

# China’s Use of Artificial Intelligence in their War Against Xinjiang

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## I. OVERVIEW

There is a long and contentious history between ethnic Muslim minority groups and the Chinese government.<sup>1</sup> For years, Uyghur (also spelled Uighur) Muslims have struggled to maintain independence in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, where they make up the majority of the population.<sup>2</sup> Over roughly the past ten years, the Chinese Communist Party has restricted freedoms in the region in response to what they refer to as a radical separatist movement by the Uyghurs.<sup>3</sup> The Chinese government has implemented many methods of indoctrination

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\* © 2021 Rebecca Stark. J.D. candidate 2021, Tulane University Law School; B.A. 2018, The George Washington University. I would like to thank my family and friends for their support, as well as *Tulane Journal of International and Comparative Law* for their efforts in preparing this piece.

1. See James Griffiths, *China’s Paranoia and Oppression in Xinjiang Has a Long History*, CNN (Oct. 13, 2018, 3:46 AM), <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/11/asia/xinjiang-reeducation-muslim-china-intl/index.html> [https://perma.cc/FVB3-F7BT].

2. *Id.*

3. Chris Buckley, *China Is Detaining Muslims in Vast Numbers. The Goal: “Transformation,”* N.Y. TIMES (Sept. 8, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/08/world/asia/china-uyghur-muslim-detention-camp.html> [https://perma.cc/KP2Y-ZJ38].

to instill Uyghurs with nationalistic beliefs.<sup>4</sup> Police presence in the area is extremely prominent and the region is essentially a mass surveillance state.<sup>5</sup> The Chinese government has invested vast resources in the expansion of artificial intelligence technologies.<sup>6</sup> Most troubling of all, Uyghurs are being detained and subsequently interned in large camps for the purposes of “re-education.”<sup>7</sup> Most individuals in the camps have not been charged with crimes, and they do not have avenues to challenge their detentions.<sup>8</sup> While outside parties are not allowed to investigate the camps, leaked information, as well as testimony from Uyghurs who have been inside, reveal that conditions are akin to those of a prison.<sup>9</sup> The Chinese government has consistently denied allegations of human rights violations.<sup>10</sup> However, their conduct is in clear violation of International Human Rights Law.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, despite the increase in information that has become known about China’s misconduct in Xinjiang, it is not likely that there will be a drastic shift toward peace and stability in the region in the near future.<sup>12</sup>

## II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UYGHUR MUSLIM MINORITY AND CHINA’S HAN MAJORITY GOVERNMENT

The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang), formally known as East Turkistan, has a complex history.<sup>13</sup> Xinjiang is inhabited mostly by Turkish-speaking Muslims, the majority of whom are Uyghur people.<sup>14</sup>

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4. *Id.*

5. Philip Wen & Olzhas Auyezov, *Tracking China’s Muslim Gulag*, REUTERS (Nov. 29, 2018), <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/muslims-camps-china/> [<https://perma.cc/W3EA-NQAK>].

6. Paul Mozur, *One Month, 500,000 Face Scans: How China Is Using A.I. to Profile a Minority*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 14, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/14/technology/china-surveillance-artificial-intelligence-racial-profiling.html> [<https://perma.cc/A248-RN3P>].

7. Rian Thum, *What Really Happens in China’s ‘Re-education’ Camps*, N.Y. TIMES (May 15, 2018), <https://nyti.ms/2Gh6iVf> [<https://perma.cc/2NCL-MVL9>].

8. Lindsay Maizland, *China’s Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang*, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS (Nov. 25, 2019), <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-repression-uyghurs-xinjiang> [<https://perma.cc/D2MM-8Q3V>].

9. *Id.*

10. *Id.*

11. Hilary Hurd, *China’s Human Rights Abuses Against Uighurs in Xinjiang*, LAWFARE (Oct. 9, 2018, 8:00 AM), <https://www.lawfareblog.com/chinas-human-rights-abuses-against-uyghurs-xinjiang> [<https://perma.cc/9R97-XELV>].

12. Griffiths, *supra* note 1.

13. GÜLJANAT KURMANGALIYEVA ERCILASUN & KONURALP ERCILASUN, *THE UYGHUR COMMUNITY: DIASPORA, IDENTITY AND GEOPOLITICS* 4 (2017).

14. *Id.*

Currently, the region has a population of about 24.5 million people.<sup>15</sup> While there are disputes amongst historians as to how long the Uyghur people have existed, it is acknowledged that, for thousands of years, the Uyghurs had lived in Eastern Turkistan.<sup>16</sup> The first documented encounter between China and the region occurred in 138 BC.<sup>17</sup> While the Chinese government claims that China has had dominion over Xinjiang “since ancient times<sup>18</sup>,” the region was only annexed by China in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Two periods of the Qing court subsequently ruled over it.<sup>20</sup>

Eastern Turkistan became Xinjiang in 1884.<sup>21</sup> Several decades later in the early twentieth century, the region became increasingly unstable.<sup>22</sup> Warlords ruled Xinjiang, and an uprising led to a brief period from 1933 to 1934 where an Eastern Turkistan Republic was declared.<sup>23</sup> The East Turkistan independence movements were largely a result of the desire of Turkic-speaking Muslims to have their own homeland.<sup>24</sup> China regained control, however, and established the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in 1955.<sup>25</sup>

Because a number of competing world powers have long been fighting over the region of East Turkistan, Uyghur history has Turco-Islamic, Russian-European, and Chinese influences.<sup>26</sup> As a result, the Uyghurs have never been strong Chinese nationalists.<sup>27</sup> In the 1930's, the Soviet Union had a dominant influence over the region, which

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15. Sui-Lui Wee, *China Uses DNA to Track Its People, With the Help of American Expertise*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb 21, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/21/business/china-xinjiang-uyghur-dna-thermo-fisher.html> [<https://perma.cc/4E8X-8TT9>].

16. THE UYGHUR COMMUNITY, *supra* note 13.

17. *Id.*

18. “新疆自古以来就是祖国不可分割的一部分。” See Zhang Dongyue (张东岳), *Guanyu Xinjiang Lishi De Ji Ge Wenti (关于新疆历史的几个问题)*, 6 *Minzu Yanju (民族演)* 14 (1959), translated in S. FREDERICK STAR, *XINJIANG: CHINA'S MUSLIN BORDERLAND* 359 (2004).

