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DISSERTATION

Understanding China's War on Terror: The Securitisation of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region

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Abstract

This paper explores the Chinese government's brutal campaign that persecutes Muslim Uyghurs, one of China's most prominent ethnic minority groups. Drawing on the Copenhagen School of securitisation theory, it examines how the Chinese State has used various revenues to frame Uyghurs as an existential threat. In framing the ethnic conflict as a security issue, the Chinese government has capitalised on the early 2000s global war on terror to legitimise its use of force on Uyghurs in Xinjiang. In 2017, after reports emerged that China has built large internment camps to hold Uyghurs, it promoted unprecedented interest in human rights issues in Xinjiang. Despite China presenting itself as a critical player in the field of international human rights, this paper shows how securitisation and mass surveillance has violated Uyghurs fundamental human rights. As Xinjiang plays a crucial role in China's economic developments, it is improbable that Uyghurs human rights will ever be upheld.

Key words; Uyghur, securitisation, China, Xinjiang, human rights law, terrorism

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Introduction

Since late 2016, the People's Republic of China's (PRC) treatment of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (henceforth, XUAR or Xinjiang), has come under the international spotlight due to the advent of what spectators in the media and scholarly communities have described as a 'surveillance' State (Chin and Bürge, 2017; Millward 2018). For over a decade, China has enforced stringent and coercive security practices across the region under a premise to thwart what China has termed as domestic terrorism (Finley, 2019). This security clampdown has predominantly focused on the Uyghur's, one of China's Muslim ethnic minorities. The increased police presence, the biometric profiling of residents, and the establishment of so-called 're-education centres' (Human Rights Watch, 2017) in the province are just a few measures used to destabilise the Uyghur ethnic and religious identity. Though mass movements in Xinjiang (and Tibet) began to occur in 2008 and 2009, governmental crackdowns gradually followed. This wide-scale surveillance strategy was initiated under the guise of fighting 'terrorism' and 'religious extremism' which came to light and was heightened in the wake of the attacks of September 11th, 2001, in New York. This led the Chinese authorities framing Xinjiang as the home front in the so-called 'global war on terror' (GWOT) or war against Islamic extremism.

The post 9/11 era has not only seen the increase in tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims but a pervasive universal discourse which has portrayed Islam as a threat to national and international security as it nurtures extremism and terrorism (Vaughn, 2005). This view is often a consequence of biased media coverage on a global scale which has focused on the rhetoric and actions of extremist groups erected under the banner of Islam (Akbarzadeh, 2009; Pollock et al. 2005). While it is apparent that these attacks executed by radical groups do not represent the Muslim community at large, it has nonetheless paved the way for increased uneasiness between non-Muslim governments and Muslim minorities. Governments have felt obliged to control and govern their Muslim minorities as security threats becoming a global norm that has even reached China. However, their approach towards controlling their Muslim minorities has gone beyond that of Western governments and instead has raised concerns of human rights violations.

For the Chinese government to initiate such extreme surveillance, they argued that the 1990s resurgence of Islam and nationalism among the Uyghurs had incited radical religious beliefs and caused fatal uprisings, riots and attacks in the last two decades. Though erroneous, it has continued to this day, to frame Islamic practices and Uyghur ethnic markers as a dire threat to national security. Such discourse has contributed to the process of racialised "othering" whereby the Uyghur ethnic minority have been depicted as people who are intrinsically different to the dominant ethnic group, the Han Chinese (Foucault, 1983; Said, 1978; Ibrahim, 2005). This binary of 'us' and 'them' has continued over the past few decades, which has, in turn, normalised the Uyghurs as the 'dangerous Other'. It has been the deployment of rhetoric, which has allowed the Chinese State to dictate their identities and the societal impression of the Uyghurs. Though using discursive methods by presenting Uyghurs

as core threats to society, this has enabled the Chinese government to implement extraordinary measures with unfettered legitimacy.

