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Family de-planning

The coercive campaign to drive down indigenous birth-rates in Xinjiang

Nathan Ruser and James Leibold



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This research report forms part of the [Xinjiang Data Project](#), which brings together rigorous empirical research on the human rights situation of Uyghurs and other non-Han nationalities in the XUAR. It focuses on a core set of topics, including mass internment camps; surveillance and emerging technologies; forced labour and supply chains; the CCP's "re-education" campaign and deliberate cultural destruction and other human rights issues.

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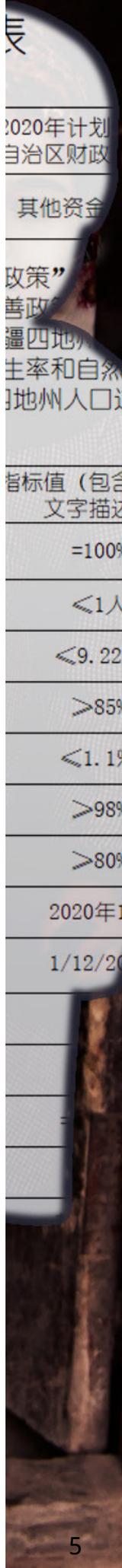
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1. Introduction

In this report, we provide new evidence documenting the effectiveness of the Chinese government's systematic efforts to reduce the size of the indigenous population of Xinjiang through a range of coercive birth-control policies.

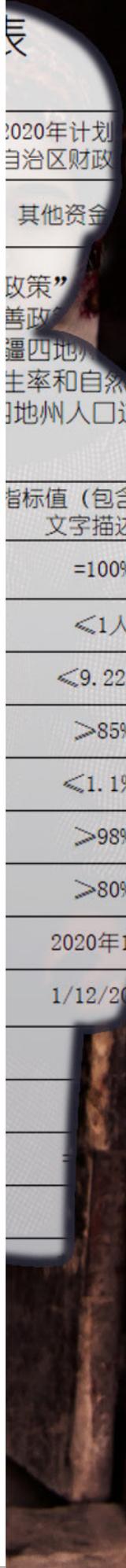
Using the Chinese government's own publicly available statistics, we have compiled a dataset of county-level birth-rates (natality) across 2011-2019. We then marshal this data to analyse trends across nationalities and spatial regions in Xinjiang, before and after the 2016 crackdown, and comparatively with other countries as recorded in the UN population dataset. Finally, we place these statistics in context through our analysis of county-level implementation documents and other official Chinese language sources which have been previously overlooked.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has a long history of state-directed demographic engineering, or what officials euphemistically call “family-planning” (计划生育) in the People's Republic of China (PRC).¹ Chairman Mao declared China's large population was its greatest resource during the 1950s, only to backflip during the early 1970s and insist “population growth must be controlled.”

In 1979, Deng Xiaoping launched the “one child policy” and created a complex set of bureaucratic institutions and practices for controlling population growth. Party officials rather than women would decide what they did with their bodies.

The one-child policy has seen a dramatic drop in China's fertility rate and unleashed new concerns about a looming demographic crisis. Yet the instinct to control remains. As Party officials are loosening family-planning rules on Han women, they are simultaneously cracking down on the reproductive rights of Uyghur and other indigenous nationalities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) over perceived fears of instability and uneven growth.

In the name of stability and control, the CCP under President Xi Jinping is seeking to fundamentally transform the social and physical landscape of Xinjiang. This includes the construction of hundreds of prison-like detention centres² and the mass internment of Uyghurs, Kazakh and other indigenous nationalities;³ a regime of highly intrusive and near constant surveillance;⁴ the erasure of indigenous culture, language and religious practices and sites;⁵ and mandatory job assignments that are indicative of forced labour;⁶ among other now well-documented human rights abuses.⁷



2. Key findings

Beginning in April 2017, Chinese Communist Party authorities in Xinjiang launched a series of “strike-hard” campaigns against “illegal births” with the explicit aim to “reduce and stabilise fertility at a moderate level” and decrease the birth-rate in southern Xinjiang by at least 4 children per thousand people from 2016 levels. This followed years of preferential exceptions from family-planning rules for indigenous nationalities (see Sections 3 and 5 of our report).

The crackdown has led to an unprecedented and precipitous drop in official birth-rates in Xinjiang since 2017. The birth-rate across the region fell by nearly half (48.74 percent) in the two years between 2017 and 2019.

The largest declines have been in counties where Uyghur and other indigenous communities are concentrated (see Section 4). Across counties that are majority-indigenous the birth-rate fell, on average, by 43.7 percent in a single year between 2017 and 2018. The birth-rate in counties with a 90 percent or greater indigenous population declined by 56.5 percent, on average, in that same year.

In 2017, the Chinese government’s approach to birth control among minority nationalities shifted from “reward and encourage” towards a more coercive and intrusive policing of reproduction processes. Hefty fines, disciplinary punishment, extrajudicial internment, or the threat of internment were introduced for any “illegal births.” Family-planning officials in Xinjiang were told to carry out “early detection and early disposal of pregnant women found in violation of policy” (see Section 5).

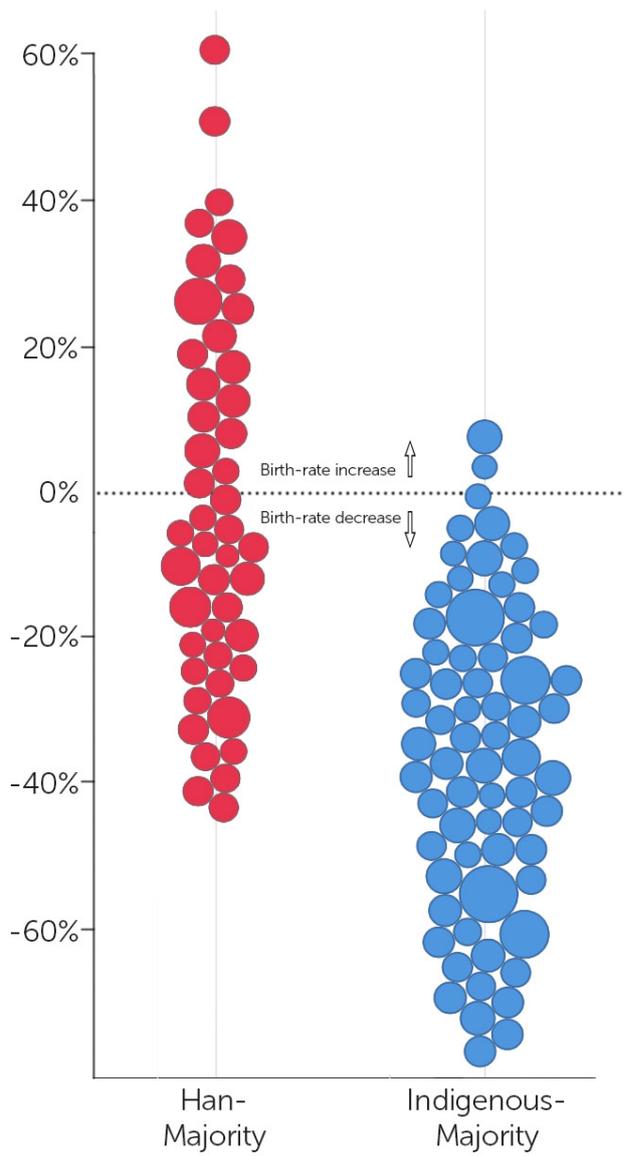
While the Chinese government argues it has adopted a uniform family-planning policy in Xinjiang, the county-level natality data suggests these policies are disproportionately affecting areas with a large indigenous population, meaning their application is discriminatory and applied with the intent of reducing the birth-rate of Uyghurs and other religious and ethnic minorities. This policy also stands in stark contrast to the loosening of birth control restrictions elsewhere in China (see Sections 6 and 8).

Policy implementation documents from Xinjiang explicitly set birth-rate targets that are among the lowest in the world, and the birth-rate has declined from a rate similar to those in neighbouring countries such as Mongolia or Kazakhstan to only slightly higher than Japan, where the low birth-rate is seen as a “national crisis” (see Sections 6 and 7).

The sharp drop in birth-rates in Xinjiang (a region with a population of nearly 25 million) is proportionally the most extreme over a two-year period globally since 1950. Despite notable contextual differences, this decline in birth-rate is more than double the rate of decline in Cambodia at the height of the Khmer Rouge genocide (1975-79) (see Section 7).

The 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, to which China is a signatory, prohibits states from “imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group,” as an aspect of the physical element to genocide. Our analysis builds on previous work and provides compelling evidence that Chinese government policies in Xinjiang may constitute an act of genocide; however further research is required to establish the intent and mental element of this crime. We call for the Chinese government to give researchers, journalists and human rights experts full and open access to Xinjiang.

Figure 1: Change in crude birth-rate, XUAR, from a pre-crackdown baseline to the 2018 birth-rate with counties sorted into Han-majority and Indigenous-majority.



表

2020年计划
自治区财政

其他资金

政策”
善政
疆四地
生率和自然
地州人口

指标值 (包含
文字描述

=100%

<1人

<9.22

>85%

<1.1%

>98%

>80%

2020年1

1/12/20

3. The campaign to eliminate “illegal births”

In the past, China permitted minority families living in urban areas to have two children and rural families to have three children while pursuing a single-child policy among Han majority families. This and other preferential policies for non-Han communities generated intense controversy and helped spur a more assimilatory approach towards indigenous communities under Xi Jinping.⁸ In 2014, then Xinjiang Party-secretary Zhang Chunxian called for the “implementation of a family-planning policy that is equal for all nationalities” in order to “lower and stabilise fertility [in Xinjiang] at a moderate level.”⁹

At the region-wide level, birth-rates in Xinjiang remained relatively stable and moderate across the history of the PRC. For the first decade of the one-child policy from 1979 to 1989, the birth-rate in Xinjiang was in fact lower than China’s average; under subsequent family-planning policies since 1990, the XUAR’s birth-rate stabilised at roughly 125 percent of China’s national average (Figure 2).

Yet that XUAR-wide rate belies much variation and fluctuation in crude birth-rates at the county level. A number of counties, especially in the Uyghur-majority south of Xinjiang, witnessed years of exceptionally high birth-rates over the last decade. For example, in Kashgar prefecture in 2014, the birth-rate soared to nearly 68 children per thousand people, while the region-wide rate was relatively stable around 16.5 per thousand.

Figure 2: Crude birth-rate ratio, XUAR versus the whole of China, 1991-2019.



Despite the relatively stable birth-rate ratio between Xinjiang and the rest of China, policy makers in Beijing and Urumqi saw high birth-rates in southern Xinjiang as an increasingly urgent problem and source of perceived instability, literally a breeding ground for the “three evil forces” of extremism, terrorism, and splittism.¹⁰

Take, for example, Xu Jianying, a professor at the Chinese Social Science Academy in Beijing, who called for “long term strategic thinking” in 2014 in order to “alter the population structure of southern Xinjiang” and confront the scourge of religious extremism.¹¹ In a 2019 interview, he repeated this call,

and claimed to have found Uyghur families in southern Xinjiang having 7 or 8 children (or even as many as 10) during his field research in 2014.

In the minds of CCP officials, efforts to “alter and optimise the ethnic structure of Xinjiang’s population” requires not only the luring of Han settlers onto the frontier but also the strict enforcement of family-planning rules among Uyghurs and other minorities.¹² In the past, local officials in southern Xinjiang complained about the lack of resources and personnel to “control rapid population growth,” and family-planning work was widely seen as perfunctory and ineffective, focused more on incentivising reporting compliance and less on punishing those who gave birth to more children than family planning rules allowed.¹³

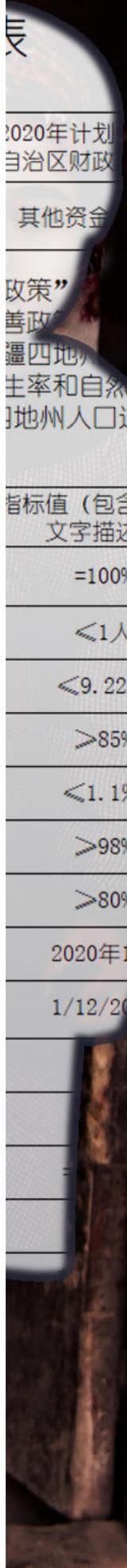
That changed with the arrival of the new Party-secretary, Chen Quanguo, in October 2016. As a part of his “clenched fist” (组合拳) approach to eliminating all sources of instability in the region,¹⁴ Chen initiated a “strike-hard campaign” (专项治理行动) against “illegal births” (违法生育). On 28 April 2017, he convened a high-level Party conference on family-planning in the four prefectures of southern Xinjiang,¹⁵ at which he demanded local officials “reduce and stabilise fertility at a moderate level,” carry out an “equal family-planning policy among all nationalities” in Xinjiang, and ensure “effective containment of illegal births in the four southern prefectures of Xinjiang through a clear transformation of the masses’ concept on childbirth.”¹⁶

As CCP officials in Xinjiang were overseeing the mass internment of Uyghurs and other minorities in purpose-built “re-education” camps, local family-planning officials were conducting a series of strike-hard campaigns against illegal births across the region, using strict quotas to eliminate unauthorised births in counties with large minority populations (see Section 5 for additional details).¹⁷

In a 2017 interview with state media, the Deputy Mayor of Bay County in Aksu Prefecture, Hayrigul Sawut, asserted that those who exceed family-planning guidelines must be “punished and punished resolutely... never tolerate nor soften.”¹⁸ In order to “actively guide” fewer and better births and strictly control illegal births, Hayrigul Sawut called for the levying of hefty fines,¹⁹ which one county-level implementation document called “an important tool for punishing illegal births and educating, warning, and shocking the masses into implementing family-planning.”²⁰

Once mobilised, family-planning officials operated with brutal efficiency across Xinjiang’s indigenous communities. In Chapchal County (68 percent indigenous), for example, officials collected nearly US\$1 million (6,018,000 RMB) in fines for 629 cases of illegal childbirth over a four-month period in late 2017 after deploying 85 new family-planning specialists.²¹ This resulted in a subsequent drop in the county’s birth-rate from 15.54 per thousand in 2017 to just 7.26 per thousand in 2019. A local judgement issued in Uchturpan County (95 percent indigenous) in 2018 ordered a 20 percent reduction in 57-year-old widow Tunisahan Rahman’s pension after she failed to pay a 11,513 RMB (US\$1,781) fine for having an “illegal” third child back in 1992, due to what the judgement admitted was a “serious illness” that led to her retirement in 2009 (see Box 1).²²

Violations of family-planning regulations and the failure to pay related fines is the most frequently cited reason for the detention of people in re-education facilities, according to a leaked government document from Karakash County (98 percent indigenous).²³ One implementation document from Cherchen County (73 percent indigenous) explicitly instructions local officials to dispatch women who have given birth to more than two children to re-education camps: “In addition to collecting the social compensation fee, send them off to undergo vocational and technical training.”²⁴



Yamansu Kyrgyz Government Pronouncement (2018) Number 96

Judgement on Reducing the Benefits of Tunisahan Rahman, a Retired Cadre of the Yamansu Township Agricultural Machinery Station

Tunisahan Rahman, female, Uyghur nationality, born on 9 April 1961, native of Uchturpan County, Xinjiang with a technical secondary school degree, started working in April 1978 at the Agricultural Machinery Station in Yamansu Township, Uchturpan County. She retired in February 2009; and from February 2009, she has been recovering from illness at home.

Upon investigation, it was discovered Tunisahan Rahman has the following problems in violation of national law and regulations:

On 20 April 1985, Tunisahan Rahman married Mamat Gayit, the cadre of the Yamansu Township Agricultural Machinery Station. Both of them have an urban household registration. After their marriage, Tunisahan Rahman gave birth to a boy, Arslan Mamat, on 14 July 1987. She gave birth to his second child, Geyretjan Mamat, on 11 May 1989. According to Article 15 of the "Regulation on Population and Family-planning of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region," "A couple with urban household registration can have two children, and a couple with rural household registration can have three children." After giving birth to two boys in good health, the couple were not eligible for another birth. On 9 September 1992, Tunisahan Rahman and her husband violated the law and gave birth to another boy Anwerjan Mamat. In 2003, Tunisahan Rahman's husband, Mamat Gayit, died of illness. The problem of Tunisahan Rahman's illegal extra birth was never discovered.

In 2017, the Autonomous Region issued the "Opinion of the General Office of the Party Committee of the Autonomous Region and the General Office of the People's Government of the Autonomous Region on Strengthening and Improving Family-planning Work in the Four Prefectures of Southern Xinjiang" (Xinjiang Party Office [2017] no. 38). When the Family-planning Office of Yamansu Township, Uchturpan County, carried out an investigation to root-out the problem of extra-births across the entire township, they discovered that Tunisahan Rahman had illegally had one extra child.

On 12 November 2017, the People's Government of Yamansu Township issued its "Decision on the Collection of Social Compensation Fee" in accordance with the Regulation on Population and Family-planning of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and decided to impose a 11,513 RMB social compensation fee on Tunisahan Rahman as administrative punishment. Tunisahan Rahman has yet to pay her social compensation fee due to serious illness.

