Tengri News, Zhang Wei, China's Consul General in Kazakhstan, issued what is to date the only statement by a Chinese public official on the reputed camp network. In reference to a CNN report on the camps, Zhang argued that "we do not have such an idea in China" (AKIpress, February 7; CNN, February 3).

This article demonstrates that there is, in fact, a substantial body of PRC governmental sources that prove the existence of the camps. Furthermore, the PRC government’s own sources broadly corroborate some estimates by rights groups of number of individuals interred in the camps. While estimates of internment numbers remain speculative, the available evidence suggests that a significant percentage of Xinjiang's Muslim minority population, likely at least several hundred thousand, are or have been interned in political re-education facilities. Overall, it is possible that the region's re-education system exceeds the size of China's entire former "education through labor" system that was officially abolished in 2013.

The article also examines the evolution of re-education in Xinjiang, empirically charting the unprecedented re-education drive initiated by the region's Party secretary, Chen Quanguo. Information from 70 government procurement and construction bids valued at over half a billion RMB (approximately USD 80 million) along with public recruitment notices and other documents provide unprecedented insights into the evolution and extent of the region's re-education campaign.

The Inception of "De-Extremification" through Re-Education in Xinjiang

The concept of re-education has a long history in Communist China. In the 1950s, the state established the practices of "reform through labor" (劳动改造) and "re-education through labor" (劳动教养). **[1]** Later, in the early 2000s, the government initiated "transformation through education" (教育转化) classes for Falun Gong followers. **[2]**

It was not until 2014 that the "transformation through education" concept in Xinjiang came to be systematically used in wider contexts than the Falun Gong, Party discipline or drug addict rehabilitation. Its application to Uyghur or Muslim population groups arose in tandem with the "de-extremification" (去极端化) campaigns, a phrase first mentioned by Xinjiang's former Party secretary Zhang Chunxian in 2012 (Phoenix Information, October 12, 2015).

In 2014, the re-education system started to evolve into a network of dedicated facilities. Konasheher (Shufu) County (Kashgar Prefecture) established a three-tiered "transformation through education base" (教育转化基地) system as part of its "de-extremification" efforts (Xinjiang Daily, November 18, 2014). It operated at county, township and village levels. A three-tiered re-education system based on these three levels is likewise mentioned in a 2017 government research paper described below, one whose ideas have apparently found widespread adoption (Harmonious Society Journal via www.doc88.com, p.76, June 2017).

The year 2015 also saw the first media report stating the actual capacity of a centralized re-education facility. Hotan City's "de-extremification education and training center" (去极端化教育培训中心) was said to hold up to 3,000 detainees whose thinking was "deeply affected" by "religious extremism" (Communist Party News, October 17, 2015).

Chen Quanguo Puts Re-Education into Overdrive

In August 2016, Chen Quanguo became Xinjiang's new Party Secretary. He came into the job from a position as Party Secretary of Tibet, where he pacified the restive region through a combination of intense securitization and pervasive social control mechanisms (China Brief, September 21, 2017).

A number of separate reports place the onset of massive detentions among the Uyghur population soon thereafter, in late March 2017 (RFA, January 22). This timing coincides neatly with the publication of "de-extremification regulations" (新疆维吾尔自治区去极端化条例) by the government of the XUAR (Xinjiang Government, March 29, 2017). Directive No. 14 in Section 3 of this document states that "de-extremification must do transformation through education (教育转化) well, jointly implementing individual and centralized education".

A potentially influential document in this development was a research paper published by Xinjiang's Urumqi Party School (Harmonious Society Journal via www.doc88.com, June 2017). The paper recommends the creation of "centralized transformation through education training centers" in all prefectures and counties. It lists three types of re-education facilities: "centralized transformation through education training centers" (集中教育转化培训中心), "legal system schools" (法制学校), and "rehabilitation correction centers" (康复矫治中心). Government construction bids indicate that these are sometimes part of large new compounds that also host criminal detention centers, police stations, fire stations or even hospitals and supermarkets.