The 2013 attacks in Tiananmen Square was a key example which cemented the Uyghurs as an enemy of the State. In 2013, in one of the PRC's most heavily guarded areas, a utility vehicle driven by a Uyghur family ploughed through tourists, visitors and security officers. With little to no information about the incident due to State censorship, it gave rise to hearsay, which spread across Chinese social media. While it was unclear whether this was a deliberate attack on the State or an accident, in the days following the incident, the PRC described the case as the country's first suicide attack enacted by Xinjiang nationalists.

Further to this, in early March 2014, the State-run press agency Xinhua News Agency reported that eight Xinjiang locals had launched a calculated knife attack at Kunming railway station, killing 33 people and injuring 140 (BBC News, 2014). Condemning this, China's security chief, Meng Jianzhu, pledged that the State would put all efforts into punishing the "violent terrorists" and ensuring their political agenda will not be tolerated by the nation (ibid). This caused hatred amongst the Han Chinese, forcing the government into blocking news coverage on blog sites and reporting on State media, urging the public not to turn their fury into vigilantism (Jacobs, 2014). However, despite the illusion that the government is attempting to use corrective action, State media continued to use its platform to shape public perception of Uyghurs. Framing Uyghurs as "terrorists" and "violent" and Xinjiang as "volatile", State-run media outlets were able to construct a dominant narrative whereby Uyghurs were issues that need to be governed (Wong, 2014; Holdstock, 2014). This, consequently, highlights how the Chinese State has been able to use language to entrench binaries between their ethnic minorities, the Uyghurs and the Han Chinese majority.

Though these incidents were highly publicised as the first acts of religious extremism allegedly executed by Uyghurs in China, by 2014 Xinjiang itself saw a rise in violence. Two suicide attacks, one in Ürumchi South railway station and another in Ürumchi market led to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to accelerate their professed Strike Hard (Yanda) campaign. This was initiated to fight against what is referred to as the "Three Evils" of separatism, extremism and terrorism (Finley, 2019). This aided in what the former Regional Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Zhang Chunxian, declared as the "People's War on Terror" which would focus solely on eliminating Islam in the PRC (Yu, 2014). In the last two years, the severity of surveillance in Xinjiang has only increased. News of so-called 'de-extremification' programmes and mass internment has suggested that the CCP has sustained the security agenda aimed at tightening their grip on Xinjiang (Amnesty International, 2018). With a lack of media coverage and the Chinese government failure to address the real gravity of the surveillance State, human rights defenders can only assume the worst, especially under the Xi Jinping's regime.

To sufficiently examine China's War on Terror and the impact of securitisation in the Xinjiang region, it is necessary to define critical terms. Firstly, according to the Copenhagen School's (CS) securitisation theory, the term 'securitisation' is an issue that is securitised when it is seen as an "existential threat, requiring emergency measures, and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure" (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998). The securitisation of issues, therefore, allows for State actors to bypass conformist political processes and is "the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as special kind of politics or as above politics" (ibid). In this sense, by indirectly framing Uyghur nationalism and Islamic practices as security threats, Beijing has evaded not only Chinese laws and the Constitution but have implemented extraordinary measures with aims to legitimise its actions on Uyghurs in front of its domestic and international audiences.

In asserting security arguments, they have successfully merged Islamic resurgence and Uyghur nationalism into the "three evil forces": extremism, separatism, and terrorism. With the help of the US proposed fight on the GWOT, China has been able to argue that its conflict in Xinjiang against the Uyghurs is matched. This is Beijing's attempt at legitimising its intense securitisation and surveillance scheme by taking it further than the Wests efforts to fight against radical extremism. For the purpose of this dissertation, extraordinary measures refer to any measure not defined as ordinary measures such as the use of force to preserve social order to which the State and its citizens agree to in their social contract.