As a staff member of a public institution, Tunisahan Rahman violated national law and regulations by exceeding family-planning rules by having one extra child. In accordance with Article 21, Item 4 and Article 44 of the "Provisional Regulation on the Disciplinary Measures for Staff at Public Institutions" and after a 6 August 2018 deliberation meeting of the Yamansu Township Party Committee and government team, it was decided to reduce Tunisahan Rahman's benefits by 20 percent starting in September 2018.

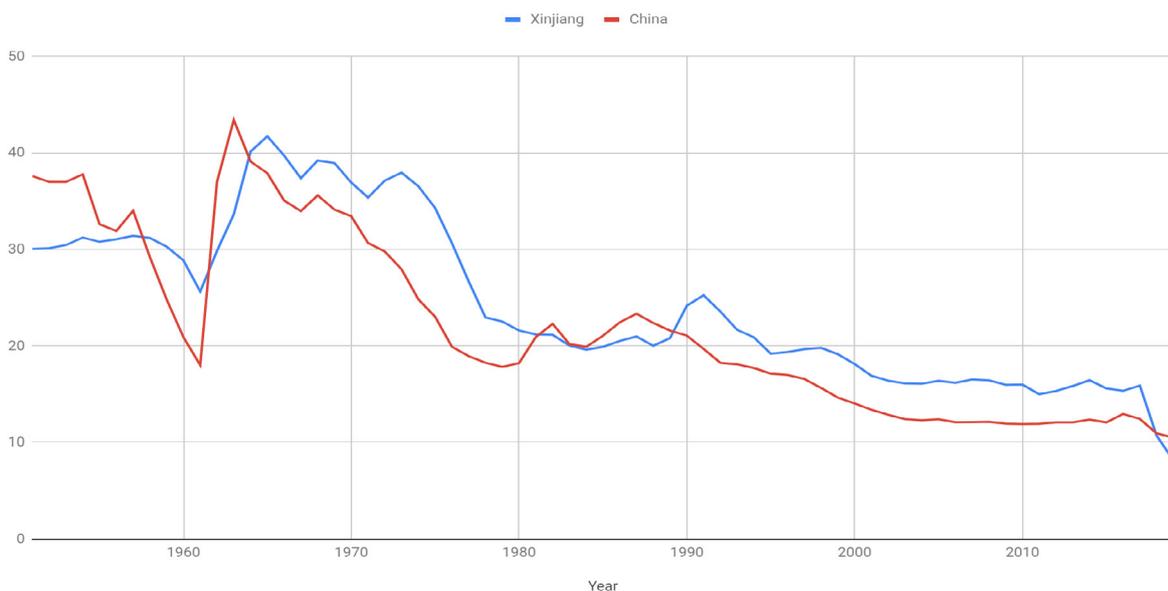
People's Government of Yamansu Kyrgyz Nationality Township
6 August 2018

In order to comply with Chen Quanguo’s directives, the XUAR legislature revised its family-planning regulations on 28 July 2017 to eliminate all preferential births for non-Han minorities in Xinjiang and implemented a uniform family-planning policy.²⁵ This new regulation provided the legal basis for the strike-hard campaign and a more coercive policing of reproductive rights in Xinjiang.

Under the revised regulation, regardless of their nationality, families with urban household registration (*hukou*, 户口) are permitted two children, while those with a rural *hukou* are permitted (in theory) three children. In one part of Uchturpan County, however, local officials piloted a “rural two-child” policy in 2018 that rewarded women who were willing to undergo tubal ligation after having two children with a one-time payment of 2000 RMB (US\$ 312).²⁶ The rapid urbanisation of Xinjiang, with ambitious plans to achieve an urbanisation rate of over 60 percent by 2025, means fewer women are legally permitted a third birth each year.²⁷

As a result of this crackdown, Xinjiang’s region-wide birth-rate decreased significantly in 2018 and 2019, dropping from around 125 percent of the national average to less than 80 percent (Figure 3). Such radical fluctuation in rates hadn’t been seen in Xinjiang since the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962), when birth-rates dropped sharply before soaring upward after the end of the great famine associated with Mao’s failed experiment in collectivization.²⁸

Figure 3: Crude birth-rates, XUAR versus the whole of China, since 1951.



This decline is also remarkable when compared to Chinese provinces with a similar societal or economic profile as Xinjiang. The provincial-level administrative units of Ningxia, Qinghai and Yunnan have a significant (though varied) proportion of minority nationalities and are worthwhile comparisons to Xinjiang. Similarly, the provinces of Sichuan, Jiangxi and Shanxi are largely Han-dominated but provide interesting economic benchmarks which Xinjiang can be compared against. Across these six jurisdictions, the fertility rate remained relatively stable over the last decade, with birth-rates dropping, on average, by 3.02 percent since 2010, compared to the sharp 49 percent decline in Xinjiang’s birth-rate since 2010 (see Figure 4).²⁹

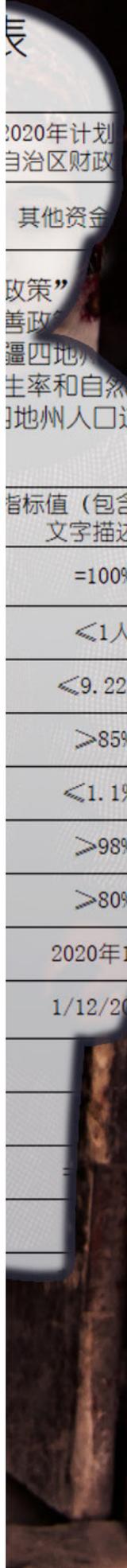
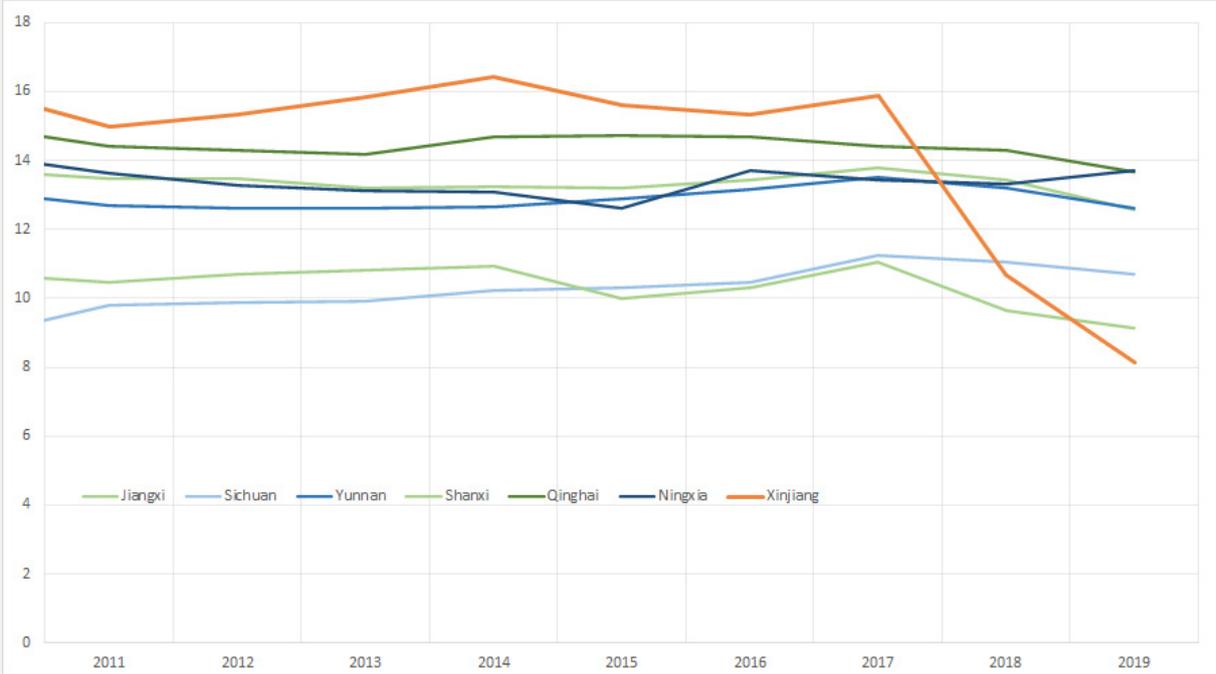


Figure 4: Decline in crude birth-rates, XUAR compared to Jiangxi, Sichuan, Yunnan, Shanxi, Qinghai and Ningxia, since 2010.



4. Sharply declining birth-rates in indigenous-majority counties

Our analysis of official Chinese government sources reveals a sharp decline in indigenous birth-rates in Xinjiang and a coercive regime of population control in which restrictions are disproportionately applied to Uyghurs and other indigenous communities.

CCP officials have gradually loosened family-planning rules among Han women since 2016, moving from a “one-child policy” to a universal “two-child policy,” due to concerns about a ticking “demographic time bomb”: with China recording its lowest ever birth-rate in 2019, 10.48 per thousand people down from 17.82 in 1979.³⁰ There are now prominent voices, such as leading economist Ren Zeping, calling for not only the full liberalization of birth-control rules in China but also the active encouragement of more births.³¹

Meanwhile, in Xinjiang, CCP officials are systematically violating the reproductive rights of Uyghur and other minority women who previously enjoyed preferential family-planning exemptions from the one-child policy. These contradictory shifts in family-planning policy are fundamentally about social control, argues noted expert Mei Fong,³² as the CCP leadership seeks to literally manufacture social stability while preserving its political hegemony.

Previous research by both Chinese and foreign experts has examined the tightening of birth-control policy in Xinjiang and a corresponding drop in natural population growth beginning in 2015, but even more dramatically after 2017.³³ Our analysis builds on that research at a finer geographical scale by using county-level birth-rate statistics (see Appendix for our full methodology), and provides further evidence of the systematic targeting of indigenous communities.

Across the 29 counties with indigenous-majority populations for which we have 2019 or 2020 data, the birth-rate has fallen by 58.5 percent from the 2011-2015 baseline average. In those counties that are over 90 percent indigenous, the birth-rate fell at an even greater rate, showing a 66.3 percent decrease in 2019-2020.³⁴

For example, 99 percent of the population in Hotan County in southern Xinjiang is Uyghur. Hotan experienced a drop in birth-rate from 25.41 per thousand people in 2012 to 7.41 per thousand in 2018, or a decrease of 70.8 percent. This is the continuation of a distinct pattern across Xinjiang since the region-wide crackdown began, in which birth-rates have decreased drastically and disproportionately in counties with large non-Han populations (Figure 5).

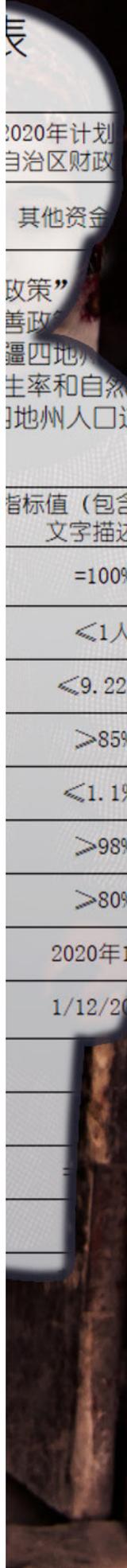
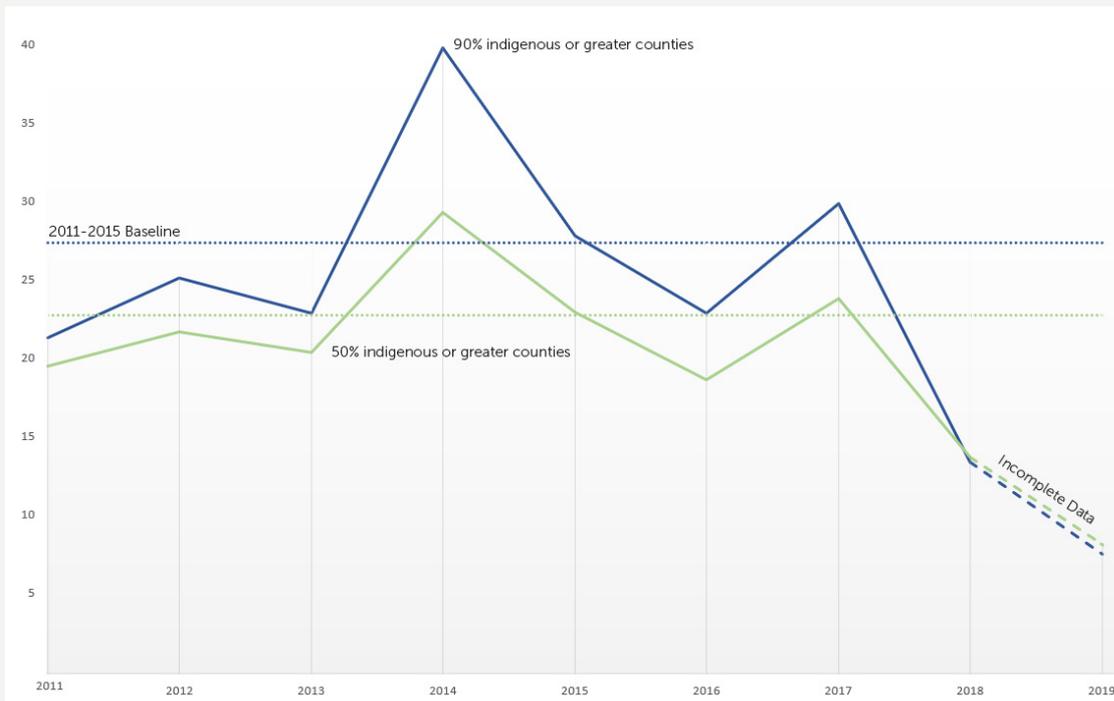
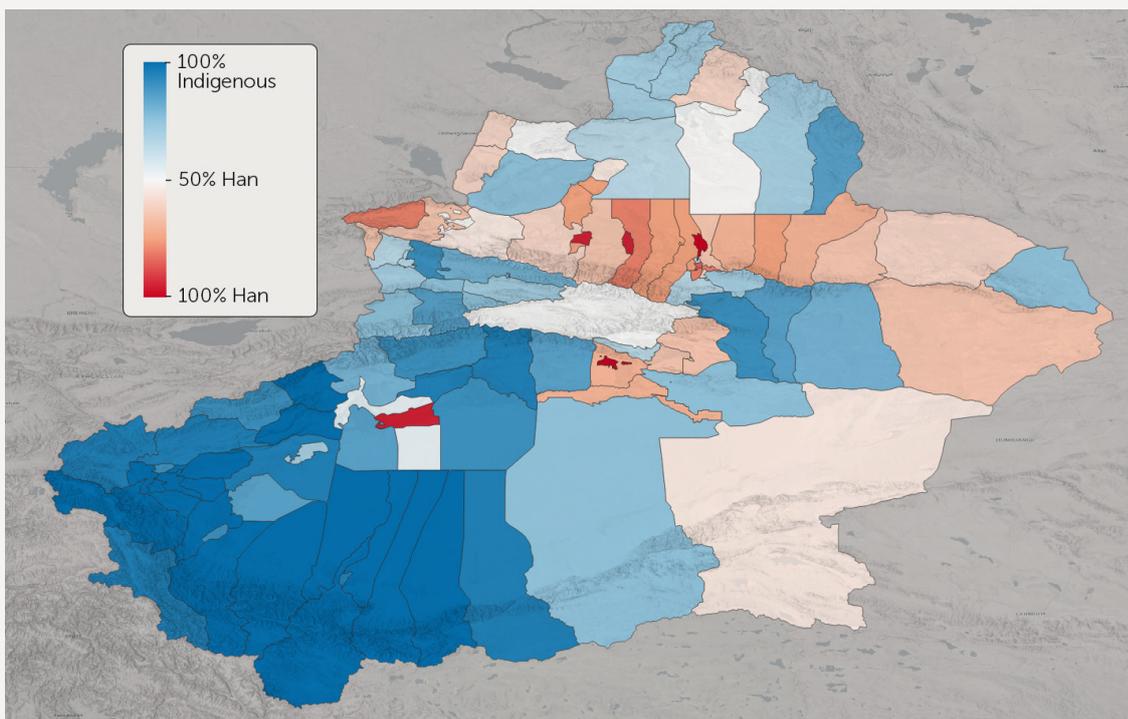


Figure 5: Crude birth-rates for counties with 50 percent+ and 90 percent+ percent indigenous populations, XUAR, 2011-2019.³⁵



Our dataset shows that across Xinjiang’s Han-majority counties birth-rates stayed relatively steady (despite some county-level fluctuations) and that approximately 1000 more children were born in 2018 compared to what would be expected from the pre-crackdown baseline (2011-2015). Meanwhile, in indigenous-majority counties, approximately 163,000 fewer children were born in 2018. Incomplete data compiled from roughly 60 counties, which includes mostly reported data from 2019 as well as three county’s target birth-rate figures, shows that this decrease continues to accelerate, particularly in heavily Uyghur areas.

Figure 6: XUAR county-level administrative units by Han versus minority percentage, 2018.