In May 2017, the first official recruitment notices related to re-education appeared, although evidently most staff were recruited by other means. Karamay, a city in northern Xinjiang, listed 110 re-education center positions for four different "centralized transformation through education classes" (集中教育转化班) as well as 248 police officers for police stations and "transformation through education bases" (教育转化基地) (Zhonggong zhaojing, May 20, 2017; Zhonggong wangxiao, May 20, 2017). Lop and Yutian Counties in Hotan prefecture advertised "transformation through education center" (教育转化中心) teaching positions (Shiye Danwei Zhaopin, August 2, 2017). Staff and teacher recruitment notices for Xinjiang's numerous new "educational training centers" (教育培训中心) often required no specific degree, skill, or teaching background. Instead, they frequently preferred recruits who demonstrated strong ideological conformity, army or police experience, or called for "training center policing assistants". In many instances, training center and police staff recruitments shared the same job posting, and bids show that "training center" compounds often have police stations. **[3]**

The Costs and Design of Re-Education Facilities

The start of Chen Quanguo's re-education initiative correlates closely with the release of detailed information in the form of government procurement and construction bids (采购项目 and 建设项目). Nearly all bids were announced from March 2017, just prior to the re-education drive (Figure 1). Likewise, the values attached to these

bids were by far highest in the months immediately after the start of the re-education campaign (Figure 2). While only a fraction of re-education facility construction is reflected in these bids, they do indicate a pattern consistent with re-education policy and implementation.