This dissertation aims to illustrate how the intense securitisation and surveillance of Uyghurs in Xinjiang has led to China violating countless human rights stipulated in international human rights law. The first chapter of this dissertation will give an overview of China's political and social system and its impacts on ethnic minorities such as the Uyghurs. It will then explain whom the Uyghurs are, followed by information about the Xinjiang region. The chapter will end after giving an introduction on the role of Islam in Xinjiang and China as a whole, and how the government began to use Islam as a tool to denigrate Uyghur Muslims.

Chapter two will go deeper into the CS securitisation theory and how the Chinese government has used this to frame Uyghurs as a security threat. It will address how Chinese State-run media and artificial intelligence has been used to enhance its already restricted surveillance State. This chapter will then go on to explain the possible motives for the Chinese government for its intense securitising practices, with both reasons being for China's economic development.

Finally, the last chapter will look at the countless international human rights instruments the Chinese State has violated despite being bound to these treaties. The chapter will then revisit the 1990's Asian values debate, or Chinese values debate. However, despite China's constant use of the argument, this section will show that China uses this to avert any criticisms on its approach to securitise the Uyghurs. The chapter will end discussing how the international community have failed at protecting

and promoting the rights of Uyghurs despite its efforts. This is due to China's economic power and worldwide influence which has deterred any criticisms of its countless human rights abuses against Uyghurs.

While the Chinese government argued that its restriction on Uyghurs is rational to eradicate extremism, and to acculturate them into a culturally homogenous State, it is unlikely to end. China's economic might has seen to override any expectations to end their abhorrent practices. Thus, this dissertation concludes that Uyghurs will continue to be monitored, arbitrarily detained and tortured until their culture is completely eradicated.

Chapter 1: The Chinese System and Ethnic Minorities, Uyghurs, and the Role of Islam

Human rights in China have always been a highly contested topic for generations. The PRC and their supporters have continuously upheld that existing policies and enforcement measures comply with human rights and that these ensure State security. However, many international human rights organisations such as the United Nations (UN), human rights defenders and States such as the USA, have contested this. Often the argument expressed is that these policies have instead allowed China to continue to violate the rights of citizens all in the name of national security. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch as well as governmental institutions like the US State Department have often presented evidence that the PRC is violating various freedoms. These include freedoms of speech, movement and religion, not only of its citizens, including those within the region such as ethnic minorities. This chapter aims at giving a brief outline of the Chinese political and social system and how it has impacted the lives of modern Uyghur Muslims. It will then go onto a brief explanation of who the Uyghurs are and how the Chinese government have used Islam as a tool to vilify and violate Muslim Uyghurs human rights continuously.

The Chinese System and Ethnic Minorities

The PRC has experienced rapid and severe changes in its political, economic and societal realms over the past few decades. These changes have played a significant role in China's economic growth and development, which arguably could not have occurred without political stability and institutionalisation. Since assuming power in 2012, President Xi Jinping with the help of the National People's Congress abolished the two-term limit on presidency which allows him to remain president indefinitely. The two-consecutive term limit to China's presidency was implemented by the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping in 1982 "to avoid the kind of chaos and tumult that can sometimes happen when you have a single authoritarian leader, as China had with Mao Zedong" (Economy, 2018). Xi's acquired power has given him the 'strongman leadership' role, setting the CCP and the country on a far more aggressive course both domestically and abroad. This "president for life" (BBC News, 2018) has paved the way for policies under his regime that have left noticeable imprints on major human rights issues, especially in the context of ethnic minorities. State media often glorifies the General Secretary's interest of ethnic minorities and their influence in the State, especially in regions of Tibet and Xinjiang. His visits to these minority regions are often plastered on front-page news media celebrating the successes of the region, which has gained praise from the wider general public (Xinhuanet, 2015). However, despite Xi's efforts, his policies and 'fight' for assimilation of ethnic minorities has escalated and has seen drastic and life-changing consequences.