19. THE UYGHUR COMMUNITY, *supra* note 13, at 10.

20. *Id.*

21. *Id.*

22. *Id.*

23. *Id.*

24. Griffiths, *supra* note 1.

25. THE UYGHUR COMMUNITY, *supra* note 13, at 11.

26. Nabjian Tursun, *The Formation of Modern Uyghur Historiography and Competing Perspectives Toward Uyghur History*, 6 *CHINA & EURASIA F.* Q 87, 88 (2008).

27. *Id.*

manifested itself through trade, culture, and education.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, the Soviet ideology of liberating people from colonialism became persuasive in the region as well.<sup>29</sup> Also around this time, Chinese warlord Sheng Shicai ruled over Xinjiang.<sup>30</sup> Shicai refused to acknowledge the Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities, which triggered a new wave of Uyghur nationalism amongst them.<sup>31</sup> The Chinese Communist government first introduced the concept of re-education in the 1950s, when the practices of “reform through labor” and “re-education through labor” were established.<sup>32</sup>

The Uyghurs started to seriously challenge China’s rule over Xinjiang beginning in 1988.<sup>33</sup> There were many different grievances that provoked the Uyghurs’ fight for control.<sup>34</sup> While Xinjiang is an autonomous region, since the 1950s the Chinese government has sent millions of Han Chinese soldiers and civilians into the area to build it up and exploit natural resources in a way that has not benefited the ethnic minorities.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, the government greatly restricted the ways that Uyghurs could practice Islam.<sup>36</sup>

Overall, the Uyghurs used a “diverse set of anti-state tactics ranging from relatively peaceful protests to riots, assassinations, and targeted bombings” in an attempt to achieve greater autonomy in the region.<sup>37</sup> At first, the protests manifested through “a low level of logistically sophisticated violence.”<sup>38</sup> One of the first major uprisings occurred in 1990, in an area called Baren.<sup>39</sup> Hundreds of Uyghurs attacked local government offices and fought off the Chinese government for days.

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28. THE UYGHUR COMMUNITY, *supra* note 13, at 38.

29. *Id.* at 36-37.

30. *Id.*

31. *Id.* at 40.

32. Adrian Zenz, *Thoroughly Reforming Them Towards a Healthy Heart Attitude—China’s Political Re-Education Campaign in Xinjiang*, THE JAMESTOWN FOUNDATION (May 15, 2018), <https://jamestown.org/program/evidence-for-chinas-political-re-education-campaign-in-xinjiang/> [<https://perma.cc/M5GE-JCJQ>].

33. Brent Hierman, *The Pacification of Xinjiang: Uighur Protest and the Chinese State, 1988-2002*, 54 PROBLEMS OF POST-COMMUNISM 48 (2007).

34. Justin V. Hastings, *Charting the Course of Uyghur Unrest*, 208 CHINA Q. 893, 895 (2007).

35. *Id.*

36. *Id.*

37. Hierman, *supra* note 33.

38. Hastings, *supra* note 34, at 893.

39. *Id.*

This was the biggest and most complex form of protest up to that point.<sup>40</sup> The protests continued throughout the 1990s and consequently became an increased concern for Chinese officials.<sup>41</sup> The government implemented the “Strike Hard” campaign in 1996 in order to stop this perceived threat to national security.<sup>42</sup> The campaign marked a shift whereby the state ceased reliance on social and economic policies to curb unrest and instead started executing hundreds of Uyghurs suspected of separatist activities.<sup>43</sup> The Chinese government used repressive tactics to limit the ability of Uyghurs to protest.<sup>44</sup> This ultimately led to a decline in anti-state mobilization.<sup>45</sup> By 1998, the deputy governor of Xinjiang released a statement that the region was under control and that the separatist movement was no longer a threat.<sup>46</sup>

About a decade ago, relations between Muslims in Xinjiang and other Middle Eastern countries strengthened, causing the Uyghurs to adopt stricter Islamic customs.<sup>47</sup> Disagreement over the right to control the region led to increased tensions between the Muslim minorities and the Han majority government.<sup>48</sup> As a result, the Uyghur people often protested the government’s rule.<sup>49</sup> In 2009, protests in the capital of Xinjiang, Urumqi, “spiraled into rioting and left nearly 200 people dead,” which led the government to adapt stricter policies.<sup>50</sup> The police in Urumqi were attempting to stop a small demonstration when a mass protest broke out and rioting became violent.<sup>51</sup> Protesters attacked Han Chinese individuals, and it ultimately took 20,000 officers to reinstate order.<sup>52</sup>

The modern effort to convert Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities into loyal supporters of the Communist Party started in 2014 when the series of protests and violent anti-government attacks reached its peak.<sup>53</sup>

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40. *Id.* at 400.  
41. Hierman, *supra* note 33.  
42. *Id.*  
43. Hastings, *supra* note 34, at 893.  
44. Hierman, *supra* note 33, at 49.  
45. *Id.*  
46. *Id.* at 48.  
47. Buckley, *supra* note 3.  
48. *Id.*  
49. Hierman, *supra* note 33.  
50. Buckley, *supra* note 3.  
51. Griffiths, *supra* note 1.  
52. *Id.*  
53. Buckley *supra* note 3.