The drastic declines in birth-rates are heavily skewed towards areas with a high proportion of indigenous nationalities, such as Uyghurs. In the past, the *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook* reported county-level birth-rate data for all nationalities; however, following the implementation of new family-planning directives in 2017 and coinciding with the wider crackdown in Xinjiang, those statistics were no longer included in the yearbook (see Section 9). It is now impossible, using official statistics, to break down and compare birth-rates by nationality.

In order to analyse the effect of the new birth-control policies, it is necessary to examine birth-rates on a geographical basis and then compare them with reported population figures and ethnic breakdowns for each county. Among Xinjiang’s 102 county-level administrative units, the proportion of the minority population ranges from roughly 4 percent in Wujiaqu City in northern Xinjiang to 99 percent in Hotan County in southern Xinjiang. Due to that extreme variation, analysis of birth-rates at the county level can illuminate how trends differ between Han and minority-dominated counties in Xinjiang.

Before the crackdown, counties with a high proportion of indigenous nationalities (predominantly in the south of Xinjiang) showed higher birth-rates. This is an example of how county-level statistics and their analysis can be highly reflective of the differences between indigenous and Han communities in Xinjiang.

By plotting the decline in birth-rates from a pre-crackdown baseline (2011-2015) against the published statistics from 2018, it is evident that birth-rates have declined far more sharply in counties with high minority populations. This suggests that these family-planning policies have a disproportionate impact on Uyghurs and other non-Han nationalities, and that this impact occurs consistently across Xinjiang and beyond the four southern prefectures singled out in policy directives.

Across Xinjiang, on average, for every 10 percent greater share of indigenous population a county contains, the 2018 birth-rate declined an additional 7.2 percent when compared to pre-crackdown levels (Figure 7). All other things being equal, the correlation (R-squared value) is strong enough that 54 percent of the variation in birth-rate decline can be explained by the percentage of the minority population alone.

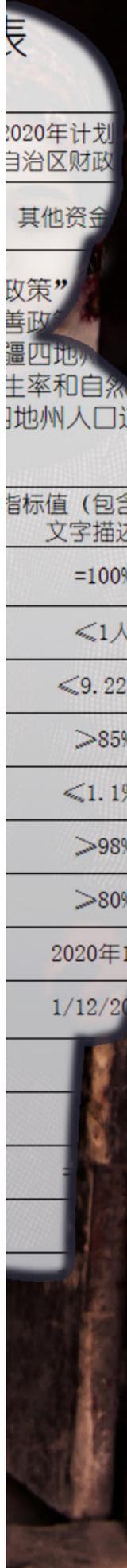


Figure 7: Change in crude birth-rates in 2018 compared to a pre-crackdown baseline in administrative units (counties and prefectures) throughout Xinjiang. The X-axis shows the county's proportion of minority population. It can clearly be seen that, as a county's minority proportion increases, so has its decline in birth-rate since the 2017 policy change.



That trend continued into 2019, for which the available data shows an even greater decrease in birth-rates, especially in counties with large indigenous populations. Looking at complete 2018 birth-rate data, the average decline in indigenous-majority counties was 35.7 percent; in 2019 (looking at incomplete data) the average decrease was 56.6 percent (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Decline (or increase) of crude birth-rates in 2019 compared to a pre-crackdown baseline in administrative units throughout Xinjiang, for areas with 2019 data available.



Although these trends are clearly visible region-wide, they are also starkly visible in the eight sub-district (county-level) administrative units in the regional capital of Urumqi. Urumqi is Xinjiang’s largest city, with a population of over 3.5 million.³⁶ It is also a Han-majority city where Han residents make up over 70 percent of the population. The city is one of the few areas in Xinjiang that has witnessed a rise in birth-rates compared to pre-crackdown levels. In 2018, the city’s birth-rate grew by about 25 percent compared to the pre-2017 baseline, from 8.5 births per thousand people to 12 per thousand.

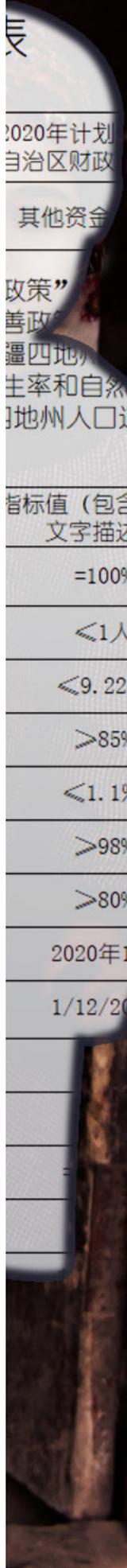
However, that growth has not been uniform across the city. Of the eight districts in Urumqi, six are Han-majority districts. Among those, each one has seen a rise in birth-rates compared to the pre-crackdown baseline; Shuimogou District’s birth-rate has risen by 50 percent, and Toutunhe District’s by 60 percent. The two indigenous-majority districts of Dabancheng and Urumqi County, on the other hand, show a drastically different situation: the birth-rate in the two areas declined by 17.34 percent and 9.9 percent, respectively.

Estimating the decline in indigenous births

The crude birth-rate statistics show significant demographic shifts across Xinjiang. There are now hundreds of thousands fewer births in parts of Xinjiang compared with what would have been expected prior to the crackdown, but the missing children are disproportionately in indigenous-majority areas.

Based on complete data from 2018, Han-majority counties had, on average, a very slight increase in the birth-rate compared to pre-crackdown levels: around 1000 more children were born in 2018 than would have been if the birth-rate had stayed static at the pre-2017 baseline. This shows that in Han-majority counties the birth-rate has remained essentially stable. In comparison, almost all indigenous-majority counties had decreases in the number of children born, totalling 162,700 fewer children in 2018 than would have been expected before to the crackdown.

In 2019, at least 186,400 fewer children were born in Xinjiang compared to what would have been expected if birth-rates had remained static at the pre-2017 baseline. Although complete county-level data for 2019 has not been released, based on the information that has been published, roughly 95 percent of Xinjiang’s missing births in 2019 appear to be in indigenous-majority counties.



5. From carrot to stick: population “optimisation” in Xinjiang

Under Chen Quanguo’s rule, the budget for family-planning work in Xinjiang increased dramatically. The XUAR government allocated 500 million RMB (US\$76 million) to carry out its “reward and encouragement” family-planning policies in the rural villages of southern Xinjiang in 2016.³⁷ That funding more than doubled by 2019, when it amounted to 1.08 billion RMB (US\$166 million).³⁸

County-level implementation documents call for a “drag-net style” (拉网式) investigation of illegal child births as far back as the early 1990s or even earlier, and the serious investigation and punishment of illegal births from 2017 or 2018 onward, in order to achieve complete coverage without any “blind-spots” or “dead-ends”; recent violations are to be treated severely and distant transgressions more leniently.³⁹

In remote Ulughchat County on the border with Kyrgyzstan, where more than 90 percent of the population is non-Han, chiefly Kyrgyz, CCP officials set up a hotline for reporting illegal births and offered a 500 RMB (US\$75) reward for successful tip-offs,⁴⁰ while in Hejing County (51 percent minority) CCP officials encouraged violators to come forward with self-confessions while also rewarding those who doxed on their neighbours.⁴¹

Party officials in Xinjiang speak about pursuing “long-term birth control measures” (长效节育措施) or “long-acting contraception” (长效避孕) among women of childbearing age, chiefly through the insertion of intrauterine devices (IUDs), tubal ligation surgery, sterilization rings and other forms of birth control.⁴²

Implementation has focused not only on curbing fertility but also on rooting out lax enforcement of family-planning targets. In the Midong District of Urumqi (34 percent non-Han population), the CCP launched a “strike-hard” campaign in July 2019 to investigate not only illegal births but also how this problem was being handled by local officials. The campaign targeted so-called “two-faced people” (两面人) and those grassroot cadres who fail to act, falsify reports or collude or intentionally conceal family-planning violations.⁴³

Reporting illegal births and maintaining accurate population data are now a key performance indicators for state and Party officials. It functions as a highly punitive “single ballot veto” (一票否决), meaning failure to meet family-planning targets, regardless of other accomplishments, automatically blocks promotion and any performance bonuses.⁴⁴ The violation of family-planning regulations is now grounds for immediate demotion or even dismissal from the CCP and government posts.⁴⁵

In Hotan Prefecture, where 97 percent of the population is Uyghur or from other non-Han nationalities, 460 CCP members and state employees were investigated and punished for having illegal births in 2017, and an additional 70 leading Party cadres and 22 family-planning officials were punished for perfunctory or unsatisfactory handling of their family-planning responsibilities.⁴⁶

The 2017 XUAR directive on reducing fertility rates set a goal of decreasing the birth-rate by at least 4 per thousand people compared to 2016 levels in order to “effectively and thoroughly resolve rapid population growth in the four prefectures of southern Xinjiang.”⁴⁷ In reality, county-level targets and

actual birth-rates have surpassed that 4 per thousand reduction target. For example, Uchturpan County’s 2020 family-planning budget document states that the goal is to reduce the birth-rate to 9.22 per thousand people in 2020 down from 19.23 per thousand in 2016.⁴⁸ That’s more than double the 4 per thousand reduction goal.

In Marbeleshi County (94 percent indigenous), local authorities set their 2020 birth-rate target as “no higher than 4.1 per thousand people” - a remarkable 88.6 percent decrease from the pre-crackdown birth-rate of 36.04 per thousand, and nearly eight times the reduction goal of 4 per thousand. Across the 16 counties in southern Xinjiang, for which data is available on birth-rates targets or actual figures in 2019-2020, the average reduction has been 12.51 per thousand from the 2016 birth-rate statistic, or over three times the stated goal.

Minority nationalities in Xinjiang have long been subjected to family-planning oversight, even when they were permitted preferential treatment. In 2010, according to data from the *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook*, the rate of family-planning policy penetration across Xinjiang was claimed to be 99.82 percent, with not a single region having less than 99 percent of its population covered by family-planning policies (Figure 9).

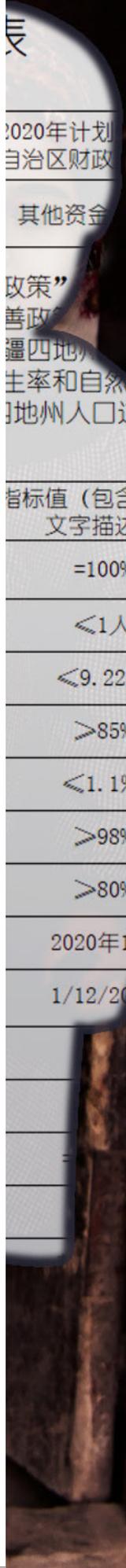
Figure 9: Extract from the 2011 *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook* showing the family-planning rates for 2010.

		(2010 年)			
地 区	Region	计划生育率 (%) Family Planning Rate (%)	领证率 (%) Coverage of One-child Certificate (%)	领取计划生育证人数 (人) Number of Persons Receiving Certificates of Honor (person)	领取独生子女证人数 (人) Number of Married Couples with One-child Certificate (person)
总 计	Total	99.82	34.83	561084	771315
城 镇	Urban	99.69	55.64	214726	537932
农 村	Rural	99.86	23.45	346358	233383

In the past, the Chinese government sought to incentivize fewer births among the indigenous population of southern Xinjiang by offering cash inducements. In 2006, the XUAR government announced the “fewer births, faster prosperity” (少生快富) reward scheme.⁴⁹ Minority women with two or fewer births who were willing to undergo “long-term contraceptive measures” (IUD insertion or tubal ligation) were entitled to a single-time cash payment of 3000 RMB (US\$460).⁵⁰

In 2017, the Chinese government’s approach to birth control among minority nationalities shifted from “reward and encourage” towards a more coercive and intrusive policing of reproductive processes. Cash rewards were now supplemented with hefty fines, disciplinary punishment, internment or the threat of internment for any “illegal births.”⁵¹

As a part of “mass supervision,” cash rewards are now handed out for informing on a neighbour or colleague. In Aksu City, for example, 5000 RMB (US\$772) was offered for verified reports of illegal births and 2000 RMB (US\$309) for exposing any fraud, underreporting, false reporting or concealment of illegal births by family-planning officials in 2019.⁵²



Family-planning officials in Xinjiang are told to carry out “early detection and early disposal of pregnant women found in violation of policy,”⁵³ and women of childbearing age must be visited monthly and undergo quarterly pregnancy checks. Only those women who are willing to undergo long-term birth control measures are considered “trustworthy” citizens.⁵⁴

The result, as Chinese government officials openly admit, is a significant decline in the minority birth-rate.⁵⁵ In the words of Xinjiang’s leading sociologist, Li Xiaoxia, the government has eliminated “old childbearing concepts and cognition” and “backward and outdated thoughts on mate selection and procreation” by actively guiding women to “emancipate their minds” and adopt “the idea of civilized modern life” by limiting their reproduction.⁵⁶

This is part of what Chinese scholar-officials call the “optimisation” (优化)⁵⁷ of Xinjiang’s population structure⁵⁸ and the gradual uplifting of its “bio-quality” (素质).⁵⁹ which in practice means fewer “low-quality” (低素质) Uyghur and other indigenous births. This sort of eugenic thinking is not only deeply rooted in modern Chinese thought but was also commonplace in the West during the first half of the 20th century.⁶⁰

The “optimisation” of Xinjiang’s population structure also involves concerted efforts to lure more Han settlers and families into the region. The region’s chief colonising vehicle, the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC, 兵团), has a plan to settle an additional 300,000 mostly Han migrants in the region, chiefly in southern Xinjiang.⁶¹ Chinese President Xi Jinping has urged the XPCC to “develop towards the south” (向南发展),⁶² become a “mechanism for stability” (稳定器),⁶³ and coalesce the masses of different nationalities into a “large melting pot” (大熔炉).⁶⁴

To achieve this, XPCC regiments are actively recruiting poor Han peasants and workers from across China.⁶⁵ They are producing emotive videos of migrant success stories, the bounties of Xinjiang’s landscape, and the lure of Uyghur brides.⁶⁶ They are also offering lucrative inducements for Han migrants and their families to settle in Xinjiang: guaranteed land or jobs; free transport; subsidised housing; free medical and education benefits; and even lump-sum cash payments as high as 20,000 RMB (US\$3,050).⁶⁷ In one case, they are also handing out additional 20,000 RMB subsidies to settlers who bring their children and parents as a reward for helping to achieve Xinjiang’s “population security.”⁶⁸

To date, the results have been modest. The XPCC’s population increased by around 143,000 or 4.6 percent in 2019. The cohort had a birth-rate of 5.79 per thousand people and a natural growth rate of only 1.61 per thousand.⁶⁹

6. China's declining fertility rates

Amid the crackdown on “illegal births” in Xinjiang, wider Chinese society is facing a looming population crisis as birth-rates slump to their lowest level since 1949.⁷⁰ In late March 2021, a working paper published by the People's Bank of China,⁷¹ which is China's central bank and a cabinet-level department under the State Council, provided a sober assessment of China's declining fertility rate and its consequences. It states that:

“education and technical progress cannot compensate for the decline in population. In order to achieve the long-term goals in 2035, China should fully liberalise and encourage childbirth.”

and:

“The ageing population and declining birth-rate in developed countries have caused serious problems for the economy and society... our country's population transition is faster... and [our] declining birth-rate more serious... China is likely to face a tougher challenge than in developed countries.”