China officially recognises 55 ethnic minority groups, in addition to the Han majority, which represents nearly 92 per cent of the overall population (English.gov.cn, 2014). Often it is relatively easy to differentiate between ethnic minorities in China due to most ethnic groups being distinguishable from

the Han majority. This is because they do not share common characteristics such as facial features, language, clothing and cultural norms. Since the formation of the PRC in 1949, the ethnic policy has fluctuated between accommodating and protecting ethnic differences and merging integrationist tendencies. Despite the 1983 Constitution and laws which have been implemented to guarantee equality to ethnic groups and promotion of their economic and cultural development, substantial implications are suggesting otherwise. In the period of the "Great Leap Forward" and the "Cultural Revolution" in the 1960s and 70s, the Chinese imposed strict restrictions on ethnic minorities. This was the process of Sinicisation whereby ethnic minorities were to change to be considered civilised enough in the eyes of Confucian Chinese, which internally led to a civilisational hierarchy. Confucianism, or what Bellah (1967) refers to as "civil religion", teaches the importance of Chinese character, behaviour and way of life with the main purpose of achieving harmony and social value (Anand, 2019). This diluted any minority culture, religion or practices as they were non-Sinicised enough to bring them in line with true Chinese values. However, during the 1980s significant liberalisation of religious and cultural rights in the State allowed for ethnic minorities to readopt their ethnic and religious traditions (Castets, 2003; Roges, 2018).

While in most States a citizen's minority status is self-identified, minority nationality (shaosu minzu) in the PRC is set at birth and determined according to an individual's social history, economic life, language and religion (Hasmath and MacDonald, 2018). This creates a clear distinction between the treatment of Han Chinese and ethnic minorities living in China. As some ethnic minorities live in what is described as 'ethnic autonomous areas', there is an assumption that the government allows for their culture and identity to thrive. However, though the State suggests pro-minority rhetoric, the Chinese government has been mostly quiet about ethnic autonomy, language and culture.

Xi Jinping has attempted to revisit and promote the 'four identifications' as seen in the 1960s and 70s. This emphasises the "affinity of minorities with the motherland, the Chinese nation/race, Chinese culture and socialist road with Chinese characteristics while promoting a sense of collective belonging through Mandarin-language instruction and patriotic education in frontier regions" (Leibold, 2015). Virtually, this constructs a new Chinese nationality and nation-State, whereby Han values dominate ethnic minorities.

Xi Jinping has stressed that there is "equality of everyone before the law" (Shengzhou, 2014; Li, 2018), despite the Constitution promoting and protecting group-differentiated rights. Instead of the promotion of ethnic diversity, the Chinese government under Xi Jinping has emphasised: "residential integration, joint schooling, and increased interethnic migration and mobility" (Leibold, 2015). This is prevalent in Xinjiang, which has instead led to ethnic unrest, causing tensions between the Uyghurs and the Chinese security officials and policymakers.

Who are the Uyghurs?

To fully comprehend the situation facing the Uyghur minority, it is necessary to provide context. The Uyghurs (sometimes spelt Uighurs) are a Turkic-speaking Muslim ethnic group originating from North-West China, bordering with Central Asia. The locality of the region proved helpful during the times of the ancient Silk Road and continues to thrive today's economy through trade, agriculture and natural resources. Though historically the inhabitants of the Uyghur region practised various religions such as Buddhism and Nestorianism, Islam was officially adopted in 960 CE and has continued ever since.

After an early attempt at independence in the 20th century, they were defeated by communist China and came under complete control and annexed in 1949. Despite Beijing's refusal to recognise the area as an internal colony, Uyghurs residing in that region have since tried to regain independence to what they call "East Turkestan". However, this was stopped during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, a socio-political movement launched by Chairman Mao Zedong from 1966. He aimed to create one dominant ethnic culture by erasing any other ethnic identity that intervenes with the dominant Han Chinese values (Dreyer, 2019). This included not only Uyghurs but also Kazakhs and Kirghiz, who share similar cultural practices. The regime forced ethnic minorities to dress as Han Chinese, speak the dominant language Mandarin, and worship Chairman Mao to assimilate into Chinese culture (ibid). Though public uproar subsided, the push for assimilation persisted but in passive forms.