The government maintains that Islamic extremism was the cause of attacks that killed hundreds of Chinese citizens.<sup>54</sup> Xi Jinping, the Communist Party chief, initiated the detentions, stating that intervention was needed in Xinjiang to combat terrorist activities.<sup>55</sup> Ultimately, over the past few years, China has built hundreds of camps across the Xinjiang region.<sup>56</sup> The camps vary from small facilities that allow inmates to go home at night to camps that can house thousands of people around the clock.<sup>57</sup> Most people who are being detained have not been charged with crimes, and oftentimes internment of individuals occurs only because they are Muslim.<sup>58</sup> In addition to these internment programs, the Chinese government has also instituted restrictions on the practice of Islam.<sup>59</sup> For example, certain traditionally Muslim baby names are banned, and Uyghur men are not allowed to have beards.<sup>60</sup> Certain Muslim officials are prohibited from fasting for Ramadan, and Quran study groups have been greatly restricted.<sup>61</sup>

In 2016, Xinjiang Communist Party chief Chen Quanguo became Xinjiang's new party secretary.<sup>62</sup> Secretary Chen initiated increasingly harsh policies targeted at the Uyghurs' freedom.<sup>63</sup> Authorities from one village in northwest Xinjiang claimed that their police department was ordered to detain forty percent of their local population.<sup>64</sup> Reeducation efforts started increasing and expanding in 2017, when at least thirty-nine camps almost tripled in size.<sup>65</sup> Relatedly, it has been estimated by experts that "construction spending on security-related facilities in Xinjiang increased by 20 billion yuan (around \$2.96 billion) in 2017."<sup>66</sup> As of August 2018, it has been reported that eighty percent of Xinjiang's

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54. *Id.*

55. *Id.*

56. *Id.*

57. *Id.*

58. Maizland, *supra* note 8.

59. Hurd, *supra* note 11.

60. See Peter Irwin, *Why Is China Banning Baby Names and Beards in Xinjiang?*, THE DIPLOMAT (Apr. 29, 2017), <https://thediplomat.com/2017/04/why-is-china-banning-baby-names-and-beards-in-xinjiang/> [<https://perma.cc/K539-NXD5>].

61. Griffiths, *supra* note 1.

62. Shohret Hoshur, *Nearly Half of Uyghurs in Xinjiang's Hotan Targeted for Re-Education Camps*, RADIO FREE ASIA (Oct. 9, 2017), <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/camps-10092017164000.html> [<https://perma.cc/359W-SDK8>].

63. *Id.*

64. *Id.*

65. Wen & Auyezov, *supra* note 5. 109

66. Maizland, *supra* note 8.

total adult population has been forcibly removed into reeducation camps.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, the children of these adult Muslims are being placed into orphanages.<sup>68</sup>

China has consistently denied reports of human rights abuses and officials at first denied the existence of the camps altogether.<sup>69</sup> The government then began to acknowledge the facilities, describing them as “mild corrective institutions that provide job training.”<sup>70</sup> In 2019, the camps gained an official name of “vocational training centers.”<sup>71</sup> The government has refused to disclose information about the detention facilities and journalists are not allowed inside.<sup>72</sup>

Despite the government’s claims, reports have shown that facilities are overpopulated and detainees are treated poorly.<sup>73</sup> Personal accounts and leaked government documents have provided details regarding how the camps were started and how they continue to be run.<sup>74</sup> Those who have survived the camps “describe being tortured during interrogation, living in crowded cells and being subjected to a brutal daily regimen of Communist Party indoctrination that drove some people to suicide.”<sup>75</sup> There are even several accounts of Uyghurs dying in police custody.<sup>76</sup> It is unclear how many Uyghurs and members of other Muslim groups have actually been detained.<sup>77</sup> Estimates range from several hundred

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67. Emily Feng, *Crackdown in Xinjiang: Where Have All the People Gone?*, FIN. TIMES (Aug. 5, 2018), <https://www.ft.com/content/ac0ffb2e-8b36-11e8-b18d-0181731a0340> [<https://perma.cc/TG2A-4QBM>].

68. *China is Putting Uyghu Children in ‘Orphanages’ Even if Their Parents are Alive*, INDEPENDENT (Sept. 21, 2018), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/china-uyghurs-human-rights-muslims-orphanages-xinjiang-province-reeducation-a8548341.html> [<https://perma.cc/CSK3-PHM9>].

69. Maizland, *supra* note 8.

70. Buckley *supra* note 3.

71. Maizland, *supra* note 8.

72. *Id.*

73. See Shohret Hoshur, *Uyghur Inmates Suffer Health Complications Due to Neglect in Xinjiang Detention Centers*, RADIO FREE ASIA (Jan. 18, 2018), <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/health-01182018171513.html> [<https://perma.cc/W9FY-UHT4>]; see Shohret Hoshur, *Uyghur Muslim Scholar Dies in Chinese Police Custody*, RADIO FREE ASIA (Jan. 29, 2018), <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/scholar-death-01292018180427.html> [<https://perma.cc/89DH-MRNU>].

74. Maizland, *supra* note 8.

75. Wen & Auyezov, *supra* note 5.

76. Hoshur, *Uyghur Muslim Dies*, *supra* note 73; *Jailed for Watching Islamic Video, Uyghur Dies in Custody*, RADIO FREE ASIA (June 13, 2016), <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/custody-06132016142251.html> [<https://perma.cc/R5NE-LFMA>].

77. Buckley, *supra* note 3.

thousand to a million people.<sup>78</sup> While information remains incomplete, it is evident these are mass internments that are taking place on a huge scale.<sup>79</sup>

### III. CHINA'S EXTENSIVE INVESTMENT IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The term “artificial intelligence” encompasses a vast amount of different systems that have the ability to think for themselves and utilize a variety of types of machine learning.<sup>80</sup> Artificial intelligence technology is expanding rapidly, and it is projected that global spending on AI will more than double by 2022.<sup>81</sup> In recent years, artificial intelligence has been applied to many different fields, such as medicine, driverless vehicles, robotics, finance, and facial recognition.<sup>82</sup> Facial recognition technology uses characteristics such as skin tone and face shape to categorize images of people based on the algorithmic definitions of race or ethnicity.<sup>83</sup> Through machine learning, data is fed to AI systems in order to train them to recognize patterns.<sup>84</sup>

In recent years, China's AI industry has grown tremendously.<sup>85</sup> China's State Council first released the “Next Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan” (Plan) in 2017.<sup>86</sup> The Plan lays out China's goal of becoming the world's premier leader in artificial intelligence, with a domestic industry worth almost 150 billion RMB.<sup>87</sup> The Plan contains three steps toward achieving several major goals (strategic objectives).<sup>88</sup> First, China will become on par with the United

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78. *Id.*

79. *Id.*

80. Pablo Robles, *China Plans to be a World Leader in Artificial Intelligence by 2030*, S. CHINA MORNING POST (Oct. 1, 2018), <https://multimedia.scmp.com/news/china/article/2166148/china-2025-artificial-intelligence/index.html> [<https://perma.cc/YC7R-5N7S>].