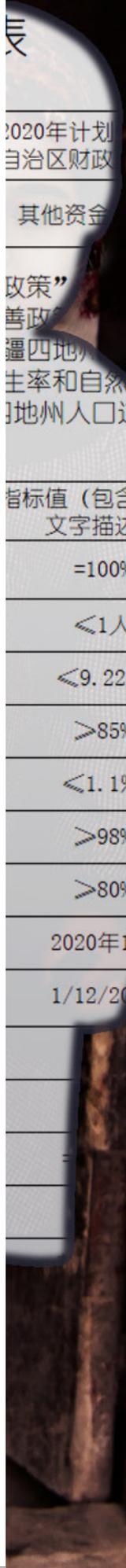
The report highlights China's already overstretched labour force, increased government expenditure on pensions and other forms of social welfare for retirees, and the threat of economic stagnation. As part of their analysis, the authors conclude that “it is necessary to increase the fertility rate” and to “vigorously encourage childbirth,” specifically mentioning the target of “at least three births per family.”⁷²

At the opening of the National People's Congress in March 2021, Premier Li Keqiang stated that the CCP would “work to achieve an appropriate birth-rate.”⁷³ Demographers quoted in the *Global Times* state media outlet told the paper that China's 14th Five-Year Plan is a critical window for reversing the country's declining fertility rate and flagged that the government might lift restrictions on births and even implement preferential policies for prospective mothers as soon as the sixth plenary session of the 19th Central Committee later this year.⁷⁴

The challenges facing China are similar to those facing much of the rest of the developed world, where falling natality rates are, or will shortly become, a strategic threat to national security. Japan, which has a birth-rate similar to that of Xinjiang, considers its low fertility rate to be a “long-term crisis.”⁷⁵ Yet, the high fertility rates among Uyghurs and other indigenous communities in Xinjiang are considered an existential threat to “population security” and “national security” by CCP officials and scholars, especially when viewed against the backdrop of declining natural growth rates among the region's Han population.⁷⁶

In fact, county-level family-planning documents in Xinjiang (as discussed in Section 5) explicitly outline the goal of reducing birth-rates in southern Xinjiang to targets that are among the lowest in the world. In 2020, for example, Maralbeshi County (94 percent Uyghur) set its birth-rate target at a mere 4.15 per thousand people (down from 51.53 per thousand in 2017), which is less than half of China's national birth-rate of 10.48 per thousand in 2019.⁷⁷

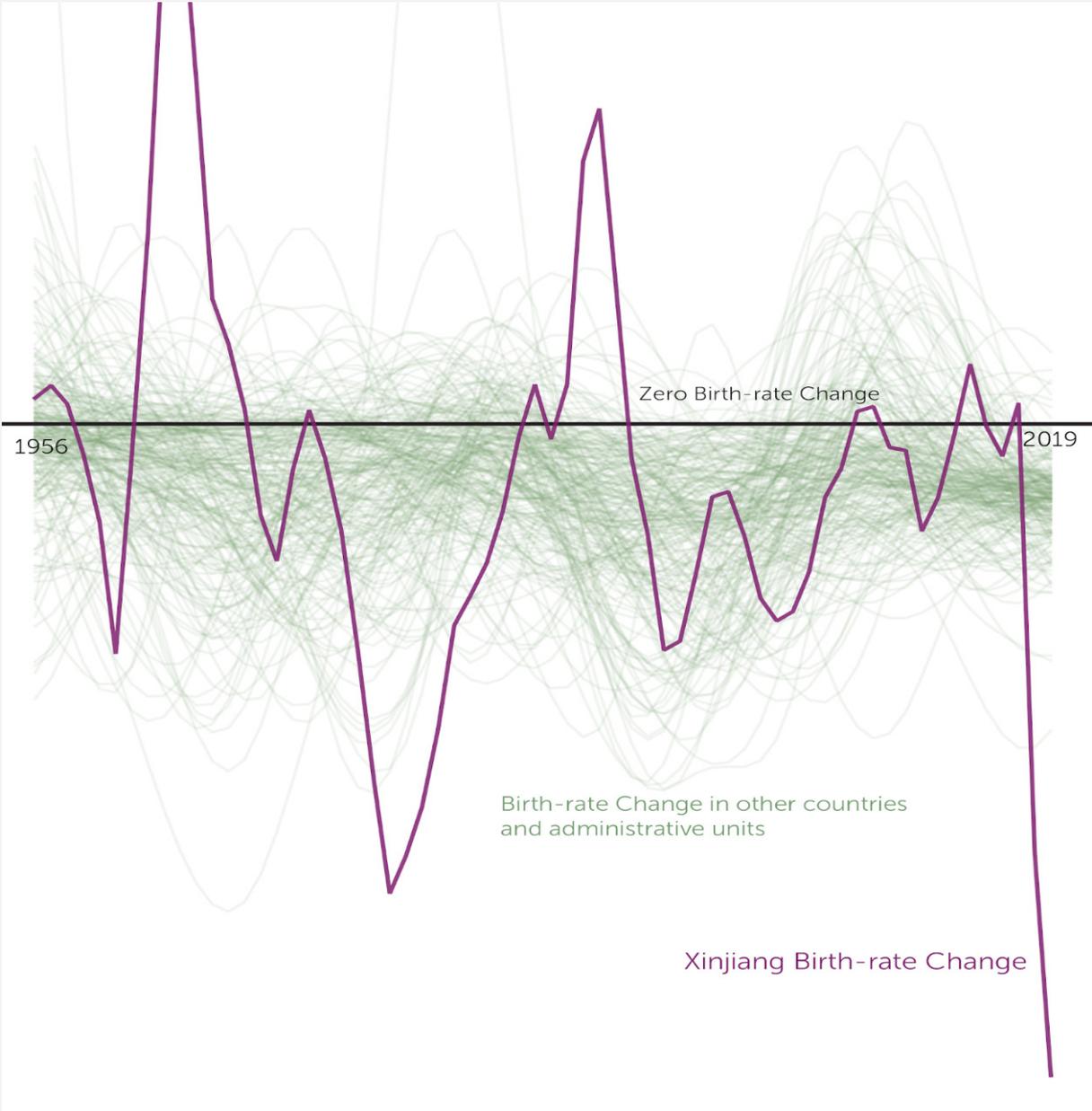
This aggressive policing of Indigenous wombs in Xinjiang is entirely inconsistent with the goals of the CCP at the national level, where it is loosening rather than tightening family-planning rules, and exposes the discriminatory, coercive and eugenic logic behind the Party's population policies in Xinjiang.



7. International comparisons

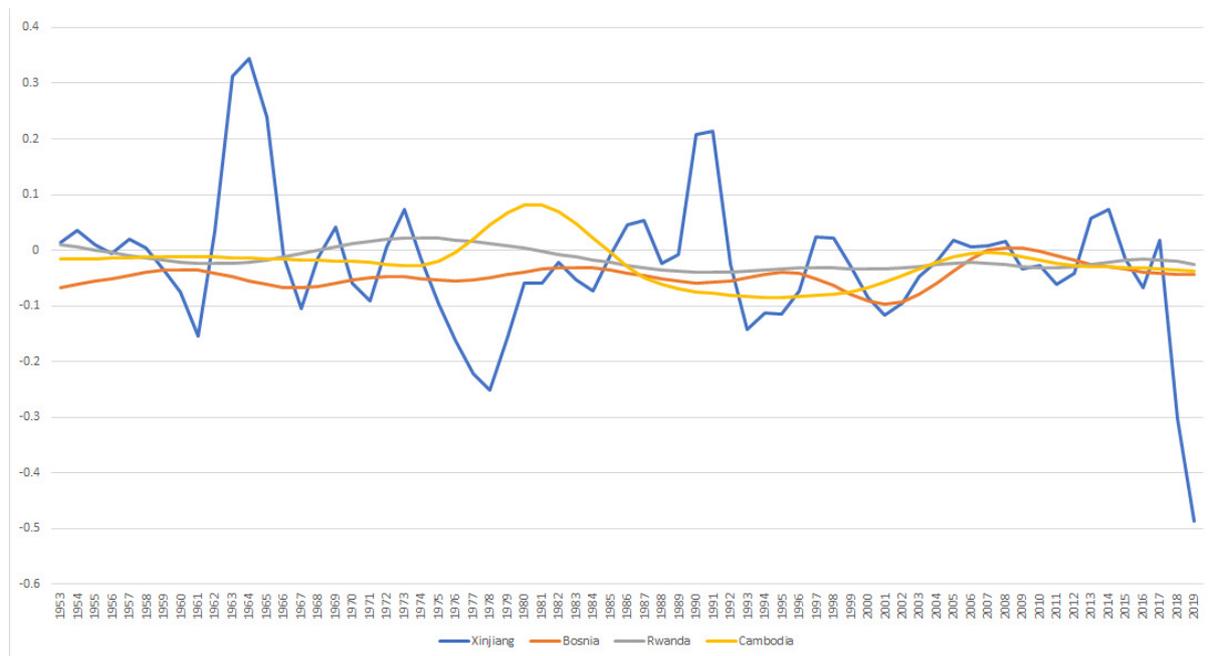
As outlined above, the natality rate in Xinjiang fell by 48.7 percent between 2017 and 2019. Comparing that drop with data from the UN’s World Population Prospects project,⁷⁸ the proportional decline in birth-rates in Xinjiang is the most extreme globally since 1950 (Figure 10). According to that data, not a single country has seen a birth-rate drop by beyond 28 percent over a two year period.

Figure 10: Biennial change in birth-rates across all countries and administrative units analysed as part of the UN’s World Population Prospects project, with Xinjiang’s data overlaid. The first major dip in the birth-rate occurred in the 1970s, when widespread and aggressive family-planning policies were first implemented across China.⁷⁹ Xinjiang data appears particularly erratic owing to the nature of UN population data which calculates projected estimates based on published surveys.⁸⁰



The effectiveness of China’s campaign to drive down indigenous birth-rates in Xinjiang is remarkably stark when Xinjiang is compared to similarly sized regions that have experienced large demographic shifts due to war or pogroms, such as Bosnia, Cambodia and Rwanda (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Comparison of biennial changes in birth-rates in Xinjiang, Bosnia, Rwanda and Cambodia, 1953-2019. Xinjiang is shown in blue.



Detailed data from Cambodia shows that among women aged 20-28 years during the 1975-1979 genocide,⁸¹ the birth-rate dropped by roughly 30 percent in total, and 22 percent of that decline was in the years from 1977 to 1979. The drop in birth-rate between 1977 and 1979 was less than half of the decline in birth-rates across Xinjiang in the latest two years for which data is available (2017-2019).

In Syria, where a brutal civil-war has killed at least 500,000 people since 2011 and displaced roughly 11,800,000 more (amounting to a combined 55 percent of the pre-war population), the birth-rate has fallen by roughly 13 percent.⁸²

In most of those examples, the main driver of demographic change was mass killing rather than targeted birth control, so there are limits to how much can be gleaned from comparing them to the situation in Xinjiang. There is no evidence, based on publicly available information, of mass deaths in Xinjiang, but rather a vast and at times brutally efficient bureaucracy that's been mobilised to drive down indigenous birth-rates. Yet these international comparisons help to foreground the Chinese government's crackdown in Xinjiang against past examples of crimes against humanity, or even genocide.

Over a two-year period, Xinjiang has gone from having a birth-rate similar to neighbouring countries such as Kazakhstan (20.7 per thousand people in 2019) and Mongolia (23.7 per thousand in 2019)⁸³ to having one similar to Japan (7.4 per thousand in 2019), a country with a famously low birth-rate and widespread government incentives to encourage people to have more children.⁸⁴

8. What Chinese state media say

Our report is not the first to examine China's coercive family-planning regime in Xinjiang and the sharp decline in birth-rates.⁸⁵ In response to Adrian Zenz's June 2020 exploration of this topic, Chinese state-media and CCP authorities launched an aggressive propaganda campaign seeking to discredit his findings through misleading statistics, other forms of misinformation and *ad-hominem* attacks.⁸⁶

In January 2021, an English-language China Global Television Network report, titled "How media outlets manipulate facts about Xinjiang's population,"⁸⁷ began by asserting that the Uyghur population in Xinjiang doubled from 5.6 million in 1978 to 11.7 million in 2018. Another widely circulated report also began by asserting that Xinjiang's population has grown steadily since the first census in 1953 and that the Uyghur population grew by 25.04 percent between 2010 and 2018 compared to only 2.0 percent growth among the Han population.⁸⁸ Generally speaking, the vast majority of state-sanctioned rebuttals focus on raw population growth figures (often prior to the commencement of the crackdown), while ignoring the precipitous decline in indigenous births following the Chinese government's crackdown.

When Chinese experts openly discuss declining birth-rates in Xinjiang, they expose the discriminatory rationale behind the artificial suppression of reproductive rights among indigenous communities such as Uyghurs. According to Professor Li Xiaoxia, who is one of China's leading experts on Xinjiang and the Director of the Sociology Institute at the Xinjiang Social Science Academy, the high birth-rates prior to the 2016 crackdown were the result of "religious extremists" who "bewitched or even coerced people" into marriage and child birth,⁸⁹ and that previous violations of family-planning regulations were a sign of either "religious extremism" or "old childbearing concepts and cognition."⁹⁰

The recent enforcement of family-planning policies and the resulting demographic shifts reflect, in the words of Lin Fanfei of Xinjiang University, "China's long-term efforts and important achievements in promoting policies to protect the rights and interests of women and children in ethnic minority areas."⁹¹ Despite railing against "false claims," "falsified data" and "baseless fake news," Chinese scholars and government officials do not dispute that birth-rates have fallen at a rapid pace, but argue they are the result of guided female emancipation and the CCP actively encourages Uyghur women, in Li Xiaoxia's words, to "become healthy, confident, independent, family-loving, patriotic, and modern in new era [*sic*]."⁹²

9. Withheld data

China's statistical yearbooks have long provided researchers with valuable insights into some of the local and more granular-level changes occurring across the country. Unlike other provincial-level autonomous regions' yearbooks, Xinjiang's statistical yearbook used to disaggregate demographic statistics at both the regional and nationality levels, permitting much richer comparative analyses.

Prior to 2017 (with the exception of 2015), birth-rate statistics were published at the county level and the rates for non-Han communities were specifically highlighted in addition to the overall birth-rate (Figure 12). Following the crackdown, birth-rates for minority nationalities were withheld from the Xinjiang statistical yearbook, making it harder to examine demographic trends as they relate to minority and majority communities, but the county-level data used in this report continued to be provided in 2017 and 2018.

Figure 12: Excerpt of 2014 birth-rate statistics showing specific breakdowns of overall birth-rates and those of "minority nationalities."

新疆统计年鉴 2015
XINJIANG STATISTICAL YEARBOOK

3-6 各地、州、市、县(市)人口自然变动情况

Population Natural Changes by Prefecture, Autonomous Prefecture, City and County

单位: ‰ (2014年) (%)

地 区 Region	出生率 Birth Rate	#少数 民族 Minority Nationalities	死亡率 Death Rate	#少数 民族 Minority Nationalities	自 然 增长率 Natural Growth Rate	#少数 民族 Minority Nationalities
乌鲁木齐市 Urumqi City	10.36	16.01	2.77	3.13	7.59	12.88
天山区 Tianshan District	9.67	15.03	2.45	2.27	7.22	12.76
沙依巴克区 Shayibak District	9.99	15.69	3.15	3.43	6.84	12.26
新市区 Xinshi District	10.46	14.93	1.82	1.93	8.64	13.00
水磨沟区 Shui Mogou Distric	9.49	20.13	2.76	4.73	6.73	15.40
头屯河区 Tou Tunhe District	9.31	13.99	4.04	5.17	5.27	8.82
达坂城区 Da Bancheng District	11.59	17.21	4.16	5.09	7.43	12.12

The most recent *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook* was published in late March 2021 with data covering 2019. That edition omitted several key demographic statistics, including birth-rates by region, population figures by nationality, population figures by region and birth-control figures by region.⁹³

To date, Xinjiang authorities have offered no explanation for the withholding of those statistics. It is reasonable to conclude that those omissions seek to make the study of demographic trends in Xinjiang more difficult and to censor politically sensitive information confirming the sharp decline in birth-rates among minority nationalities in Xinjiang.

County-level governments in Xinjiang are also starting to withhold that data, which used to be included in their annual reports on economic and social development indicators, but are increasingly being censored. Through open-source research, we located 2019 birth-rate statistics for 51 of Xinjiang's counties and prefectures. We were able to find data on 50 percent (24 in total) of the Han-majority counties across the region compared to 40 percent (27 in total) of the non-Han majority counties.

Those partial 2019 statistics show that the decline in birth-rates continues, especially in indigenous-majority counties. Among the indigenous majority counties with published 2018-2019 data, the birth-rate decreased by 31 percent in 2018 and 57 percent in 2019. This suggests that the omitted data is deemed politically sensitive and that the authorities are intentionally withholding those statistics from researchers who are concerned about the Chinese government's human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

10. Conclusion

Since its sweeping crackdown on “instability” in Xinjiang, the CCP has sought to surveil, control and assimilate Uyghurs and other minority nationalities while systematically erasing aspects of indigenous culture, history, and identity. Those policies work in concert to produce a climate of fear in which anything other than complete acquiescence is criminalised.

It is in this context that Xinjiang witnessed a nearly 50 percent drop in birth-rates over the three-year period from 2017 to 2019. Chinese state media, academic experts, and Party authorities do not dispute any of these facts; indeed they published the very statistics upon which our analysis rests. As the previously mentioned report by Professor Li Xiaoxia concludes:

“In 2018, both fertility rate and natural growth rate of ethnic minority population (the Uyghur [*sic*] population in particular) in Xinjiang decreased significantly. All of these can be attributed to the strict implementation of the family-planning policy...”⁹⁴

In the view of CCP officials, they are simply “correcting” previous preferential policies and lax enforcement that resulted in high natality rates among indigenous nationalities in the region, rather than introducing a range of coercive policies (intimidation, disciplinary punishment, hefty fines, detention and the threat of detention) to deliberately and forcibly reduce “low quality” births within those communities.

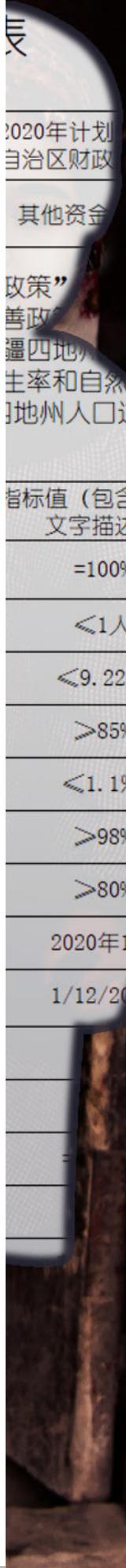
Our examination of birth-rate statistics and official policy-planning documents make clear that those policies do not apply uniformly across the region. Rather, they are targeted at counties with higher proportions of Uyghur, Kazakh and other minority nationalities, chiefly southern Xinjiang, with a 66.3 percent drop in the birth-rate in counties with a 90 percent or greater indigenous population that have published 2019 data.