During the time of Mao's reign, settler colonialism by the Han Chinese increased in the region as the government allowed for more migration to Xinjiang (Sautman, 2000). As Xinjiang is resource-rich, it was and is still imperative for the benefit of the Chinese economy to maintain it. It was also thought to encourage integration and assimilation between the Uyghurs and the rest of the Chinese. It is important to note that the Uyghur Muslims are different from the Hui Muslims, who are considered to have integrated into Han values and are loyal to China (Mackerras, 1998).

Now, covering almost one-sixth of China's total territory, the XUAR is estimated to inhabit over 20 million people, with roughly 8 million inhabitants being Uyghur Muslims. However, even though the region's name suggests that Uyghurs have autonomy and self-governance, it has become one of the State's most controlled areas.

Role of Islam in Xinjiang and China

As China sought to repress Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities religious and cultural rights in the 1960s and 70s when the political and economic climate changed in 1980s, this subsided. Uyghur ethnic and religious resurgence began to rise and was encouraged by other Uyghurs as an act of rebellion against the Han acculturation that the State attempted to impose on them. As the defeat of the Soviets during the time led to independent States in Central Asia, concerns from Beijing arose at the possibility of this occurring in Xinjiang. This led to gradual securitisation of ethnic nationalism and religious practices, as Beijing began to implement extraordinary measures that restricted a lot of the freedoms that Uyghurs had.

However, analysis by Dillon suggests that these measures were ineffective and instead resulted in Uyghurs using Islam to express their ethnic identity to oppose the dominant Han Chinese and the government (Dillon 1994; Castets, 2003; Mackerras, 1998; Bovingdon, 2004). This backfired on Muslim Uyghurs as it emphasised a separatist ideology and thus gave the Chinese State the ability to set the foundation of politicisation of Islam in Xinjiang (Chung, 2006; Dillon, 1994; Dillon, 2004).

With this, Dillon further examined the differences between the Hui-Uyghur relations due to both undergoing Islamic resurgence. He concluded that there was animosity between the two minorities as the Hui hold a strong allegiance with the Han majority (ibid, 2004), which hence explains the differing treatment of the two groups. The Chinese government encouraged migration of the Hui ethnic group to Xinjiang between the 1940s and 80s as they were considered to have conformed to Han values. Though Hui's are mainly Muslim, their loyalty remains with China, and it is no surprise that they show sympathy towards Beijing and have criticised the Uyghur separatism. This has, in turn, benefitted the Hui as they are still able to practise Islam without the precautions and stringent measures that are imposed on the Uyghurs. It is, therefore, an issue between the Chinese government and Uyghur ethnic identity and autonomy.

The attacks on September 2001 on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, has allowed the Chinese government to jump on the discursive bandwagon and construct a narrative which plotted Uyghurs as the Islamic terrorists that aimed at splitting the region. In 2002, Beijing stated that they had identified 400 Uyghurs fighting in Afghanistan (Fuller, 2004) and claimed that over 1,000 Uyghurs had been trained there which posed a threat to China (Wayne, 2008). In addition to this, they further stated that they had traced insurgent weapons to fundamentalist groups in Afghanistan (ibid) and that Uyghur nationalists had close ties to Al-Qaeda, an extremist group notorious for committing acts of violence across the globe. However, this link has since been rightly dismissed by many scholars and is seen to be Beijing's agenda to frame Uyghurs as Islamic nationalists in the "war on terror" (Dillon 2004; Castets, 2003). After the USA initiated the GWOT, China showed support in offering to tackle terrorism in Xinjiang. This has made it easier for the CCP to apply and legitimise their measures against the Uyghurs with international support as many States joined forces to eradicate Islamic extremism all in the name of national security.