81. Erica Sweeney, *IDC: Retail to Lead Global AI Spending in 2019 as Total Market Reached \$35.8B*, MARKETING DIVE (Mar. 12, 2019), <https://www.marketingdive.com/news/idc-retail-to-lead-global-ai-spending-in-2019-as-total-market-reaches-35/550240/#:~:text=By%202022%2C%20spending%20on%20AI,all%20AI%20spending%20in%202019> [<https://perma.cc/3RQR-AVRL>].

82. Robles, *supra* note 80.

83. Mozur, *supra* note 6.

84. *Id.*

85. Robles, *supra* note 80.

86. Rogier Creemers, *A Next Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan*, CHINA COPYRIGHT & MEDIA (last updated Aug. 1, 2017), <https://chinacopyrightandmedia.wordpress.com/2017/07/20/a-next-generation-artificial-intelligence-development-plan/> [<https://perma.cc/JQG8-FHC8>].

87. *Id.*

88. *Id.*



States' AI technology by the year 2020.<sup>89</sup> Second, China will achieve its own major breakthroughs in the field, and AI theory and technology will be incorporated into many aspects of society by 2025.<sup>90</sup> Third, China will become the world leader in AI theories, technologies, and applications by the year 2030.<sup>91</sup>

The Chinese government has already sponsored a massive amount of investment toward the advancement of AI.<sup>92</sup> The country has spent billions in start-up funding, and they have also created programs to attract researchers from across the globe.<sup>93</sup> In addition to the amount of data points generated due to the sheer size of the country, the regulatory and legal environments in China have allowed the government to streamline data policies and encourage development.<sup>94</sup> The government selected leading Chinese tech companies to receive financial support in order to facilitate rapid industry growth.<sup>95</sup> In 2017, China chose five companies to spearhead the movement of AI advancement.<sup>96</sup> Currently, they sponsor at least fifteen different companies.<sup>97</sup>

China's powerful central government allows it to access big data sets.<sup>98</sup> The Plan outlines various "focus tasks" to help achieve its major goals.<sup>99</sup> These focus tasks "touch on the application of AI to social, economic, and national security challenges."<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, the Plan contains "guarantee measures" intended to support and guide the development and application of AI, such as necessary laws and regulations, ethical frameworks, and resource allocation principles.<sup>101</sup> In 2018, the Ministry of Public Security invested billions of dollars into two

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89. *Id.*

90. *Id.*

91. *Id.*

92. Eamon Barrett, *A.I. in China: Tiktok Is Just the Beginning*, FORTUNE (Jan. 20, 2020, 4:30 AM), <https://fortune.com/longform/tiktok-app-artificial-intelligence-addictive-bytedance-china/> [<https://perma.cc/JBW6-JABB>].

93. Natalie Sherman, *Is China Gaining an Edge in Artificial Intelligence?*, BBC (Nov. 12, 2019), <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-50255191> [<https://perma.cc/68YF-MCKK>].

94. *See id.*

95. Barrett, *supra* note 92.

96. *Id.*

97. *Id.*

98. *Id.*

99. Theodore J. Karch, Ashwin Kaja & Yan Luo, *China's Vision for the Next Generation of Artificial Intelligence*, THE NAT'L L. REV. (Mar. 25, 2018), <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/china-s-vision-next-generation-artificial-intelligence> [<https://perma.cc/D658-BVCH>].

100. *Id.*

101. *Id.*

plans, translated as Skynet and Sharp Eyes, with the goal of computerizing surveillance, policing, and intelligence collection.<sup>102</sup> There are multiple Chinese AI companies behind the facial recognition technology, many of which are valued at more than \$1 billion each.<sup>103</sup>

The Chinese government has also worked with foreign nations in order to advance their technological growth.<sup>104</sup> Several prominent American geneticists have worked with the ministry and have contributed to China's online database of DNA samples.<sup>105</sup> Similarly, China has used equipment and machinery from American companies to help advance the machine learning of DNA mapping.<sup>106</sup>

#### IV. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF HOW AI IS BEING USED TO TARGET UYGHUR MUSLIMS

Despite all of the benefits and societal advancements that AI can bring forth, the interrelated surveillance and privacy issues are extremely concerning.<sup>107</sup> Experts say that China is now the first known example of a government using advanced artificial technology to racially profile an ethnic minority group.<sup>108</sup> The Chinese government has increased personal surveillance in Xinjiang to an alarming degree, through the implementation of technology such as an extensive video surveillance system and smartphone monitoring.<sup>109</sup> Specifically, mass surveillance measures are applied that “make use of QR codes, biometrics, artificial intelligence, phone spyware, and big data.”<sup>110</sup>

The government started to organize Xinjiang into a grid system after Communist Leader Chen Quanguo took control of the region in 2016.<sup>111</sup> At that point, towns and cities were split into segments of about five hundred people, each with their own police station.<sup>112</sup> Officers are

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102. Mozur, *supra* note 6.

103. *Id.*

104. Wee, *supra* note 15.

105. *Id.*

106. *Id.*

107. Mozur, *supra* note 6.

108. *Id.*6

109. Indrees Ali & Phil Stewart, *China a '21st Century Surveillance State,' U.S. Defense Chief Says*, N.Y. TIMES (Jan. 24, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2020/01/24/technology/24reuters-usa-china-surveillance.html> [<https://perma.cc/93UV-BRUK>].

110. Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2019*, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/china-and-tibet#7934d0>.