The policies disproportionately affect the reproductive rights of indigenous women while actively transforming, or in Party-speak “optimising,” the demography of one-sixth China’s national territory. They also contradict the loosening of family-planning rules elsewhere in China and recent calls for the state to incentivise additional births in order to ward off a looming demographic crisis.

The Chinese government’s coercive birth-control policies in Xinjiang seek to not only reduce the size of the Uyghur and other indigenous populations but also to dilute their social and political influence through state-sponsored migration and other forms of population control.

For all communities, but especially indigenous ones with a strong connection to land, women are considered transmitters of life, values, and knowledge within these communities. A regime of coercive birth-control, mass extrajudicial detention, compulsory labour transfers and widespread remote schooling will sever these ties over time, undermining the power of Uyghur women while neutralising the perceived threat these indigenous communities are believed to pose for the Chinese Communist Party and China’s Han majority.

Our dataset and analysis offers new evidence that the Chinese government’s actions in Xinjiang likely contravene Clause (d), Article 2 of the 1948 Genocide Convention, to which China is a party, and constitute “measures intended to prevent births within the group”; although additional research is



required to establish whether these actions have been “committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part” the Uyghur people or other minority groups in Xinjiang, and thus constitute genocide.

The possibility of genocide means the global community must respond. It is imperative that the global community seeks further information and unfettered access to Xinjiang while continuing to pressure the authorities in Beijing and Urumqi to reconsider its abusive policies.

Appendix: Methodology

For this project, we compiled a dataset of over 1,000 birth-rate (natality) statistics across 102 county-level administrative units in Xinjiang since 1951.⁹⁵ The dataset includes complete county-level data from 2011 to 2018 compiled from the *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook* (新疆统计年鉴), which is published each year by the Statistical Department of the XUAR government.⁹⁶ That data informed our creation of a “pre-crackdown baseline” for each county, which represents the average crude birth-rate for the five-year period from 2011 to 2015 for each county.

The use of county-level data allowed us to tease out trends within the data that are not released by Chinese authorities. As the counties in Xinjiang vary greatly in the proportion of their indigenous population (see Figure 6), from under 4 percent in Wujiaqu City to 99.4 percent in Hotan County, examining how a demographic statistic such as the birth-rate responds to changes in nationality-makeup can provide insight into how policy is implemented at a local level and its impacts on specific communities.

Region-wide statistics were sourced from the national *China Statistical Yearbooks* (中国统计年鉴) allowing us to examine XUAR-level and national-level data from 1951 onwards. Additional data on Xinjiang’s birth-rate since 1950 was obtained from a journal article written by sociology Professor Li Jianxin and colleagues at Peking University in 2019.⁹⁷

We then used open-source family-planning documents and other statistical communiqués issued by county-level administrative units as a part of their annual reporting process on economic and social development indicators to construct partial data from 59 of the 102 county-level administrative units since 2018, including reported birth-rates for 2019 and target birth-rates for 2020.⁹⁸ The overwhelming majority of those statistics came in the form of a “crude birth-rate” (出生率), which measures the number of children born per 1000 people within each county unit, and the remainder were converted into that format. The full dataset can be downloaded [here](#).⁹⁹

Due to the increasing sensitivity of this data, some administrative units (especially in southern Xinjiang and predominantly indigenous) have not released data on birth-rates for 2019. The most recent *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook*, published in March 2021 with data from the calendar year 2019, withheld key demographic data (including county-level birth-rate data) and thus prevents us from providing complete 2019 birth-rate data (see Section 9 for further details).¹⁰⁰ It is unclear whether that data might be forthcoming, and, if it is released, how reliable it might now be.

In order to provide context and meaning for those statistics, we located and analysed hundreds of Chinese-language documents available online. They include county-level implementation documents issued by family-planning units and local governments, budget documents, social media posts, academic articles, and official state media reports on population and birth-control measures in Xinjiang. While information on the Chinese government's policies in Xinjiang is increasingly censored or geo-blocked,¹⁰¹ we used a range of open-source intelligence methods to locate, triangulate, and analyse available material related to China's coercive birth-control policies in Xinjiang.

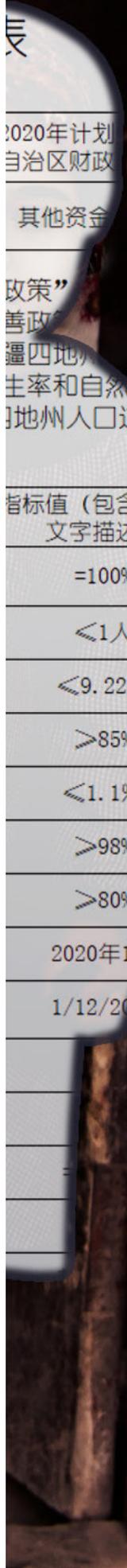
For international comparisons, we used birth-rate data from the World Population Prospects project.¹⁰² That data has been compiled and projected by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN Secretariat since the 1990s; the earliest data comes from the 1950s and the most recent update is from 2019. The UN dataset includes the population growth rates and rates of natural population increase for most UN member nations. For specific comparisons, such as with birth-rates in Cambodia, we have utilised more detailed sources such as national government statistics and peer-reviewed research by demographers.

Notes

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- 2 Nathan Ruser, *Documenting Xinjiang's detention system*, ASPI, Canberra, September 2020, [online](#); Alison Killing, Megha Rajagopalan, Christo Buschek, 'China secretly built a vast new infrastructure to imprison Muslims', *BuzzFeed News*, August 2020, [online](#).
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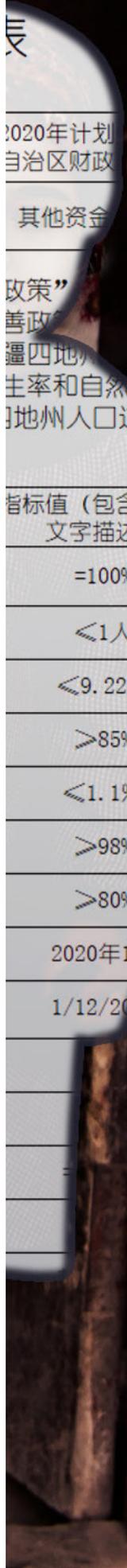
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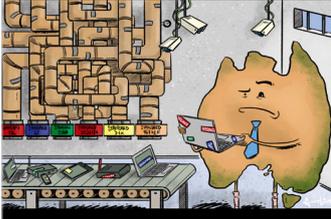
Acronyms and abbreviations

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
ICPC	International Cyber Policy Centre
IUD	intrauterine device
PRC	People's Republic of China
UN	United Nations
XPCC	Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps
XUAR	Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

Some previous ICPC publications

Working smarter, not harder
Leveraging government procurement to improve cybersecurity and supply chains

Rajiv Shah



INTERNATIONAL CYBER POLICY CENTRE
macquarie GOVERNMENT
Policy Brief
Report No. 27/2020

Trigger warning
The CCP's coordinated information effort to discredit the BBC

Albert Zhang and Dr Jacob Wallis

Introduction
As international media and researchers expose human rights abuses in China, including allegations of systematic sexual slavery in Xinjiang, government censors, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has sought to neutralise and discredit information campaigns and propaganda targeting the UK public. In particular, the BBC, CCP diplomats, accounts, Chinese state media, and CCP-affiliated entities, have coordinated efforts to discredit the BBC's reporting and content that seeks to undermine critical reports by international media, research institutions, and NGOs with accusations of bias and disinformation. These coordinated efforts seek to smear and discredit the organization and individuals involved in the reporting and research, for example, through promoting fake information that accuses the BBC of bias and disinformation.

The coordinated approach to counter and undermine the BBC highlights several features of the CCP's increasingly agile propaganda and disinformation apparatus. These include: a more coordinated approach across diplomats, and state media; a more agile and responsive approach to counter and undermine the BBC's reporting and research; and a willingness to target international audiences.

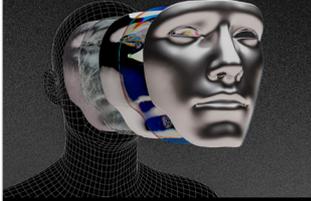
如何制作BBC风格的纪录片
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INTERNATIONAL CYBER POLICY CENTRE
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A survey of Chinese-language media in Australia

Alex Joske, Lin Li, Alexandra Pascoe and Nathan Attrill



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Winning hearts and likes
How foreign affairs and defence agencies use Facebook

Dr Damien Spry



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Retweeting through the great firewall
A persistent and undeterred threat actor

Dr Jake Wallis, Tom Uren, Elise Thomas, Albert Zhang, Dr Samantha Hoffman, Lin Li, Alex Pascoe and Danielle Cave



INTERNATIONAL CYBER POLICY CENTRE
Policy Brief
Report No. 33/2020

Covid-19 Disinformation and social media manipulation

Elise Thomas, Albert Zhang and Emilee Conroy

Pro-Russian vaccine politics drives new disinformation narratives

Introduction
On 22 July, a press release was posted to the website of the Luhansk People's Republic, the pro-Russian self-declared state in Ukraine, Eastern Ukraine. The press release related to a supposed COVID-19 vaccine that had been developed in Russian laboratories, including references to the Russian Ministry of Health (Ministry of Health). According to the press release, of the 15 patients who received the trial vaccine, five were killed, including four Ukrainian soldiers. The press release was published the day after Russia announced plans to mass produce its own vaccine in a matter of weeks.

The Russian vaccine trial news (repeated, repeated) this disinformation narrative – which has been political, anti-American and anti-Ukrainian Government undertones – has achieved widespread dissemination in multiple languages and across multiple communities, including into a pro-Russian Australian and New Zealand Facebook group (Figure 3). The latter efforts have been undertaken from a large propaganda site associated with a separatist government, funded by Russian media, via the international telephone network, despite a number of attempts by legitimate media in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, Italian, German and Czech, to fact check it.

Figure 3: Tweets repeating the disinformation narrative



First Retweeted: **How the disinformation narrative spread**
The success of this completely fabricated narrative reflects a broader shift across the disinformation space. As the world's focus moves from the initial response to the coronavirus towards the race for a vaccine, with all of the complex geopolitical tensions that entails, public disinformation is also moving on from the origins of the virus to the vaccine race.

This report uses the US–Australian vaccine race as a case study to examine how political disinformation about Covid-19 vaccines is being leveraged by the international disinformation ecosystem.

August 2020

INTERNATIONAL CYBER POLICY CENTRE
Policy Brief
Report No. 21/2019

Engineering global consent
The Chinese Communist Party's data-driven power expansion

Dr Samantha Hoffman



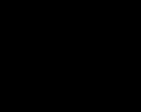
INTERNATIONAL CYBER POLICY CENTRE
Policy Brief
Report No. 21/2019

Cyber-enabled foreign interference in elections and referendums

Sarah O'Connor
With Fergus Hanson, Emilia Currey and Tracy Beattie



INTERNATIONAL CYBER POLICY CENTRE
Policy Brief
Report No. 41/2020



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Nathan Ruser – Researcher with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute

The latest report “Family De-planning: The coercive campaign to drive down indigenous birth-rates in Xinjiang” (published in May 2021) examines changing birth-rates in Xinjiang at a fine geographical scale. A summary of the findings are provided here.

In our research we managed to document and record birth-rate statistics for over 100 counties and all prefectures in Xinjiang for every year from 2011-2018. These statistics helped us form a baseline birth-rate figure by averaging the five years from 2011 to 2015, and offered an average ‘pre-crackdown’ birth rate for each county. The statistics published for 2018 show a precipitous decline in the overall birth-rate of Xinjiang, but also a high correlation between the size of that decrease and the proportion of the county’s population which was Uyghur or another indigenous nationality.

This correlation is displayed in the figure below, with the Y-axis representing the decline in a county’s birthrate between the pre-crackdown baseline and 2018.



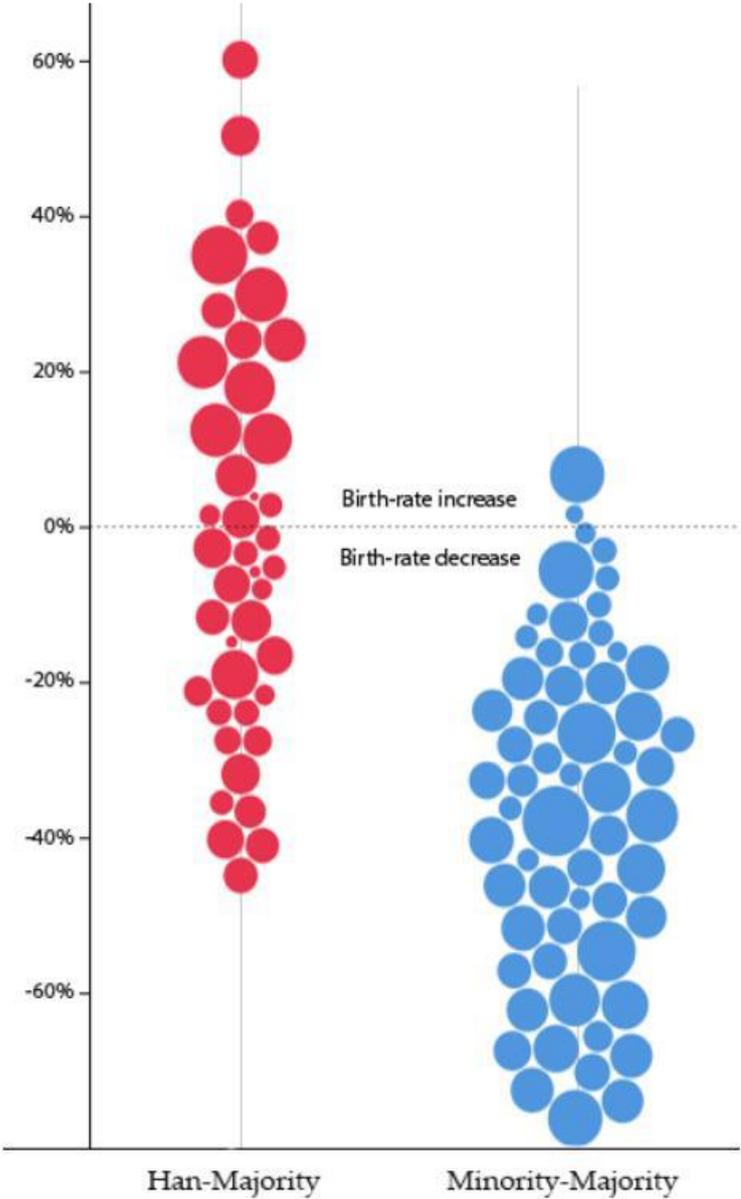
Partial data was scraped from government websites and policy target documents in Xinjiang for 59 counties that showed the 2019 or 2020 birth-rate, these statistics showed a continued decrease in the birth-rate and similar correlation between the decline and an area’s Uyghur population.

We found that almost the entirety of Xinjiang’s decline in birth-rates occurred in counties which were minority-Han populated, and for 2018, the Han-majority counties had a birth-rate that stayed effectively stable since the crackdown, with a total of around 300 more children born in 2018 than would be expected from the 2011-2015 pre-crackdown baseline figures. Meanwhile, counties with a majority population of indigenous nationalities (namely Uyghurs) saw over 160,000 fewer children born than could be expected. Partial data suggests this trend has worsened for 2019 and 2020.

This policy of suppressing birthrates contrasts strongly with national policies that seek the boost the birth-rate and encourage births, with the declining birth-rate across China being seen as a strategic

threat and causing “serious problems”. This is while policies that suppress birth-rates to a much greater degree than nationally are being pursued for indigenous nationalities in Xinjiang.

The systematically discriminatory and coercive (see Zenz’ work) nature of these policies to suppress birth-rates may constitute acts of genocide under Article II section D of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Although, our work does not demonstrate intent and therefore determine whether a genocide more widely is ongoing.



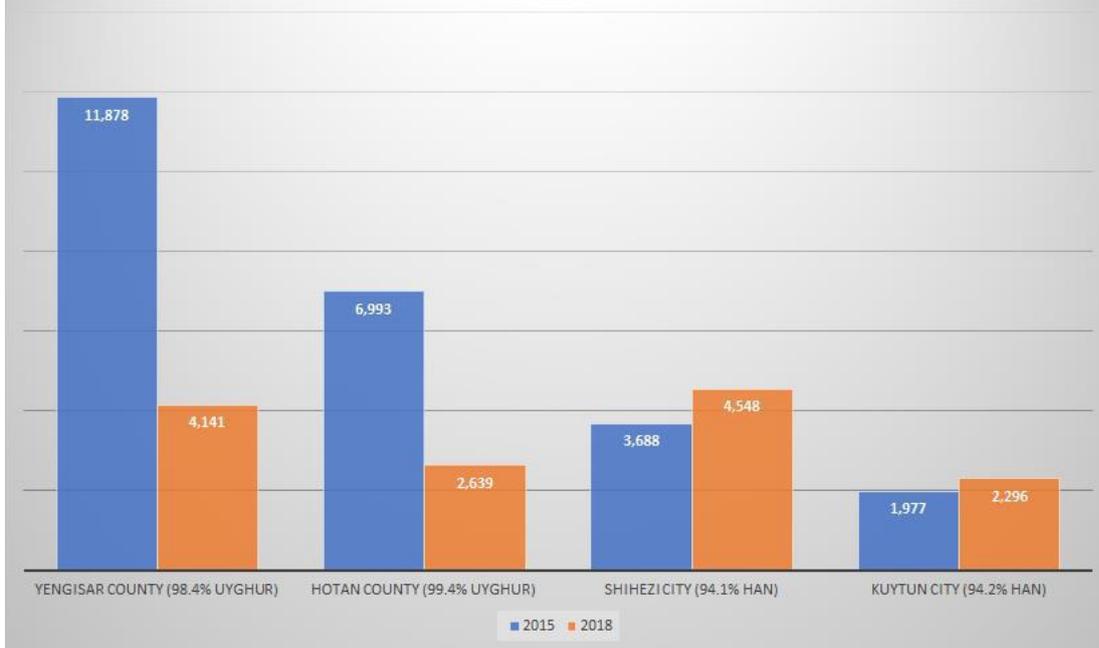
Some examples are below.