Furthermore, following the terrorist attacks in 2013 and 2014, inside Xinjiang and around China, the narrative of Uyghurs painted as extremists continued. As Xi Jinping assumed power, his policies allowed for greater repression and higher resistance, which essentially birthed the surveillance State. His firm belief in security is the key to combatting terrorism and maintaining regional peace led him to announce his fight against the 'three evil forces' – terrorism, separatism and extremism. Xi expressed that "[w]ithout security, there would be no development to speak of" (Zhuangzhi, 2017). This added impetus to building the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the '21st century Silk Road' aimed at strengthening 71 countries trade and Chinese investment around the world. As Xinjiang is at the heart of the BRI, it gives rise to one of the main reasons to why China have imposed strict security policies in that region.

However, while some may argue that Islam has played one of the key contributing factors to the conflict between Uyghurs and the Chinese government, this is arguably not the case. The fact that the Hui Muslims do not face the same level of scrutiny suggests that the Chinese State have and still are selectively targeting Uyghurs, for a reason beyond religion. The economic opportunity of the new Silk Road, however, raises questions on whether Islam is the problem or whether the Chinese State needs the region for economic expansion.

Chapter 2: The Birth of the Surveillance State

China has a long past of dealing with Xinjiang from a security point of view, especially concerning the Muslim Uyghurs. Beijing has been notorious in implementing policies and extraordinary measures that have played a prominent role in suppressing the Uyghur ethnic, cultural and religious identities. China's robust and elaborate system of surveillance and internment camps has become a key player in maintaining social control of Uyghurs residing in Xinjiang. This totalitarian determination combined with modern technology has come under the spotlight since 2017, and concerns have only increased since. As security in the province has tightened, restricting Uyghurs every movement and making it nearly impossible for Uyghurs to live an ordinary life, it has reached beyond just a human rights issue. This chapter aims at explaining reasons as to why and how China is increasing its security by taking existing security studies literature from the Copenhagen School's (CS) securitisation theory. It intends to show the impact that securitising actors have on the tracing and producing of Uyghurs as a security threat. With the help of State media and artificial intelligence, this chapter will explore how Beijing has successfully birthed one of the biggest surveillance States in the world. The chapter will end by explaining two possible motives for China's intense surveillance of the Xinjiang region; both of which is largely economic.

Introduction to the Securitisation Theory and the Gradual Securitisation of Xinjiang

The concept of 'security' has always been a contested subject due to no universal or unbiased definition. This dissertation conceptualises security as abroad and intersubjective construct subject to the differing perceptions of threats and therefore existing in an endless state of flux (Campbell, 1998). The narrative that Uyghurs constitute a national security threat fall into the practices of securitisation. Though there is a considerable body of literature published on security issues relating to China, they suggest a more State-centric approach (Fravel, 2007; Hughes, 2009; Tang 2010). Though limited, numerous analyses on China have been conducted using the framework of securitisation derived by the CS's securitisation theory. To relate the CS's securitisation theory into the context of China, defining and explaining securitisation is necessary. As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, securitisation refers to the process in which "an issue is presented as an existential threat…justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure" (Buzan et al., 1998). Securitisation is a "self-referential practice" which means that the issue at large is not a real threat; it is only obtainable as one (ibid). As a "speech act", the very language used by actors creates a discourse whereby fear is the critical divider (ibid). By discursively labelling an issue as a security threat it permits and legitimises any action to be taken against it.

Securitisation "implies the existence of a securitising actor as well as a referent object: the former declares that the latter is existentially threatened" (Trédaniel and Lee, 2018). Essentially, it is a way by which States can legitimately use security measures as a 'state of emergency' or introduce extraordinary measures as citizens of the State naturally agree to them. It is thus the job of the State to convince the target population in allowing for complete security and to "override rules that would

otherwise bind it" (Buzan et al., 1998). By showing the dominant citizens that this issue cannot be resolved through traditional politics, it reassures them that this issue is to be taken by the State. The securitisation theory suggests that this is only successful when the target audience accepts this discourse, which thus grants validity to any governmental measures to be employed even if it violates human rights. The "existential threat" must be on a collective scale, so for a State to securitise a subject, the subject must be an extreme risk that directly threatens its existence (Hansen, 2000; Trédaniel and Lee, 2018). This threat suggests that securitisation is not favourable, arguably it is instead a dictatorial process which forces security over civilian activities which they are unable to contest due to the legitimacy of these security measures.