111. Maizland, *supra* note 8.

112. *Id.*

able to closely monitor Uyghurs by “scanning their identification cards, taking their photographs and fingerprints, and searching their cell phones.”<sup>113</sup> Uyghur Muslims are being tracked all across China.<sup>114</sup> For example, reports indicate that last year, law enforcement in the central city of Sanmenxia ran a system that screened whether residents were Uyghurs a total of 500,000 times over the course of just one month.<sup>115</sup> In the western city of Kashgar, there are police checkpoints approximately every one hundred yards, supplemented with facial-recognition cameras that are everywhere.<sup>116</sup>

Facial recognition is integrated through surveillance cameras that detect Uyghurs by their facial characteristics, which are different from those of the Han majority.<sup>117</sup> Police departments and the companies that supply the technology refer to this process as “minority identification.”<sup>118</sup> Information that is collected through different surveillance measures is stored in a massive database called the Integrated Joint Operations Platform.<sup>119</sup> The database uses artificial intelligence to create lists of “suspicious people” based on this information.<sup>120</sup> While Chinese companies are not the only ones to have the technology to sort people based on their appearance, China is the only country to use such technology for law enforcement purposes.<sup>121</sup> Over a million local officials have also been recruited to monitor people, such as through staying in their homes for periods of time.<sup>122</sup>

Furthermore, the government has not restricted their surveillance measures to just facial recognition.<sup>123</sup> The government has collected biometric data from its citizens through a program called “Physicals for All.”<sup>124</sup> From 2016 to 2017, authorities gathered DNA as well as other genetic samples and personal data from over 36 million people.<sup>125</sup> Local police contacted Uyghurs personally and told them that the checkups

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113. *Id.*

114. See Maizland, *supra* note 8; see also Mozur, *supra* note 6.

115. Mozur, *supra* note 6.

116. Maizland, *supra* note 8.

117. Mozur, *supra* note 6.

118. *Id.*

119. Maizland, *supra* note 8.

120. *Id.*

121. Mozur, *supra* note 6.

122. Human Rights Watch, *supra* note 110.

123. Maizland, *supra* note 8.

124. *Id.*

125. Wee, *supra* note 15.

were mandatory.<sup>126</sup> Two Uyghurs, a former official and a student, said they were ordered to show up at police buildings where officers “recorded their voices, took pictures of their heads at different angles and collected hair and blood samples.”<sup>127</sup> This program was aided in part by an American geneticist who provided genetic material that the government compared to Uyghur DNA and equipment from an American company.<sup>128</sup>

Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang outside of the detention centers are also subject to restrictions on the way they live their personal lives.<sup>129</sup> Travel throughout the region is extremely difficult, as government officials have confiscated passports and Uyghurs must apply for permission to go through checkpoints in order to move from town to town.<sup>130</sup> This practice has resulted in the division of families, at times with children being trapped in one country without their parents.<sup>131</sup> The government has even banned Turkic Muslims from contacting people abroad.<sup>132</sup> Twenty-three of United States-based Uyghur journalist Gulchehra Hoja’s family members have disappeared within the camps.<sup>133</sup> Hoja says that her family started vanishing in 2017, and she now cannot contact any of them.<sup>134</sup> The government has also instituted a number of oppressive restrictions on Islamic and other Uyghur cultural practices.<sup>135</sup> There are many methods of political indoctrination, including “compulsory flag-raising ceremonies and political or denunciation meetings.”<sup>136</sup> The practice of Islam, in effect, is essentially outlawed in the region.<sup>137</sup>

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126. *Id.*

127. Buckley, *supra* note 3.

128. Wee, *supra* note 15.

129. Human Rights Watch, *supra* note 110.

130. *Id.*

131. *Id.*

132. *Id.*

133. Ivan Watson & Ben Westcott, ‘Cultural Genocide’: How China Is Tearing Uyghur Families Apart in Xinjiang, CNN (Nov. 15, 2018), <https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/14/asia/uyghur-china-xinjiang-interview-intl/index.html> [https://perma.cc/F7R9-4SXE].

134. *Id.*

135. Human Rights Watch, *supra* note 110.

136. *Id.*

137. *Id.*

## V. CHINA'S VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

China's large-scale incarceration and re-education of the Uyghur Muslims is in clear violation of international law.<sup>138</sup> While China's use of AI technology has greatly facilitated their ability to detain and intern Uyghurs, there is still a dearth of artificial intelligence regulation, especially at the international level.<sup>139</sup> In 2015, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute established a center on AI and robotics.<sup>140</sup> The center was created to focus on "understanding and addressing the risks and benefits of AI and robotics from the perspective of crime and security through awareness-raising, education, exchange of information, and harmonization of stakeholders."<sup>141</sup> Despite attempts by international bodies, the regulatory gaps are prominent as technology continues to advance rapidly.<sup>142</sup> Lines still need to be drawn to determine what is ethical before it is determined what should be legal.<sup>143</sup>

That being said, international human rights law is applicable to the situation in Xinjiang through traditional international law, as well as through the application of treaties that China has signed.<sup>144</sup> China has ratified, and is currently a party to, four different international conventions on human rights.<sup>145</sup> All four conventions are relevant to their

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138. Hurd, *supra* note 11.

139. *Center on Artificial Intelligence and Robotics*, UNICRI, [http://www.unicri.it/topics/ai\\_robotics/centre/](http://www.unicri.it/topics/ai_robotics/centre/) [<https://perma.cc/S9D4-9YGT>] (last visited Mar. 10, 2020).

140. *Id.*

141. Tariq Ahmad & Jenny Gesley, *Regulation of Artificial Intelligence: International and Regional Approaches*, THE LIBR. OF CONG. (Jan. 2019) <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/artificial-intelligence/international.php> [<https://perma.cc/52R6-SR4E>].

142. *Center on Artificial Intelligence*, *supra* note 139; Vivek Wadhwa, *Law and Ethics Can't Keep Pace with Technology*, MIT TECH. REV. (Apr. 15, 2014), <https://www.technologyreview.com/s/526401/laws-and-ethics-cant-keep-pace-with-technology/> [<https://perma.cc/W9WM-XKWF>].

143. *Id.*

144. *See* International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Jan. 4, 1969, 660 U.N.T.S. 195, *available at* <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cerd.aspx> [<https://perma.cc/8DM4-VML4>] [hereinafter ICERD]; *see* International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 1, Jan. 3, 1976, 993 U.N.T.S. 3.; *see* Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, art. 1, June 26, 1987, 1465 U.N.T.S. 85 [hereinafter CAT]; *see* Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, art. 2(b), Jan. 12, 1951, 78 U.N.T.S. 277 [hereinafter CPPG].