In Yengisar County (98.4% Uyghur), 11,878 babies were born in 2015 and only 4,141 babies were born in 2018.

In Hotan County (99.4% Uyghur), 6,993 babies were born in 2015, and only 2,639 in 2018.

In Shihezi City (94.1% Han), 3,688 babies were born in 2015, 4,548 in 2018.

Babies born in 2015 and 2018



3898

6 June 2021 (01:27:45 – 02:47:00)3899 **Nathan Ruser**

3900

3901 NR – I'm a researcher at the ASPI in Canberra, and one of the things that we've been
3902 trying to do throughout our work in Xinjiang is take a lot of these disparate reports and
3903 trying to quantify them. So that's involved in that cultural destruction, in the camp networks
3904 especially. We've tried to get an idea of a whole regionwide picture of the situation there
3905 through, generally, open-source and satellite means.

3906 So this started in 2018 with a project that was mostly done in sort of our free time...we
3907 actually looked at about 100 camps, but only 30 got published on. And what that's showed
3908 was there was sort of continuing, and in fact accelerating, growth for these camps to mid-
3909 2018 when we started looking.

3910 Then in the last two years, we've focused a lot more on trying to look at it a lot more
3911 comprehensively. So our first report was sort of attempting to locate and identify what we
3912 believe is the vast majority of the detention facilities across Xinjiang. And I'm sure there
3913 will be questions later on the methodologies there, so I might expand on that later, but we
3914 basically were able to locate over 380 different facilities across the country– I mean across
3915 the region.

3916 We only looked at facilities that were newly constructed since 2017, or had been
3917 expanded since 2017. And so, to put that into context – this isn't a one to one comparison,
3918 but I think it helps to contextualize these numbers – those camps that we found represent
3919 one new detention facility for every 37,000 indigenous people in Xinjiang – so Uyghurs,
3920 Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, a bunch of those other indigenous nationalities. By comparison, in New
3921 York, there are about 2,000,080 Black Americans. So applying that ratio to New York
3922 City...would see more than 55 detention prisons built just for Black Americans, just in
3923 New York City, just since 2015. Over 55.

3924 So it's a huge number. One of the other things that we tried to do in this report is develop
3925 a typology of these facilities. So we noticed distinct architectural trends within them, and

3926 so we split them into four different facilities, from one - the least secure, to four - the most
3927 secure, and what appeared to be prison-like facilities.

3928 Journalists...have only ever been taken to the lower-security facilities. And until 2019,
3929 when these facilities began to de-secure, and decommission in some cases, they were
3930 only taken to a very small number of those lower-security facilities. So it can be very clear
3931 that the access that international observers – diplomats and journalists – have had to
3932 Xinjiang is only in this...very small part of the detention regime more generally.

3933 In 2019, we noticed that a number of these lower-security facilities began to be de-
3934 securitized, and in some cases, decommissioned. But we also noticed that a number of
3935 high-security facilities were showing signs of construction and expansion. And this
3936 corroborates reports from victims and other sources that a lot of the detainees in those
3937 lower-security 're-education' facilities were either being released generally into some form
3938 of village or neighbourhood detention, or into coerced labour conditions. But those ones
3939 that weren't being released from those facilities were being sentenced to higher security
3940 prison camps. So these are the ones with very high walls and watchtowers around the
3941 whole edge.

3942 What we were able to also find was some very clear notes between the camps to forced
3943 labour pipeline – and that's actually been shown recently by some journalists quite
3944 well...Nathan VanderKlippe, he's a Canadian journalist, and recently he went to Lop
3945 County in Hotan and found that directly adjacent to one of our detention centres, there
3946 was a large factory complex – in fact, a factory complex stretched about 5km beyond the
3947 edge of the detention centre. And along that whole sort of perimeter there was high
3948 barbed wire fencing with CCTV cameras every couple of hundred of metres.

3949 Beyond that, I think what's important to note about this carceral regime is, because there
3950 is such a large number of facilities, and we've heard from a lot of victims that very minor
3951 things can end up with you being detained, I think there needs to be a broader
3952 understanding of how this sort of background of detention props up the entire coercive
3953 system of government in Xinjiang, where any slight against the government or any sort of
3954 statement that could be perceived as against the government authorities could result in
3955 your detention. Because of that, in my opinion, there's not really such a thing as consent

3956 in Xinjiang anymore – whether it is within or outside of the camps – because if you say
3957 no, then that is reason for you to be detained in these camps. We’ve heard...of how
3958 horrific a lot of those conditions are.

3959 We also looked more distinctly at cultural destruction, the idea of cultural genocide. For
3960 our methods there, we looked at about 1000 different cultural sites that we found through
3961 a mix of point of entry databases, old heritage journals that had been published in
3962 Xinjiang, and also this random stratified search method that looked at every county in
3963 Xinjiang and tried to find mosques and religious sites in it. And what we found was that
3964 about a third of the mosques had been demolished, about a third of the mosques had
3965 been damaged, generally through rectification campaigns where the authorities removed
3966 minarets...from the mosques.

3967 These are similar rates of destruction and damage that we found in other sacred sites,
3968 like mazars, tombs, graves, and cemeteries. This was relatively uniform across Xinjiang.
3969 There were some areas with less destruction, namely Urumqi and Kashgar city, and we
3970 suspect those were sort of lower rates of demolition because in many cases they’ve been
3971 ‘disneyfied’...into this tourist city.

3972 What we did find actually quite interesting was that the destruction of cemeteries seemed
3973 to be quite a local matter. So, for example, we estimated between 400 and 500 cemeteries
3974 in Aksu prefecture – which were over 50% of the ones we looked at – had been
3975 demolished. Similarly, there are many counties in Hotan where the vast majority of
3976 cemeteries had been demolished. But there are other areas of Xinjiang such as Kashgar
3977 where that didn’t seem to be taking place so much.

3978 One example I want to talk about specifically on that cultural genocide front is that of
3979 [*inaudible*] mazar, which is this thousand-year-old sacred site between...in the desert
3980 outside of Kashgar – about 20 km from the nearest cultivated area. That’s always been
3981 the site of a large pilgrimage in Xinjiang....In that early 2000s era, the site was closed,
3982 and people were sneaking in at night to do that pilgrimage. But we found that the entire
3983 facility, the entire community, the mazar itself, and the village that was surrounding it was
3984 entirely demolished in December 2017. So every single building in that area had been

3985 razed... That necessitated taking bulldozers through 20 km of sand dunes and such to
3986 conduct that demolition.

3987 What we also found was that that was about the same time that prominent anthropologist,
3988 Rahile Dawut, was also detained in December 2017. And a lot of her body of work had
3989 been studying that shrine and other pilgrimages in Xinjiang.

3990 Another interesting thing that we found was that, throughout northern Xinjiang in the
3991 period from 2012 to 2015, a lot of mosques had actually been revitalized – reconstructed
3992 – with a lot more prominent Islamic architecture and that – I can't speculate as to why that
3993 was – but it was a trend that we definitely saw throughout the northern part of Xinjiang.
3994 And then two years later in 2017, you started seeing that reverse – you started seeing
3995 mosques that just got rebuilt two years ago being demolished or having a lot of those
3996 renovations removed.

3997 In a good way that sums up some of those...attitudes towards Uyghur culture and
3998 traditions is a speech from the Deputy Secretary of Aksu prefecture – [*inaudible name*] –
3999 they call on government departments to waste no time in guiding the masses to “change
4000 their customs” and “abandon closed, backwards, conservative, and ignorant customs”.
4001 That was their defence for the reason that they demolished a lot of those cemeteries.
4002 That shows that – it gets referred to a lot in Chinese documents – that human quality
4003 element – that sometimes has that racial tinge to it, sometimes it doesn't.

4004 The final report I'd like to briefly talk about in this statement is our birth rates report.
4005 Basically what we found – what was widely known – was that the birth rate in Xinjiang
4006 had declined precipitously since 2017 – specifically since 2018, because these policies
4007 started taking place in May and June 2017, so they started affecting the birth rate in 2018.

4008 Throughout Xinjiang, there was about half decline – so the birth rate effectively halved in
4009 two years. I think it was 48.75% – I'd have to check that number, but it was something
4010 around that.

4011 What we also found was that that decline had almost exclusively been occurring in Uyghur
4012 areas – in areas where there were high indigenous percentage of the population. When
4013 we just looked at the indigenous majority counties, we saw this really sharp decline in

4014 birth rates. So, for example, comparing the 2018 birth rate, which is the last year that full
4015 data was released, there were about 160,000 fewer children born in Uyghur-majority and
4016 indigenous-majority counties than would be expected based on an average birth rate
4017 baseline from prior to the crackdown. Whereas in Han majority counties in Xinjiang, of
4018 which there are quite a few, the birth rate had stayed pretty much stable. In fact, there
4019 were about 3000 more children born than what you would expect.

4020 What we've showed is that, across Xinjiang, not only are you seeing this unprecedented
4021 decline in the birth rate, and from all of our research we were unable to find a similar
4022 decline in such a quick period in any part of the world since 1950...So it should be noted
4023 that, like a lot of places that have experienced genocide...don't keep good birth rates
4024 statistics, but we did find some good stuff from the Khmer Rouge, where the Cambodian
4025 government had done surveys after the genocide to sort of work out this demographic
4026 effect. We found that, throughout the Khmer Rouge, the birth rate declined by about 30%
4027 among this cohort of – I think it was women that were aged in their 20s at the time of the
4028 genocide. So you've seen the birth rate decline in Xinjiang being a much greater rate than
4029 what you saw in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge.

4030 But not only is this decline unprecedented and precipitously steep, but it also is
4031 disproportionately affecting heavy indigenous communities in Xinjiang. We found
4032 evidence of government directives specifically saying these Uyghur-heavy, 4 southern
4033 prefectures of Xinjiang – these are targeted with specific birth reduction campaigns. And
4034 we also found there was this incredible decline – almost exclusively in Uyghur areas.

4035 This birth rate decline had declined into 2019, where we were able to construct partial
4036 data from...50 to 60% of the counties in Xinjiang, we found that this actually had very
4037 dramatically increased the decline in birth rates. So what you saw was sort of a period of
4038 about 20 years, from 1990 to 2015, where the birth rate in Xinjiang remained quite stable
4039 at about 125% of what China's national birth rate average is. Then in the last two years it
4040 has dropped precipitously to about 70-80% of what China's national birth rate is.

4041 And then this sort of goes counter to what we've seen the Chinese government authorities
4042 attempt to do in recent months, in recent weeks even, across the rest of China, which is
4043 encourage births, encourage Chinese women to have more children. And we've seen

4044 very targeted policies across China to pursue that goal in the last...few years, but only
4045 the last few months that that policy has really taken place. But in Xinjiang, were seeing
4046 very deliberate efforts to systematically lower the birth rate, especially and
4047 disproportionately affecting areas that are heavily Uyghur and heavily indigenous.

4048 *Counsel – You have analysed satellite data for over 380 different suspected detention*
4049 *facilities. In that report, you go on to state as follows: “the available evidence suggests*
4050 *that many of the detainees in Xinjiang’s ‘re-education’ network are now being formally*
4051 *charged and locked up in higher security facilities”....How are you able to say that or to*
4052 *know that?*

4053 NR – We got that information from examining satellite evidence, especially seeing these
4054 higher security...formal prisons or pre-trial detention site actually expanding and
4055 constructing and building more buildings in the region. But I don’t think that is enough to
4056 prove what we were seeing on its own, but that also corroborated evidence that we were
4057 hearing from a lot of victims an victims’ families that their relatives who were detained
4058 were going from ‘re-education’ centres and political indoctrination centres and formally
4059 being sentenced to prison...especially picked up in 2019, but has continued still.

4060 It would be fair to say that– at least my assessment is that, at the moment, the detention
4061 facilities are not at their greatest capacity. I believe that a lot of people in the lower security
4062 facilities have been released into forced labour streamed or location control... my
4063 understanding is that it seems likely that the rate of formal detention and prison sentences
4064 is increasing, and that’s based on satellite imagery, but also victim testimony. I think there
4065 has been some indication of it in official records, but I don’t know that too well myself.

4066 *Counsel – That then raises the question of, what’s the point? What’s the point of re-*
4067 *educating students if they then end up in a high-security facility?*

4068 NR – That would be just speculation from my part. It is definitely not all of the lower
4069 security people that did get sentenced to formal prison sentences – a lot of them were
4070 released into labour streams or generally neighbourhood or village detention. I would
4071 suspect it was the ones who showed adequate progress in those 18 months to two years
4072 of political ‘re-education’ were released, and those that showed insignificant or

4073 unsatisfactory progress, in what China was attempting to teach them and indoctrinate
4074 them in, were then sentenced to prison. That would be my guess – pure speculation.

4075 *Counsel – Let us speak about those who showed progress and were released. With so*
4076 *many re-education camps in Xinjiang, given that they began operating since around 2017,*
4077 *I would say you would expect to see today a proportion of newly graduated and highly*
4078 *educated Uyghur students in Xinjiang. With the document that you have come across, do*
4079 *you know whether this is the case?*

4080 NR – ‘Highly educated’ probably isn’t the correct word – a lot of this is political education
4081 and indoctrination, but also vocational training. So you’ve obviously seen stuff like people
4082 who were previously highly educated such as school teachers or nurses or doctors being
4083 trained in vocational training such as garment factory produce and stuff.

4084 And we certainly have seen a lot of people that appeared to be introduced into these
4085 government-organized labour programmes that are coming from what used to be
4086 detention sites. We know that in part because of Chinese state media, so it’s not the most
4087 reliable source. There is no reason to me personally to doubt that those people that
4088 they’re showing are actually genuine ‘graduates’, as they call them from these centres.
4089 And yeah, also the fact that a lot of victims, families in the diaspora have started reporting
4090 that some family members have been released...

4091 *Counsel – ...Family ‘deplanning’... In your research on that matter and the changing birth*
4092 *rate in Xinjiang, you find that, beginning April 2017, the CCP launched what you call a*
4093 *series of ‘strike-hard’ campaigns against illegal births in Xinjiang, with the explicit aim to*
4094 *decrease the birth rate in southern Xinjiang. You go on to say, however, that this policy*
4095 *is in stark contrast with the loosening of birth control restrictions elsewhere in China. So*
4096 *first and foremost, would it be fair to say therefore that the PRC [is] specifically targeting*
4097 *Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other minorities in southern Xinjiang for this reduction in birth*
4098 *rates?*

4099 NR – That’s a question we were seeking to answer. It’s increasingly difficult to answer
4100 that because less and less statistics are being released by the Chinese government. Prior
4101 to 2017, their official statistical communiqué, the Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook, had tables

4102 of birth rates for each county, and it split that birth rate into the actual birth rate and the
4103 birth rate among ethnic minorities – the *minzu* people – populations in the county.

4104 So you could very clearly see the difference between overall birth rate and generally
4105 Uyghur birth rate. Since 2017, that data has stopped being published, and they only
4106 provided the overall birth rate. That is why we use this geographic perspective, because
4107 across the counties in Xinjiang, they range from about four percent indigenous to 99.5%
4108 indigenous. So by looking at the birth rate decline across that gradient of increasing
4109 indigenous populations, we then could infer how that policy was affecting the birth rate of
4110 Uyghur people and other indigenous nationalities in Xinjiang. And yes, what we found
4111 was a very clear correlation that the more indigenous an area was, the further the birth
4112 rate had fallen since the crackdown, since specifically April 2017.

4113 *Counsel – Would you be able to tell from the documents you’ve come across whether*
4114 *such a policy would have been planned at the local, regional, or national level?*

4115 NR – It seems to be quite uniform. A lot of these policies...are not public. What we found
4116 referenced in a lot of family planning documents was specific reference to a Xinjiang-wide
4117 directive talking about the lowering of birth rate for specific prefectures that were Uyghur-
4118 majority. So that is [*inaudible*], Kashgar, Hotan, and Aksu – those four counties which are
4119 predominantly Uyghur. We did find reference to Xinjiang-level directives trying to target a
4120 lower birth rate in those areas. But it should be noted that the birth rate did get lower quite
4121 uniformly outside of those four prefectures too.