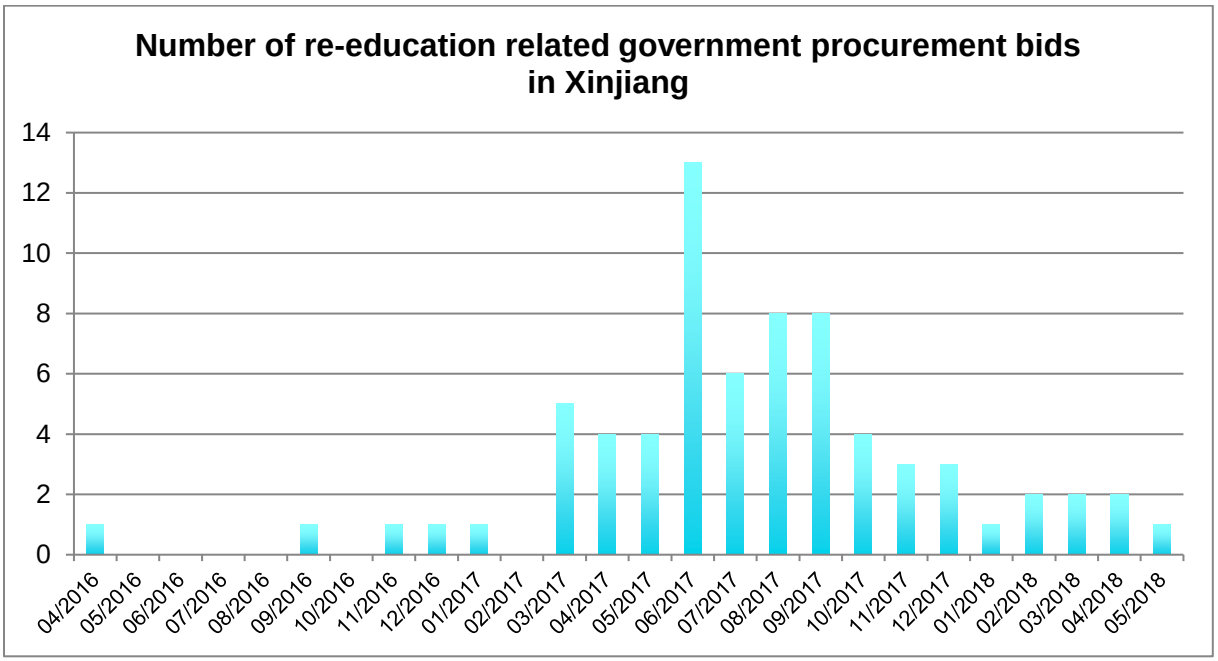

Figure 1. Source: Government procurement bids

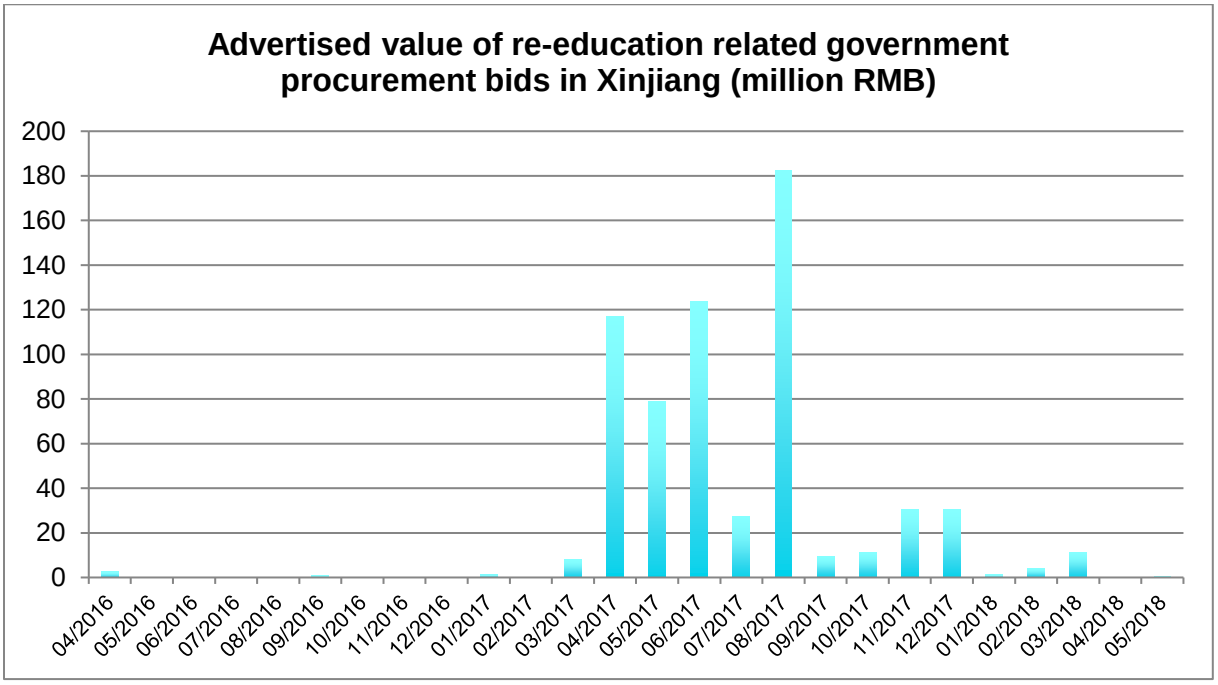

Figure 2. Source: Government procurement bids. Values for some projects were not available. For others, advertised values pertained to the construction of several different facilities. In the latter cases, values for re-education facilities were estimated.

Bid descriptions indicate both the construction of new as well as upgrades and enlargements of existing re-education facilities. Some pertain to adding sanitary facilities, warm water supplies and heating or catering facilities, indicating that existing buildings are being used to house more people for longer periods of time. Several planned facilities feature compound sizes exceeding 10,000sqm. One bid combines vocational training and re-education facilities totaling 82,000sqm. A former detainee estimated that his re-education facility held nearly 6,000 detainees (RFERL, April 26).

Many bids mandate the installation of comprehensive security features that turn existing facilities into prison-like compounds: surrounding walls, security fences, pull wire mesh, barbwire, reinforced security doors and windows, surveillance systems, secure access systems, watchtowers, and guard rooms or facilities for armed police. One bid emphasized that its surveillance system must cover the entire facility, leaving "no dead angles" (无死角). Several facilities branded as vocational or other educational training facilities also carried bids calling for extensive security installations, with some mandating police stations on the same compound.

Overall, documentation assembled by the author lists 55 re-education facility related procurement bids valued at over 450 million RMB in respect to their re-education components. **[4]** Nearly all of these were for regions with significant Uyghur or other Muslim minority populations.