145. *See* International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, *supra* note 144; *see* International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *supra* note 144; *see* Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading

surveillance and internment of Uyghurs.<sup>146</sup> The Chinese government has both denied that they are violating human rights and argued that the international law of sovereignty protects the country from interference with actions taken within the territory.<sup>147</sup> Despite this, substantial amounts of evidence continue to detail incessant internment of ethnic minorities.<sup>148</sup>

Arguably the most relevant and applicable convention is the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).<sup>149</sup> As its name suggests, this convention was created by the United Nations with the intent of eliminating all forms of racial discrimination.<sup>150</sup> Article 1 of the ICERD defines racial discrimination as any “distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference” made on the basis of “race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin” that nullifies or impairs human rights and fundamental freedoms in any field of public life.<sup>151</sup> The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has further explained that the goal of the Convention is to guarantee “the right of everyone to equality before the law in the enjoyment of fundamental human rights, without distinction as to race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, and at ensuring that that equality is actually enjoyed in practice.”<sup>152</sup> “A state may recognize a racial or ethnic group as distinct on the basis of linguistic, religious, economic or social characteristics, or some combination of these

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Treatment or Punishment, *supra* note 144; *see* Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, *supra* note 144.

146. *See* International Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, *supra* note 144 at art. 1; *see* International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *supra* note 144 at art. 2; *see* Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, *supra* note 144 at art. 1; *see* Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, *supra* note 144 at art. 2.

147. Buckley, *supra* note 3; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, The Declaration of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on the Promotion of International Law (June 25, 2016, 5:07 PM), *available at* [https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/position\\_word\\_order/-/asset\\_publisher/6S4RuXfeYIKr/content/id/2331698](https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/position_word_order/-/asset_publisher/6S4RuXfeYIKr/content/id/2331698) [<https://perma.cc/D5X9-AJES>].

148. *China 2019*, AMNESTY INT’L, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/china/report-china/> [<https://perma.cc/C2ES-LSSZ>].

149. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, *supra* note 144.

150. *Id.*

151. *Id.* at art. 1.

152. Theodor Meron, *The Meaning and Reach of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, 79 AM. J. INT’L L. 283, 287 (1985).

features.”<sup>153</sup> Article 5 of the Convention lays out a number of civil rights that must be guaranteed to everyone.<sup>154</sup> These rights include freedom of movement and residence within the state, the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and a number of other rights that are being explicitly withheld from the Uyghur Muslims.<sup>155</sup>

China's only reservation to the Convention is regarding article 22.<sup>156</sup> Therefore, the only provision they are not bound by is one stating that any disputes arising from the Convention that are not settled by negotiation should be referred to the International Court of Justice for decision.<sup>157</sup> The Chinese government's actions in the public sphere of categorizing and detaining ethnic minority groups based solely on the fact that they are members of said groups is squarely in contradiction with the ICERD's main purpose of eradicating racial discrimination.<sup>158</sup> The Chinese government is purposefully monitoring and interning the Uyghur people specifically as an ethnic minority group.<sup>159</sup>

While the ICERD leaves room for several exceptions, none of them apply to the situation at hand. For example, Article 2(2) sets out an affirmative action provision whereby distinctions can be made by the state in order to promote racial equality.<sup>160</sup> Additionally, Article 1(2) allows a state to discriminate on the basis of citizenship.<sup>161</sup>

Similar to the ICERD, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) promotes the right of self-determination and recognizes that people should be able to “freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.”<sup>162</sup> Additionally, Article 2 emphasizes that the rights guaranteed in ICESCR will be “exercised without discrimination of any kind.”<sup>163</sup> By impeding on the ability of ethnic minority groups to freely practice their religious

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153. *Id.*

154. ICERD, *supra* note 149 at art. 5.

155. *Id.*

156. ICERD, *supra* note 149; ICERD, Declarations and Reservations, Jan. 4, 1969, 660 U.N.T.S. 195, available at [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg\\_no=IV-2&chapter=4&clang=\\_en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-2&chapter=4&clang=_en) [<https://perma.cc/S9KC-SLTY>].

157. ICERD, *supra* note 149 at art. 22.

158. See ICERD, *supra* note 149; see Meron, *supra* note 152; see AMNESTY INT'L, *supra* note 148.

159. Griffiths, *supra* note 1.

160. Meron, *supra* note 152 at 288; ICERD, *supra* note 149 at art. 2(2).

161. ICERD, *supra* note 149 at art. 1(2).

162. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *supra* note 144.

163. *Id.* at art. 2.

and cultural customs, China is arguably in violation of this covenant as well.<sup>164</sup> Many “religious figures, intellectuals and academics” have been detained “merely for exercising their rights to freedom of religion and expression.”<sup>165</sup> For example, Xinjiang University president and cultural leader Tashpolat Teyip was given a two-year suspended death sentence in September 2017.<sup>166</sup> The state provided no explanation, and the only information comes from a leaked document accusing him of ethnic separatism.<sup>167</sup>

The detention and internment of the Uyghur Muslims is likely also in violation of the UN Convention Against Torture (UNCAT).<sup>168</sup> Article 1 defines torture as “any act by which severe pain or suffering, physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted” for purposes such as punishment for a commission of an act, intimidation or coercion, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, with the consent or acquiescence of government officials.<sup>169</sup> While the Chinese government has claimed that their “re-education” of Uyghurs is being done to combat terrorism and radical separatist views, UNCAT clearly states that “[n]o exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture.”<sup>170</sup>

Lastly, it is also possible that China is in violation of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.<sup>171</sup> Despite their reasoning and justifications, it does seem apparent that the government is intending to “destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group” through acts “causing serious bodily or mental harm.”<sup>172</sup>

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164. *Id.*; see generally AMNESTY INT’L, *supra* note 148.

165. AMNESTY INT’L, *supra* note 148.

166. Darren Byler & Amy Anderson, *He Was a Communist Party Member and Model Uyghur. It Didn’t Save Him from Beijing*, CNN (Oct. 27, 2019, 1:23 AM), <https://www.cnn.com/2019/10/26/opinions/tashpolat-tiyip-xinjiang-uyghur-opinion-intl-hnk/index.html> [<https://perma.cc/2V2A-NKJ7>].