4122 Han counties showed a much lower rate of decline.

4123 *Counsel – You referred to it this morning...you said that the birth rate decline in Xinjiang*
4124 *is unprecedented and precipitously steep. However, in your report, you suggest that this*
4125 *is aimed at reducing the population in Xinjiang. You never really use the term ‘destroying’*
4126 *that population. Is that correct?*

4127 NR – Yes. So I think it’s really difficult to sort of draw those implications just out of these
4128 statistics. So we’ve generally been quite cautious in that. I think what this report shows,
4129 and especially the disproportionate way in which Uyghur families are being affected, is
4130 that there [are] definitely systematic campaigns to reduce the birth rate. And what it

4131 appears to be is that the birth rate in most of the areas is now below what is necessary
4132 for their population...to stay stable. And I think if you look at the 2018 and 2019 population
4133 figures, the birth rate – the overall population of Uyghurs has actually declined slightly. I
4134 don't think personally I'm qualified, based on the statistics research that we did, to say
4135 whether there is intent there to destroy, or whether it is just to sort of politically control
4136 and limit the influence and reduce the population.

4137 *Counsel – You then go on to say, however, that the birth reduction...birth control policies*
4138 *in Xinjiang should not be seen in isolation but should also be seen in connection with*
4139 *other policies in the region, such as state-sponsored migration and other forms of*
4140 *population control. And you state that these policies aimed to reduce the size of the*
4141 *Uyghurs and other indigenous populations and to dilute their social and political influence.*
4142 *I'm not sure whether you are able or have the data to answer this... and what's the overall*
4143 *final aim of that? Why is the government trying to reduce the Uyghur population and dilute*
4144 *its social and political influence?*

4145 NR – This is my personal belief – I don't think we have the statistics to back this up – but
4146 my understanding is that, I think the authorities in Xinjiang and the authorities in China
4147 more generally see Uyghurs specifically as a threat to the state, that ethnicity they see as
4148 a threat to the state. So they are taking measures to – in one way dilute them physically,
4149 as far as what percentage of the population there are, and you've seen that through that
4150 birth rate decline – but also attempt to [*inaudible*] Uyghurs – there doesn't appear to be a
4151 campaign of mass death as part of this crackdown...literally just outlaw a lot of aspects
4152 of Uyghur culture and history – and we've seen that through the physical destruction of
4153 mosques, but we've also seen that through this detention regime backbone which means
4154 that, for long periods, if you were seen wearing a beard, you were liable to be thrown in
4155 a detention camp. So I think there is...these parallel efforts to physically reduce the
4156 number of Uyghur through birth control policies and birth rate reductions, but also to sort
4157 of make Uyghurs that remain 'less Uyghur' and sort of forcibly assimilate them into the
4158 Han polity that sort of exists in Xinjiang.

4159 *Panel – You refer in the report on birth rates to 'scholar officials', and I think you*
4160 *mentioned three of them in particular to, or social scientists. And in the cultural destruction*

4161 *report, you mention a researcher at a CCP school and also a public intellectual. I wonder*
4162 *if you could tell us what the relationship in China is between academics and the*
4163 *government or other state authorities or party authorities.*

4164 NR – That’s not my specific area of expertise – you’d probably be better directing that
4165 question to someone more specifically an expert on that. But what I would say is that, in
4166 a lot of these cases, the official government documents are not available to us – we’ve
4167 seen through some leaks how in a way explosive they are. But a lot of those guiding
4168 philosophies do filter down to publicly accessible – generally in party journals – or the
4169 party journal of a university, where there is this nexus between the scholarship and the
4170 official party membership of people.

4171 I wouldn’t be able to speak to how strictly controlled those publications are, but I would
4172 say that if you were a senior member and a senior lecturer at a party school specifically,
4173 what you write would be very much in line with what the government authorities have
4174 suggested and put forward.

4175 *Panel – You refer to things they’ve said which support government policies, which might*
4176 *be read as belittling to Uyghurs in their description of them or describe what once might*
4177 *have been called as ‘civilizing mission’, in terms of female emancipation for example as*
4178 *an objective of the policies. So would you say that that is a role that those academics or*
4179 *scholars officials are playing – a sort of ideological role justifying the policies?*

4180 NR – I think in many ways those publications can be seen as a window into these
4181 decision-making processes. And how direct those relationships are isn’t something that
4182 we can know without seeing the documents, the internal discussions themselves. But I
4183 certainly would accept your characterization of a lot of these arguments as being quite in
4184 many ways belittling and suggesting that Uyghur culture and Uyghur people are lesser to
4185 the Han culture in the region. I would suggest that does play quite a role in the formation
4186 and dissemination of these policies.

4187 *Panel – Of course I’m just going on the people that you’ve quoted in your reports rather*
4188 *than any wider view. On the birth rates, you use the Chinese government’s own publicly*

4189 *available statistics and also county-level implementation documents. Could you tell us a*
4190 *bit more [about] which government bodies produced those documents?*

4191 NR – We mainly looked at the Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook, which is an annual
4192 publication by, I think it's a specific statistical bureau in Xinjiang, that collates a lot of these
4193 statistics, not just on demographics but also on all of the economic and
4194 livelihood...indicators...

4195 But then, as we noted, [the] final year in which they were published was 2018. So to seek
4196 more recent figures, we turn to – in most cases, it was the statistical communiques
4197 published on the official county website, but in some cases it was family planning
4198 departments and bureaus/ implementation and target policies.

4199 It should be noted I think there were only three occasions where we used a target figure,
4200 and that target figure should be seen as a ceiling where the birth rate is in no way higher
4201 than that but there is a chance that the actual birth rate is lower than that. The way that
4202 generally works is that there is this sort of family planning department within the health
4203 bureau of a local government area based on their statistics to regional bodies to compile
4204 them into these annual statistical communiques. But in some cases, it comes straight
4205 from the county government rather than the regional government.

4206 *Panel – The documents you have seen from family planning units – are you able to tell*
4207 *from those under which authority, which part – are they under health or other structures*
4208 *within the government?*

4209 NR – I believe they are under health, but I would have to check to be certain...

4210 *Panel – You've talked about how the policies disproportionately affect areas with large*
4211 *indigenous populations, and that that's discriminatory, but you also mentioned that there*
4212 *were exceptionally high birth rates in some counties, especially in the south, and an*
4213 *increase I think in the period shortly before the decline.*

4214 *Is it arguable that what the 2017 Regulations say that the policy is about is what is*
4215 *happening, which is that it is an attempt to make the birth rates the same across*

4216 *populations just to allow Uyghurs to have the same number of children as are allowed if*
4217 *you're Han Chinese? So not discriminatory, more of an equalizing policy?*

4218 NR – I think the way to characterize the birth rates before was that there were specific
4219 years with exceptionally high figures – these are generally 2014 – I think was the year
4220 with the highest figure and that's the following year is when a lot of these – the precursors
4221 to these policies came into play. What I would note is that, when you look at just the birth
4222 rate now compared to the ethnic makeup of a region...the birth rate is slightly lower in
4223 Uyghur areas now than in Han areas – though it's not necessarily statistically significant,
4224 but it is certainly lower.

4225 What I would say is that these policies should be seen in the context of the wider
4226 government push to raise the birth rates nationally. There's often attempts to raise the
4227 Han birth rate in Xinjiang, which has traditionally been quite unsuccessful in the past. But
4228 the fact that there have been attempts to raise the Han birth rate and now there are
4229 attempts to lower the Uyghur birth rate, at least in Uyghur areas, I think that shows, or
4230 it...demonstrates the ideological backing behind this policy. You've seen documents from
4231 the Chinese central bank talking about the low birth rate as a national emergency; there's
4232 no way that China can continue to prosper if the birth rate remains slow. And as a result
4233 of that, nationally, China has started to implement a lot of policies to raise the birth rate.
4234 That direct contrast is what shows that these aren't just policies to equal the playing the
4235 field I guess between Han communities and Uyghur communities.

4236 And it should be noted that, traditionally, Xinjiang hasn't had that much higher of a birth
4237 rate, although the statistics were less well kept before the crackdown. The Xinjiang birth
4238 rate had for about 20-25 years remained at about 125% the national birth rate, whereas
4239 we've seen a much more significant drop since then.

4240 But yeah, I think when you put it into context of the wider attempts to raise the birth rate
4241 and make sure that people have more children... The target birth rates in Uyghur
4242 communities that you are seeing right now is unprecedentedly low and a lot lower than the
4243 replacement rates. I think there was one county that had their 2020 birth rate target at
4244 four people per 1000 – for comparison, Japan and Korea, which had very public national
4245 emergencies about demographics, have their birth rate at between six and seven.

4246 *Panel – You mention there was an increase in the budget for family planning in the region.*
4247 *Would you know who sets that budget?*

4248 NR – Unfortunately, I don't, sorry. That part of the report wasn't a part that I was mainly
4249 working on. I don't know that, sorry.

4250 *Panel – Turning to the cultural destruction report, you mention earlier that Article 4 of*
4251 *China's Constitution – about preservation of cultural heritage...Article 36 of the*
4252 *Constitution – protection, freedom of religious belief. Would you say that the cultural*
4253 *destruction that you are evidencing in your report is in breach of China's constitution?*

4254 NR – Yes, its certainly appears that and we documented that...so when you look at the
4255 heritage register in Xinjiang, there's sites that are listed but not protected under the county
4256 heritage register, there are sites that are protected under the county heritage register,
4257 then there are sites that are protected under the prefectural heritage register, then there
4258 are sites that are protected under the regional and then national heritage register. So
4259 there's a lot of different levels of protection granted. And what we found was there were
4260 still high numbers even in the most significantly protected region in sites of destruction.
4261 But there was a slight down tip, so the less protected sites were being demolished at a
4262 slightly higher rate, but there was still definitely demolition occurring in the nationally
4263 protected sites.

4264 Another thing – there's a mosque in [*inaudible location*] I believe it is, that we looked at in
4265 the report specifically and this is one that is afforded a very high level of heritage
4266 protection. What we found was they demolished the gatehouse of the mosque that had
4267 been constructed in I think the 17th or 18th century, and replaced it with this reconstructed
4268 miniaturized version of it. We've actually seen since then that they've demolished that
4269 miniaturized version of it and reconstructed it in a side alley so it can't be seen from a
4270 public area or the public square that it used to dominate. I think that in a way shows that
4271 they are at least aware of those protections, and I think this shows the example of – this
4272 is a site that was highly protected, they realized there would be a lot of bureaucratic work
4273 in demolishing it, though we have seen highly protected sites be demolished, so instead
4274 they tore it down and reconstructed it so at least they can say, "no, this site is still here".

4275 *Panel – I think you say somewhere in report that 17.4% of sites protected under Chinese*
4276 *law have been destroyed. ‘Protected under Chinese law’ – is that being on the various*
4277 *registers that you’ve mentioned?*

4278 NR – Yes, I’d have to check the actual – I think we have like a donut chart that shows the
4279 different levels of protection and the rates of demolition there in the report. But I can’t
4280 remember what those statistics are off the top of my head, but yes, I think that is how we
4281 would characterize what we mean by legally protected under Chinese law.

4282 *Panel – Later on in the report, you refer to a revised set of government regulations*
4283 *monitoring religion in 2017, subsuming the state body managing religious affairs into the*
4284 *CCP’s United Front Work Department (UFWD) in 2018. Could you tell us what the UFWD*
4285 *is? What its function is?*

4286 NR – I probably wouldn’t be the best person to address that as well, but the UFWD
4287 generally is this body that pushes the...that seeks to promote that Chinese narrative and
4288 the central policy in which all government bodies follow as well. I think it’s a way to
4289 communicate and coordinate that message across government bodies so to push it out
4290 into the rest of the world. But there would be people much better qualified to speak on the
4291 UFWD than me.

4292 *Panel – The researcher I mentioned earlier at the CCP school who you refer to and who’s*
4293 *at a CCP school in one of the northern prefectures – she recommends that there should*
4294 *be one mosque only for each administrative unit. What would she mean by administrative*
4295 *unit?*

4296 NR – That’s a good question, and it wasn’t specified in the source document so we don’t
4297 know. Generally, the administrative structure of locations in Xinjiang is split between: the
4298 regionwide, which is the admin level one; the prefecture, which is the admin level two; the
4299 county, which is the admin level three; the township, which is the admin level four; and
4300 then specific village communities, which is the admin level five.

4301 And so I would suspect that it is either the number four or five, the township or the village
4302 level. Based on what we’ve seen, I would suspect it’s the township, but the source
4303 document doesn’t specify.

4304 *Panel – On the reports on the detention centres, I think one of your sources was public*
4305 *construction and service tenders. Who was issuing those tenders?*

4306 NR – That was generally – that was always a government body – it was generally either
4307 the Department of Education or Department of Justice that would put out specific tenders,
4308 public tenders for public companies to be the people that construct this. That was how we
4309 knew about these earlier mechanisms of the detention regime. People such as Shawn
4310 Zhang and some journalists did a lot of really exemplary work in seeking those tender
4311 documents and sharing them. Since then, those have mostly disappeared as a source of
4312 finding camps, but in 2018 especially, that was the only source before we got an idea of
4313 what these camps actually look like.

4314 *Panel – So that’s another source of information that has become more difficult to access.*
4315 *And of course, you’ve mentioned on the birth rates, the change in the way that statistics*
4316 *are presented makes it more difficult for you to analyse. And you’ve suggested, on the*
4317 *cultural destruction side, that leaving in place more of the religious and cultural sites in*
4318 *Urumqi and Kashgar is because those places are visible to outsiders.*

4319 *So, across all those different areas of research that you are doing, are you saying that*
4320 *you suspect that there’s a systematic attempt now in response to researchers’ work and*
4321 *journalists’ work to deliberately...ensure that its harder to get hold of the evidence that*
4322 *you need?*

4323 NR – Yeah, absolutely, there’s no question about [that]. We have seen sources deleted
4324 within days of us managing to archive them. We’ve found a lot of sources where we can
4325 only archive a cache version of this site because the live version has disappeared.

4326 In the past few days, there seems to be very active methods to delete evidence and
4327 documents from the internet, yes. In fact, with the cultural destruction site, a lot of what
4328 we’ve used was scanned versions of old books because that information isn’t online
4329 anywhere, at least not anymore.

4330 *Panel – I have a couple of questions on the same point if I could follow this through with*
4331 *you. I just want to talk about the demolitions, not the desecrations. The demolition of the*
4332 *mosques, the burial sites, and the shrines, and other heritage sites.*

4333 *You say that they're mostly located in Aksu and Hotan prefectures, and these are around*
4334 *the border of that region which adjoins Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and then going further*
4335 *westwards into Afghanistan. In your report, I don't see any roads or these arterial roads*
4336 *which connect inland China to exterior areas, including this region. I just did a quick*
4337 *Google search and there's some prominent roads here – one being the G315 which goes*
4338 *southwards, another being G314 which goes northwards, and they join.*

4339 *So, I know it's hard to get access to plans for the future from the country. You say these*
4340 *areas of destruction are left vacant, but from their distribution, can you begin to see a*
4341 *pattern emerge which points to future developments? And we all know about the BRI.*
4342 *And the peculiarity where you say certain cities are outliers like Kashgar and Urumqi don't*
4343 *really matter if you bring in that logic, because the intention here is to develop. And the*
4344 *fact that Muslim-dominated countries haven't spoken out against something which might*
4345 *be seen as sacrilegious – for instance, destroying a mosque or even burial sites. Is there*
4346 *something that you point to corroborating such a hypothesis?*

4347 NR – Quick clarification – when we referred to Aksu and counties in Hotan, that was
4348 specifically on cemetery demolition. We saw, except for Urumqi, which had a very low
4349 number of mosques to start with – I think it had about 160 registered mosques in Urumqi
4350 city compared to something like 20-21,000 across Xinjiang – we saw lower rates of
4351 demolition in specifically Urumqi and to a lesser extent Kashgar city. What I would add is,
4352 other than that there was pretty uniform demolition of mosques and shrines across the
4353 region.

4354 What we would say is that we were only able to look at the evidence from a satellite
4355 perspective. We were able to see when a structure was physically demolished or when
4356 there was significant changes to the structure. From what I've heard from people who
4357 have visited the region, a large number of the mosques that remained standing are locked
4358 shut and pretty derelict inside. I know there's been some people that have pushed their
4359 phone up against the crack in the door...and it's pretty derelict and desecrated inside. So
4360 our statistics don't take into account those mosques, and that appears to especially be
4361 the case in Kashgar city, where a lot of the mosques have been closed or locked shut,
4362 even though they have not been physically demolished.

4363 I don't think there's a way in which we can sort of tie these demolitions to examples of
 4364 future development. What I would say is that, when we did this satellite research, the best
 4365 quality satellite imagery that was available in recent times – I think it was something like
 4366 90%+ of the mosques that had been demolished had not been developed on since and
 4367 had remained vacant land...I think that goes to show that this isn't more generally a
 4368 campaign to revitalize a city, but it is just to demolish areas.