The scale of re-education facility construction can be reflected in local budget reports. For example, Akto County stated that in 2017 it spent 383.4 million RMB or 9.6 percent of its budget on security-related projects, including "transformation through education centers infrastructure construction and equipment purchase" (教育转化中心等基础设施建设和装备购置) (Akto Government, February 2). **[5]**

While there is no published data on re-education detainee numbers, information from various sources permit us to estimate internment figures at anywhere between several hundred thousand and just over one million. This would be equivalent to a detention rate of up to 11.5 percent of Xinjiang's Uyghur and Kazakh population aged 20-79 years. It is therefore possible that Xinjiang's present re-education system exceeds the size of the entire former Chinese re-education through labor system. **[6]**

While there is no published data on re-education detainee numbers, information from various sources permit us to estimate internment figures at anywhere between several hundred thousand and just over one million. he latter figure is based on a leaked document from within the region's public security agencies, and, when extrapolated to all of Xinjiang, could indicate a detention rate of up to 11.5 percent of the region's adult Uyghur and Kazakh population. (Newsweek Japan, March 13). The lower estimate seems a reasonably conservative figure based on correlating informant statements, Western media pieces and the comprehensive material presented in the long version of this article. It is therefore possible that Xinjiang's present re-education system exceeds the size of the entire former Chinese re-education through labor system.

Conclusions

China's pacification drive in Xinjiang is, more than likely, the country's most intense campaign of coercive social reengineering since the end of the Cultural Revolution. The state's "war on terror" is, arguably more and more a euphemism for forced ethnic assimilation.

Despite the strain on the local economy and the potentially disastrous long-term consequences for ethnic relations, Beijing's support for Chen Quanguo's extreme de-extremification measures is unlikely to wane. Under Xi Jinping, "foreign" religions such as Islam or Christianity have been kept on ever-tighter leashes and directed to "Sinicize" in accordance with "socialist core values" (New York Times, March 24, 2017). In that sense, Xinjiang's re-education drive is effectively part of a larger, more subtle nationwide campaign.

Xinjiang's status as the "core hub" of Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative has seemingly made Beijing hell-bent on pursuing a definitive solution to the Uyghur question. The frequently highlighted "successes" of Xinjiang's re-education system may lead the state to adopt it elsewhere. Just as Xinjiang has become China's testing ground for cutting-edge surveillance technology, the state may use the experiences gathered from large-scale re-education for its social reengineering efforts across the nation.

As pointed out by the scholar James Millward, we would do well to ponder whether what is happening in Xinjiang will stay in Xinjiang (New York Times, February 3).

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Notes

[1] See Mühlhahn, K., 2009. Criminal Justice in China: A History, pp.215-257. Deckwitz, S., 2012. Gulag vs. Laogai - The Function of Forced Labour Camps in the Soviet Union and China. MA Thesis, Utrecht University.

[2] Compare Tong, J., 2009. Revenge of the Forbidden City: the Suppression of the Falungong in China 1999-2005. Besides combating the Falun Gong, the state also employed "transformation through education" to re-educate Party members, targeting e.g. cadres with "non-conformist" (不合格) or "backward" (落后) mindsets (Li Derong, Baidu Scholar, 2002; Yuan Zhihua and Yi Waiping, Baidu Scholar, 2006). Finally, "transformation through education" is a common concept in the context of coercive isolated detoxification treatments (强制隔离戒毒) given to drug addicts.

[3] Often, neither advert texts nor specific job requirements indicate a relationship with vocational skills training. Kuqa County in Aksu Prefecture, where nearly the entire population is Uyghur, advertised 60 "education and training center" staff positions in the same intake as its convenience police station advert. The advert preferred recruitees with a background in the military or police. Qitai County in Changji Prefecture, with a Muslim population of 26 percent, advertised 200 assistant police positions specifically for its county "training center". Several other adverts recruited "education and training center" staff in the same advert as other police positions, in nearly all instances without any degree requirement or relevant vocational training knowledge. Rather, Shawan County in Aksu, a Uyghur majority region, mandated some of its future teachers to have degrees in law or Chinese language, both "skills" that are typically taught in political re-education facilities. Sources: see the long version of this article.

[4] Some bids did not show cost estimates.

[5] Similarly, Qiemo County's reported budget activities list 105.1 million RMB spending on security-related investments, including the construction of three re-education centers (教育转化中心) (Qiemo County, December 28, 2017). Likewise, Shache County's 2017 budget report showed a 1.5 million RMB spending item on "legal system transformation through education" (司法教育转化), which likely pertains to operating expenses rather than facility construction. Similarly, Ruoqiang County adjusted its 2017 budget to provide an additional 6 million RMB spending on re-education, likely also pertaining to running costs (Shache County, March 8, 2017; Ruoqiang County, January 29). All of these counties are located in regions with significant or majority Uyghur populations.

[6] Detailed sources and calculations for the statements made in this paragraph can be found in the longer version of this article.

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