167. *Id.*

168. CAT, *supra* note 144 at art. 1; see generally AMNESTY INT’L, *supra* note 148.

169. CAT, *supra* note 144; see AMNESTY INT’L, *supra* note 148.

170. CAT, *supra* note 144, at art. 2; see AMNESTY INT’L, *supra* note 148.

171. CPPG, *supra* note 144; Scott Simon & Adrian Zenz, *China Suppression of Uighur Minorities Meets U.N. Definition of Genocide, Report Says*, NPR (July 4, 2020), <https://www.npr.org/2020/07/04/887239225/china-suppression-of-uyghur-minorities-meets-u-n-definition-of-genocide-report-s> [<https://perma.cc/6EJ7-ZHML>].

172. CPPG, *supra* note 144; see AMNESTY INT’L, *supra* note 148; see Simon & Zenz, *supra* note 171.



## VI. THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO CHINA'S HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Despite the increased amount of information that continues to become known about the Xinjiang detentions, the international community as a whole has taken relatively few concrete steps to rectify the situation, and it is unclear what actions will be taken in the future.<sup>173</sup> In July 2019, twenty-two countries wrote a letter to the U.N. Human Rights Council condemning the Chinese government's actions.<sup>174</sup> However, shortly after, thirty-seven countries responded with a letter in support of China's actions in the field of human rights through their anti-terrorism measures.<sup>175</sup> In September 2019, the United States, on behalf of more than thirty other countries, spoke at a U.N. General Assembly event and denounced China's human rights abuses in Xinjiang and demanded an end to their "horrific campaign of repression."<sup>176</sup>

In recent years, the United States has acted in response to China's AI developments.<sup>177</sup> Specifically, the United States has toughened oversight of Chinese investments, banned U.S. firms from doing business with certain Chinese companies, and increased criminal prosecution of alleged technology theft.<sup>178</sup> The Defense Innovation Unit,

173. Hurd, *supra* note 11.

174. Permanent Representatives of Austl., Austria, Belg., Can., Den., Est., Fin., Fr., Ger., Ice., Ir., Japan, Lat., Lith., Lux., Neth., N.Z., Nor., Spain, Swed., Switz., and the U.K. of Gr. Brit. and N. Ir., in a letter dated July 8, 2019 addressed to the United Nations Office at Geneva to the President of the Human Rights Council, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/41/G/11 (July 23, 2019), *available at* [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/supporting\\_resources/190708\\_joint\\_statement\\_xinjiang.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/supporting_resources/190708_joint_statement_xinjiang.pdf) [<https://perma.cc/V4TB-26LG>].

175. Representatives of Alg., Angl., Bahr., Bangl., Belr., Bol., Burk. Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo, Cuba, N. Kor., Dem. Rep. Congo, Djib., Egypt, Eq. Guinea, Eri., Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Laos, Mozam., Myan., Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pak., Phil., Russ., Saudi Arabia, Serb., Som., S. Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Taj., Togo, Turkm., Uganda, U.A.E., Uzb., Venez., Yemen, Zam., Zim., and the State of Palestine, in a letter dated July 12, 2019 addressed to the United Nations Office at Geneva to the President of the Human Rights Council, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/41/G/17 (Aug. 9, 2019), *available at* <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G19/240/77/PDF/G1924077.pdf?OpenElement> [<https://perma.cc/D5F7-P9BD>].

176. Humeyra Pamuk & David Brunnstrom, *U.S. Leads Condemnation of China for 'Horrific' Repression of Muslims*, REUTERS (Sept. 24, 2019), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-un-xinjiang/u-s-leads-condemnation-of-china-for-horrific-repression-of-muslims-idUSKBN1W92PX> [<https://perma.cc/3P7Y-9L58>].

177. See Sherman, *supra* note 93.

178. *US Pushes Back on Foreign Takeover Deals*, BBC (Aug. 14, 2018), <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-45177254> [<https://perma.cc/N2CR-DPGV>]; *Trump Declares National Emergency Over IT Threats*, BBC (May 16, 2019), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-48289550> [<https://perma.cc/CZE5-HWQJ>]; *US Indictment Accuses Chinese Firm of Stealing*

a Department of Defense organization, issued a 2018 report recognizing that while China's AI economy will likely grow to be as large the United States', aiding in "their mercantilist strategy through free trade and open investment in our technology sector is a choice."<sup>179</sup> Both U.S. investment in China and Chinese investment in the United States have dropped in the last year.<sup>180</sup>

The United States has expressed criticism of China's treatment of the Uyghurs in a myriad of ways.<sup>181</sup> Various politicians and officials have condemned China's human rights violations.<sup>182</sup> For example, U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper spoke out against China's surveillance in a recent speech, stating in a straightforward manner that "the Communist Party of China is using artificial intelligence to repress Muslim minority communities and pro-democracy demonstrators."<sup>183</sup> In October 2019, the State Department imposed visa restrictions on Chinese officials "who are believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, the detention or abuse of" ethnic Muslims.<sup>184</sup> These restrictions were made in tandem with Department of Commerce restrictions on U.S. product exports.<sup>185</sup> Given the ongoing trade war between China and the United States, there is a significant possibility that the White House's stated objections to the human rights violations in Xinjiang will be viewed by some as self-motivated.<sup>186</sup>

Additionally, the United States Congress has introduced a bill calling for action against China.<sup>187</sup> The Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act contains concrete measures such as sanctions and bans on the sale of

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*Trade Secrets*, BBC (Nov. 1, 2018), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-46066537> [<https://perma.cc/PA7G-DAMB>].

179. Michael Brown & Pavneet Singh, *China's Technology Transfer Strategy: How Chinese Investments in Emerging Technology Enable a Strategic Competitor to Access the Crown Jewels of U.S. Innovation*, DEF. INNOVATION UNIT EXPERIMENTAL (Jan. 2018), [https://admin.govexec.com/media/diux\\_chinatechnologytransferstudy\\_jan\\_2018\\_1.pdf](https://admin.govexec.com/media/diux_chinatechnologytransferstudy_jan_2018_1.pdf) [<https://perma.cc/392D-6R3P>].