4369 And we've seen that, similarly in Uyghur traditional houses, where in some counties, in
 4370 most counties in fact, a large portion of the traditional houses had been demolished and
 4371 left vacant land. But in some counties that goes up to probably about more than half of
 4372 the traditional Uyghur houses. Such as *[inaudible location]* – actually a county where
 4373 that's happened very strongly, so is *[inaudible location]* county. In most cases there
 4374 seems to be very little attempt to develop these sites that have been demolished since.

4375 *Panel – There is no pattern emerging in terms of their location for instance – the 20 kms*
 4376 *desert that was razed that had the ancient site and settlement?*

4377 NR – It does appear to be quite uniform, except for those two cities. *[Inaudible]* mazar is
 4378 just a notable case, not so much because of its location, beyond the fact that it shows
 4379 how much effort was required to demolish it. It would be like incredibly easy to just close
 4380 the roads to it and that's what they've been doing for more than a decade now. They've
 4381 closed the site. There are 30 people that still remained in the village adjacent to the sacred
 4382 site. But instead of just closing that, they went to the effort of taking bulldozers through all
 4383 *[those]* sand dunes for 20 kms to explicitly raze the entire site that was about 1000 years
 4384 old.

4385 *Panel – ...Why would they invest so much time, energy, and money destroying so many*
 4386 *buildings and sites?*

4387 NR – I suspect because, I mean again, these are speculations, it comes back to that
 4388 scene – Uyghur culture as inherently incompatible with the CCP rule. Any expression of
 4389 this Uyghur culture, Uyghur history is itself seen as a threat. That's why they've
 4390 neutralized that perceived threat by demolishing mosques. Again, that is speculation.

4391 *Panel – From your understanding of the political power structures within the PRC, is it*
4392 *possible, in your opinion, that the policies being prescribed and executed by the PRC,*
4393 *such as the destruction of religious sites and places of Uyghur culture, could occur without*
4394 *the direction or the knowledge of the most senior people within the PRC or the CCP?*

4395 NR – So I would more generally link this crackdown to the appointment of Chen Quanguo
4396 as the Party Secretary of XUAR in 2016. My understanding is that this crackdown more
4397 generally is very much – he’s the architect of it. But I would also add that this couldn’t
4398 have happened – and we have seen from how invested the central government is in the
4399 narratives around Xinjiang and how much events and issues in Xinjiang is a national
4400 priority and a national secret, and the fact that the Xinjiang aid policy is I think a good
4401 policy of that national incorporation into regional policy – I don’t think any of these could
4402 happen without the knowledge and permission I guess of even Xi Jinping.

4403 *Panel – In your travels through the data promulgated by the authorities, either at*
4404 *government or provincial or even at town level, is there a formal structure to that? Is there*
4405 *one database essentially, or is it a myriad of different structures and places?*

4406 NR – It is very much a myriad, and there’s a big complicated differentiation between party
4407 organs and governmental authorities, and it is extremely complicated. I believe that we
4408 will try to sort of have a product soon that tries to demystify some of that but that’s not
4409 what I’m working on – I just find it quite confusing myself that there is definitely a big
4410 number of government bodies, government authorities, party organs, that all have a
4411 different role in this administration of Xinjiang. It’s quite convoluted and quite complex,
4412 yes.

4413 *Panel – Is it something you are specifically working on in regard to a creation of what I*
4414 *might loosely call an organogram of these different sites that are posting this data?*

4415 NR – Not so much on the sites, but on the government authorities specifically. Not me
4416 personally, but that is work that is being undertaken.

4417 *Panel – Would you be able to point us to whoever is doing that work at some stage?*

4418 NR – Yes.

4419 *Panel – Could you say a bit more about the satellite technology that underlines the*
4420 *tracking of the destruction of sites? Particularly its reliability going back historically when*
4421 *you compare original situations to what is happening or has happened more recently.*

4422 NR – The differences in satellite coverage are not so much an issue but it does cause
4423 problems, especially in north Xinjiang where there is a lot less systematic satellite
4424 coverage. What we would say is, I think for pretty much the entirety of Xinjiang we were
4425 able to get high resolution imagery from at least one point between 2012 and 2015. And
4426 then since then, and that's sort of what we did the basis of this change analysis on, looking
4427 at it from whatever point was available. What we were also able to find was that, since
4428 the crackdown in Xinjiang began, there has been a very comprehensive effort to take
4429 satellite imagery of the region, because I think there is this understanding that satellite
4430 imagery is one of the most unambiguous ways to get access to areas. And so what that
4431 has translated into in a lot of regions is imagery every week, and even sometimes multiple
4432 times within a week. This isn't for the whole of Xinjiang, but for certain areas there is that
4433 regular [*inaudible*].

4434 Also, graciously, Google Earth has decided to acquire a lot of that satellite imagery, so
4435 that's available to anyone, beyond just the traditional paywall behind the commercial
4436 imagery sources generally.

4437 So what we were able to do for most cases was to work out the month that this demolition
4438 happened by being able to look at a– let's just say in August 2018 imagery image, and
4439 let's say an October 2018 image. And we can see that the demolition occurred sometime
4440 within that window.

4441 ...There was very strong coherence between the times of demolition of mosques within
4442 a city or within a county. And we found that in lots of cases, all the mosques in this region
4443 had been either demolished or rectified with their minarets taken off and their domes
4444 removed at pretty much the same week or the same month. There is definitely areas
4445 where that coverage is a lot less good, and in many cases where it is honestly inadequate
4446 to do proper fully comprehensive looks at this, and that's mostly in north Xinjiang, but
4447 generally it is quite good, especially since the crackdown.

4448 *Panel – For how many years has the centre been preparing reports on these various*
4449 *subjects?*

4450 NR – Our first report on Xinjiang was actually just an unfunded project that we took to to
4451 do in our spare time in mid to late 2018, so that was when we first...and then following
4452 back, we started trying to look at it more systematically within the concept of these
4453 themes.

4454 *Panel – How many reports, roughly, have been made public before the present one that*
4455 *we are looking at?*

4456 NR – All of our reports have been made public, so we don't have private reports...

4457 *Panel – Roughly, how many?*

4458 NR: This is my fourth one. A lot of colleagues have done some as well...between seven
4459 and ten.

4460 *Panel – Do you take the step of – do you make the step of posting a copy through the*
4461 *PRC's embassy in Canberra to make sure they know about it?*

4462 NR – No. We've also found that, in a lot of cases, it's quite detrimental to do that – sources
4463 could disappear and we don't want...the government to have prepared a propaganda
4464 response to our research findings.

4465 What we have done is generally shared it with journalists in the days before its
4466 released...and this is outside the peer review processes that we use. Sometimes they will
4467 send findings of our research to Chinese government authorities to comment on it, but
4468 we don't do that.

4469 *Panel – One way or another, the reports are public.*

4470 NR – Yeah.

4471 *Panel – Have they ever been cited, to your knowledge, in parliamentary or committee*
4472 *hearings in Canberra?*

4473 NR – Yes, they have. I can't remember exactly when or where, but I think they have been.
4474 Especially the 'Uyghur for Sale' report, which isn't one that I was heavily involved in, but
4475 that I think has especially been cited by parliaments generally.

4476 *Panel – You've noted reaction to your report by taking items off the web.*

4477 NR – Yes.

4478 Panel – Just two questions in respect of that. The reports are available, so if the PRC
4479 wanted a full report, it could always have got one, once it was a public document?

4480 NR – Yes, we actually do see – we definitely can see that people in China are accessing
4481 our reports.

4482 *Panel – Has the PRC, or anybody that's connected to the PRC or speaking for the PRC,*
4483 *ever published a detailed rebuttal of any part of any of your reports?*

4484 NR – Not really. They often respond to questions...just dismissing us as much as
4485 possible, dismissing the institute as much as possible.

4486 There have been a few cases where they've tried to dig in deeper. I recall one case when
4487 – the Global Times [or a] state media organ – went to disprove a lot of what we said were
4488 camps. And for example, in one case they showed drone pictures of an area about 12
4489 kms away from where we said the camp was, and in other cases they showed across the
4490 road. I think that certainly is their response, but I wouldn't necessarily call it that rigorous
4491 of a response and certainly not addressing the specific findings and trying to rebut them.

4492 *Panel – Have you ever felt obliged to issue a correction to any of your reports following*
4493 *material raised by the PRC?*

4494 NR – There was one facility that we identified as a detention camp that we no longer
4495 believe is. That was identified because we picked it out as a point of interest while it was
4496 under construction, and at some point it migrated from the point of interest list to the actual
4497 list. And when that got brought to our attention, we saw it when the construction was
4498 finished and [said], "this doesn't appear to be a camp", and removed it.

4499 Other than that, there's been probably well over 50 camps...that people have tried to call
4500 out and say, "it's not a camp". [But] other than that one, I believe we've looked at them all
4501 and [said], "no, we are still confident that this is a camp".

4502 *Panel – You explain that there's been some activity, maybe more than usual activity, in*
4503 *taking things down roughly at the time of this Tribunal. Can you give us an idea of any*
4504 *particular type of things that have been taken down just about now?*

4505 NR – I wouldn't be best to speak to this, but there are generally quite broadly a lot of
4506 information is being taken down. We are seeing government websites and county official
4507 websites being a lot less accessible, making documents harder to get more generally, not
4508 just documents on a specific topic. You see rounds and rounds of things being taken
4509 away.

4510 So initially it was those construction reports, I mean those construction tenders, that got
4511 removed. Then we saw reports on the Xinjiang Aid Project and government-organized
4512 labour programmes being systematically removed. You've seen very much these rounds
4513 of these different topics being systematically removed. But at the same time there is just
4514 generally information documents and websites being removed.

4515 *Panel – Is the intention from the directives that are coming centrally down to the areas –*
4516 *is their intention that they want to get rid of all the religious sites, or do they have a quota?*
4517 *We heard yesterday that one of the mosques had been converted into a museum. So are*
4518 *they going to keep a few to show people or make sure that they're not actually destroying*
4519 *the religion?*

4520 NR – There definitely have been mosques that have remained. The question that I think
4521 stands, which is quite pertinent but I don't think I can answer it, is how accessible these
4522 mosques are to people seeking to pray. I think in most cases... since 2017 especially,
4523 that has pretty much stopped, but it's hard to assess to what extent.

4524 There is still the physical shell of a lot of mosques, I think about a third of them, but a
4525 number of them are locked shut, a number of them are open in this way that I don't think
4526 is accessible to prayer, and a lot of them have been converted into one use, such as a

4527 bar, like you said. Previously, I saw a report recently which [is about] one that was
4528 converted into a public toilet.

4529 The question is how accessible the remaining structures are to parishioners and to people
4530 who look to pray there. My understanding is that, especially in 2017-2019, that was
4531 extremely inaccessible. There may be potentially signs in the last year or so that certain
4532 people are being allowed back to pray, but none of that research is finalized. And I can't
4533 begin to speak to the extent of how much that is occurring, if it is occurring. It's just a
4534 general sense that I've got.

4535 *Panel – There have been attempts to debunk the reliability of yours and others' evidence*
4536 *based on satellite imagery. Is there an incontrovertible way of verifying these images?*

4537 NR – No. The way that we've done this is– I think this is the best time to talk about that
4538 methodology in detail...what we looked at to start with was these lists of about 30-60
4539 detention sites that were well documented and I think incontrovertibly detention sites by
4540 the construction tenders and other documents such as party visits or local media.

4541 And from that list of about 50-100 sites that we have no doubt...we started to build this
4542 very comprehensive idea of what these facilities looked like and what features they have
4543 and what set them apart from other more innocuous buildings, such as schools or
4544 government offices, or whatever else is occurring in Xinjiang. We got this very
4545 comprehensive idea of what to look for. Then it became a matter of scanning through as
4546 much of Xinjiang as possible through satellite imagery to find these distinct signatures
4547 that fit facilities into these four architectural typologies that we found.

4548 I can understand that, for a lot of people, especially people that don't want to believe
4549 what's happening in Xinjiang, that is a kind of inaccessible method, and when they look
4550 at a satellite imagery it's kind of difficult to see those signatures unless they get specifically
4551 pointed out to you.

4552 When we have had people try to debunk, that's been the vast majority of people going, "I
4553 guess this site doesn't look like a camp to me, what's make you say it's a camp?" We
4554 were able to articulate what makes us say it's a camp, such as these watch watchtowers,

4555 these fences, these internal fences, that you don't see on other public buildings and other
4556 buildings in Xinjiang.

4557 But this is only from that one perspective from the sky. So there is a reason that we call
4558 it all suspected facilities rather than confirmed facilities. In an ideal world, that wouldn't be
4559 the case. But with the complete opacity of information in Xinjiang, I think that's the best
4560 that we can get at the moment. What I would say is that we have been confronted with
4561 dozens of sites that people have attempted to debunk, and none of those...I'm still
4562 extremely confident that all of those sites, except that one that I mentioned previously
4563 while it was under construction, are actually camps.

4564 *Panel – So you are right to point out that there are two bits to my question. The first is*
4565 *about verification as to whether these are camps. Before that, are you able to verify that*
4566 *the images themselves were taken of that place and they're not in some way doctored or*
4567 *falsified?*

4568 NR – Yeah, that's actually an argument that I've had, that people affiliated with the
4569 Chinese government have brought up before – “how can you trust these satellites?
4570 They're owned by US companies”. Then I was able to show them Chinese satellite
4571 companies that have imaged the same area and showed the same thing.

4572 I think generally it is quite unheard for there to be entire areas of satellite imagery that
4573 have been falsified. The one example I can think of is the Russian Ministry of Defence
4574 tried to make their own composite of satellite imagery to show that a Ukrainian jet shot
4575 down MH17 – only example I can think of off the top of my head where satellite imagery
4576 has been faked.

4577 But in this case, we have multiple sources of satellite imagery on multiple days from
4578 multiple different companies and individual satellite platforms that all show the same
4579 thing. So, I don't think there's any reason to suspect that what we are seeing through
4580 satellite imagery and even through Google Earth is not an accurate representation of what
4581 is on the ground.

4582 *Counsel – Your research has shown the sheer scale of the camps in Xinjiang and I was*
4583 *wondering whether you can draw any views on, therefore, the estimates of the detainees*
4584 *in those camps. I know it's difficult, but if you could say a few words on that.*

4585 NR – That is one thing that we have been very reticent to do, because I don't think the
4586 information at least that we have looked at exists for us to create a firm estimate. There's
4587 too many changing variables across different types of camps. It wasn't until extremely
4588 recently that we knew that prison camps were structured in a way in which there was a
4589 dorm structure inside each room rather than individual cells. And all those questions that
4590 remain unanswered make it really difficult to estimate even knowing the exact floorspace
4591 of how much room is dedicated to detainees, what an actual number would be.

4592 What I would say...is that based on the scale on the spread of these facilities, the
4593 estimates that we have heard of about one million would not be out of the realm of
4594 possibility. The capacity is probably somewhere near that level. But the capacity is
4595 different, the actual number of people detained at any one point, and the actual number
4596 of people detained throughout the length of this crackdown.

4597 *Counsel– If you were to hear the number two or three million, you would say that that*
4598 *would be beyond the capacity of the current camp?*

4599 NR – Yes, I would not consider those estimates to be particularly robust – what I would
4600 say is that beyond the people physically detained in camps, there are a large number of
4601 people that we know have been forced to attend day school and have these political
4602 indoctrination practices, like visiting a school one day a week to undertake these lectures,
4603 and that number is undoubtedly higher, but I would not personally put a lot of weight in
4604 the scale of physical detention being much above one million.

4605 *Panel – Has there been any, I loosely describe it as, triangulatory cross-referencing*
4606 *evidence in regard to the construction of these camps – so purchasing of raw materials,*
4607 *or evidence about transport of what must be very significant volumes of materials to a*
4608 *region far distant from the core of the country.*

4609 NR – Yes. So Xinjiang itself has quite a high amount of primary industry already – it's a
4610 highly industrialized area. There are government bodies that control a lot of that industry

4611 – especially through the XPCC. So I don't think there is– I'd be surprised if there were
4612 many cases of raw materials needing to be brought in from the rest of China. But what
4613 we do certainly see... is these government construction tenders, where they say we want
4614 X number of buildings of X size to be built in this area, and then we can cross-reference
4615 that to there being a camp in that area. Another way of triangulating it...is victim testimony.
4616 When you have had people who had been released from detention – in most cases where
4617 they have been able to identify what site they were held in, it is a site that we have on our
4618 database. Which is why we believe our database is quite comprehensive. It probably
4619 doesn't capture all of them, but I would say it captures the vast majority of facilities.

4620 *Panel – ...is there any evidence of, for instance, recruitment...for prison guards?*

4621 NR – Yes, there is. Again, those sources of evidence have mostly dried up. There
4622 certainly [have] been documents that say 'recruitment of guards', 'recruitment of teachers'
4623 especially, in a lot of these facilities.

4624 This isn't the vast majority of facilities. There [are] a lot of facilities that aren't documented
4625 beyond the satellite evidence, because a lot of these construction tenders weren't ever
4626 public to start with. A lot of those that were have disappeared now. So it's not to say that
4627 every camp has this triangulatory basis of evidence – but the ones that have have pretty
4628 much all been included in that database.