Nonetheless, China has always treated ethnic minorities differently, especially those considered non-Sinicised. The "[s]inicisation of Xinjiang (which encourages mass migration of Han Chinese into the region) and allegations of clandestine and connections between global Islamic jihadists and radical Uyghur insurgents form the two main planks of Beijing's securitisation strategy" (Trédaniel and Lee, 2018). For them, Uyghurs have not incorporated actual Han Chinese values and are "others", separate from the rest of society (Said, 1978; Ibrahim, 2005). This sense of "othering" has allowed space for the State to construct a narrative that associates specific terms to Uyghurs such as "extremists", "terrorists" and "separatists" which has led to the CCP constructing the 'three evils' (which came into effect post 9/11). As the State-media and the State perpetuate this rhetoric, Uyghurs have become a product of racialised and 'dangerous othering' instead of individuals that have assimilated to 'normal' Han Chinese values. For the State to describe Uyghurs as 'terrorists' or 'extremists', it criminalises those who have no choice in being Uyghur or those who choose to be Muslim. In this context, securitisation implies that the securitisation by the CCP occurs to protect Chinese citizens from an existential threat, Uyghur extremists. This is a way for the Chinese State to legitimise the use of any emergency or extraordinary measures to maintain social order which citizens naturally agree to as part of their moral and their political obligation in society (ibid).

The Chinese government must convince the dominant Han in allowing for the complete security of Xinjiang by showing them that Uyghurs are security threats that cannot be controlled through traditional politics but instead through surveillance. It may be argued that authoritarian States like China do not need approval of the population in order to implement security measures. While this may be the case in the short-term, Beijing still needs to ensure a large majority of the Chinese to commend these actions even if it means a high level of coercion or persuasion are used. Extraordinary measures must still be reasonable even in the most totalitarian regimes otherwise there would be a chance of the population in engaging in demonstrations or riots that oppose the government. The silence of the large majority of Chinese insinuates that they indorse any extraordinary measures pushed onto the Uyghur people.

Restrictions have led to the differentiating treatment of Uyghurs in comparison to Chinese nationals, solely due to their ethnic identity, which leads to a battle of "us versus them". Arguably, securitising Uyghurs effectively alienates them further from the Chinese nation and government, which as studies

have shown can spur radicalism (Trédaniel and Lee, 2018; Roy, 2005; Bolton, 1972). It can thus be expected that a faction of Uyghurs would resist government policies and adopt a more radicalised stance against the Chinese State. This explains why some Uyghurs in the past have joined known extremist organisations such as the Turkistan Islamic Party as they believe this will liberate their identity. Ultimately, the de-extremist strategy will yield a hopeless and angry group of Uyghurs and will stunt Xinjiang's overall long-term security, stability and development. This has only led to the State believing that Uyghurs have always held extremists' views which has only categorised them as terrorists or separatists. These labels have been deeply entrenched into Chinese society for years, and it is unlikely for them to be denaturalised, primarily through education or media due to State regulation. These regulations have then given the Chinese State sole control over any information the population receives.

After the 9/11 attacks, securitisation became a prominent measure used to justify actions taken by any government from global terrorism. Fear and anxiety led to the initiation of the "war on terror", where many Western governments such as the US and UK became engaged in a war against terrorism and fundamentalism. Language became the most important tool to mobilise the Western populace painting a discourse that perceives Islam as a global threat to civilisation. This became the State's agenda which gave China leeway and vindication to imitate this dialogue without criticism and for authenticity.