180. Sherman, *supra* note 93.

181. Michael R. Pompeo, *U.S. Department of State Imposes Visa Restrictions on Chinese Officials for Repression in Xinjiang*, U.S. DEP'T OF STATE (Oct. 8, 2019), <https://www.state.gov/u-s-department-of-state-imposes-visa-restrictions-on-chinese-officials-for-repression-in-xinjiang/> [<https://perma.cc/D2C4-XCFV>].

182. Ali & Stewart, *supra* note 109.

183. *Id.*

184. Pompeo, *supra* note 181.

185. *Id.*

186. Griffiths, *supra* note 1.

187. Uyghur Act of 2019, S. 178, 116th Cong. (2019).

U.S. goods to state agents in Xinjiang.<sup>188</sup> The act was signed into law by the President in June of 2020.<sup>189</sup> U.S. officials have spoken out in other ways as well, such as through the nomination of Uyghur scholar Ilham Tohti for the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize.<sup>190</sup> Tohti was considered a leading moderate voice on Xinjiang and sought to promote understanding between the Han Chinese and Uyghurs.<sup>191</sup> He was sentenced to life in prison on charges of separatism in 2014.<sup>192</sup>

Third party independent actors such as non-profit organizations and media outlets have also condemned the Chinese government's actions.<sup>193</sup> In 2019, Amnesty International, along with four other human rights organizations, addressed a joint letter to the UN Secretary General urging the UN to take increased measures to end the detentions.<sup>194</sup> Certain news outlets such as the *New York Times* have continued to report on leaked documents disclosing details that shed light on what is really occurring in Xinjiang.<sup>195</sup> This is crucial, because as more information becomes released, more accounts can become corroborated.<sup>196</sup> Companies and individuals who have worked with the Chinese government are also starting to withdraw resources and support.<sup>197</sup> For example, Massachusetts based company Thermo Fisher decided in 2019 that they would no longer sell their equipment in Xinjiang.<sup>198</sup> Prominent American geneticist Dr. Ken Kidd also says that he has stopped working with the

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188. *Id.*

189. See Ben Westcott & Haley Byrd, *US House Passes Uyghur Act Calling for Tough Sanctions on Beijing Over Xinjiang Camps*, CNN (Dec. 4, 2019), <https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/03/politics/us-xinjiang-bill-trump-intl-hnk/index.html> [<https://perma.cc/TZ7P-KRYD>].

190. Press Release of 2018 Annual Report from Sen. Marco Rubio and Rep. Chris Smith, Chair and Cochair, Cong.-Exec. Comm'n on China (Oct. 10, 2018) (on file with the Cong.-Exec. Comm'n on China) available at <https://www.cecc.gov/media-center/press-releases/chairs-release-2018-annual-report%E2%80%94seek-additional-actions-to-address> [<https://perma.cc/6FDR-UB42>].

191. Griffiths, *supra* note 1.

192. *Id.*

193. See Open Letter To Un Secretary General Re: China's Human Rights Violations In Xinjiang, AMNESTY INT'L (Sept. 17, 2019), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/1079/2019/en/> [<https://perma.cc/5DRN-63RV>]; see also AMNESTY INT'L, *supra* note 148.

194. AMNESTY INT'L, *supra* note 148.

195. *Id.*

196. *Id.* ("The descriptions matched the testimonies Amnesty International received from former detainees and overseas relatives of those sent to the camps or who went missing in Xinjiang.")

197. Wee, *supra* note 15.

198. *Id.*

Chinese Ministry of Public Security and is removing all Uyghur data from his own public database.<sup>199</sup>

## VII. FUTURE PROJECTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Overall, there is currently no standout solution to put an end to the human rights violations occurring in Xinjiang, and it is unlikely that the region will be peaceful and stable in the near future.<sup>200</sup> Despite the lack of information that is put out by the Chinese government, it appears that detentions are still occurring. Additionally, there is a substantial number of people who are still missing and unreachable within the region.<sup>201</sup> China continues to advance in the field of artificial intelligence, and their technology continues to evolve.<sup>202</sup> It is also unclear how Beijing would even begin to reverse its policies at this point, as few moderate voices still exist.<sup>203</sup> Most of the Communist Party officials in charge are “hardliners” with reputations for “ruthless crackdowns and zero tolerance.”<sup>204</sup> The government has also resisted requests from international parties to allow outside investigators into the camps.<sup>205</sup> Overall, the government insists that the situation in Xinjiang is solely an internal matter.<sup>206</sup>

Despite all of this, there are possible steps that can be taken to help the Uyghurs overall, and the international community at large must persist in its intervention measures. “The protection of human rights is of fundamental importance, and all countries must respect their human rights obligations and commitments.”<sup>207</sup> Other countries should take action through measures such as publicly challenging President Xi Jinping and sanctioning senior officials, such as Chen, who are running operations in Xinjiang.<sup>208</sup> Foreign countries can also cease exporting technologies that are being used to aid human rights violations and generally work towards preventing China from targeting Uyghurs.<sup>209</sup> Activists have also called on the United States to grant

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199. Ali Chang & Nick Fountain, *Planet Money: Stuck in China's Panopticon*, NPR (July 5, 2019), <https://www.npr.org/2019/07/05/738949320/episode-924-stuck-in-chinas-panopticon> [<https://perma.cc/7NBA-SGHM>].

200. Maizland, *supra* note 8.

201. Watson & Westcott, *supra* note 133.

202. *See* Robles, *supra* note 80.

203. Griffiths, *supra* note 1.

204. *Id.*

205. Maizland, *supra* note 8.

206. *Id.*

207. Pompeo, *supra* note 181.

208. Maizland, *supra* note 8.

209. *Id.*

asylum to Uyghurs who have fled Xinjiang.<sup>210</sup> While U.S. officials across parties lines have condemned the actions in Xinjiang, it is time that the Chinese government is held accountable.<sup>211</sup>

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210. *Id.*

211. Alex Ward, *5 Real Steps the US Could Take to Help Uighurs in China*, Vox (July 28, 2020), <https://www.vox.com/2020/7/28/21337081/china-uighurs-muslims-trump-forced-labor-help> [<https://perma.cc/95WR-UFEV>].