While before the attacks, Muslim Uyghurs in China were seen as 'others', this was enhanced after 2001 but on an international scale as the State was also battling against the threats of terrorism. The affiliation of Islam with terrorism and extremism became ever more pronounced, allowing for a comparison of Muslim Uyghurs to those in Al-Qaeda to be accepted. The term 'religious extremist' – and potential terrorist considering 'extremism' has become an ideational source of terrorism – has come to mean any individual that practices Islam, however peaceful.

In 2014 this link grew as the militant group known as Daesh or Islamic State (IS), gained global prominence and was believed to be operational in 18 countries across the world (BBC News, 2018; Zavadski, 2014). Chinese authorities reported that thousands of Uyghurs had been recruited by the self-proclaimed IS which grew fears of any future attacks akin to those in the West, e.g. Belgium and France in 2014. This, in Foucauldian terms, allowed for Uyghur Islam to be constructed as a biological threat to society, similar to a disease that must be cleansed (Roberts, 2018). In this sense, 'cleansing' has been symbolised in State media as a "thought liberation movement" which has become a social norm (Yi Mu, 2018). Again, these dichotomies have allowed the Chinese State to dictate the Uyghur identity and re-construct it to fit their agenda.

This was further reinforced by the State media, where fear itself became instrumentalised and caused panic and hatred towards Uyghurs as an issue that goes against national security. This exemplifies how Uyghur land became securitised due to etymology, where national and international media and policymakers use such language to fabricate an ethnic identity and religion to make Islam a more

perceptible and ongoing threat. Effectively, this has led the CCP to revisit and restore the brutality of the Cultural Revolution in 1966-76, which led hundreds of Mosques being closed, Islamic texts such as the Quran and the Hadith being burnt, the Uyghur language being repressed and public figures or scholars being removed (Bovingdon, 2004; Millward, 2007; Sudworth, 2018). This was stepped up in the past two years under Chen Quanguo, a Communist Party Secretary who was known for his designed program of intensive surveillance in Tibet (Ma, 2019).

Chen's combination of hyper-securitisation and militarisation to accelerate the political and cultural transformation of local people gives us a glimpse of how his system has come into effect. The introduction of so-called 're-education centres' and dispatching Han people to live at Uyghurs residents to report any extremists' behaviours are aimed at "breaking lineage, breaking roots, breaking connections, and breaking origins" (International Campaign for Tibet, 2019). This dystopian rhetoric illustrates the ideology that has introduced harsh policing measures which has served to reify the securitising narrative surrounding Uyghurs and violating their human rights.

The Media

The internet and media have become a global phenomenon and a fact of life. Its reach and ability to influence an entire nation's political ideology has become ever so powerful. Often the stories that sell the most are the ones published, giving media outlets the power to abuse their privileged position to spread bigotry and propaganda which can often divide societies. In China, media outlets are State censored, meaning that the Chinese government have full control of any media and any information that is capable of reaching a broad audience. These censorship rules have blocked media coverage of various topics considered 'sensitive' – ranging from comparing Xi Jinping to Winnie the Pooh (Haas, 2018) or topics of ethnic minorities like the Uyghurs – and are intact to maintain 'social harmony' (Luqiu, 2018).

The hegemonic position of the Chinese State media, mainly Xinhua News Agency, has contributed to essentialist rhetoric with the help of censors where Uyghur Muslims have been reduced to security threats. Luqui, a Chinese journalist and news executive, stated in her book that "[i]n addition to employing nationalist rhetoric and narratives to denounce the Uyghur separatists and separatist groups in news reports, commentaries, and editorials, China's State media were not allowed to report on events on their own, but had to use Xinhua-provided wire stories that were preapproved by the censors during and after the [Urumqi 2009] conflict" (2018). It is clear the State censors condone this bigotry against the Uyghurs in the media because if they did not condone it, they would have censored it. These censors are thus used as a tool for the Chinese authorities to smear and dehumanise Uyghurs without giving them a voice. Uyghur representation from Chinese State media thus gives a wide array of viewers ability to harbour and be influenced by implicit biases making them susceptible to treat Uyghurs differently, or allow for the State to subject them to differing treatment. By targeting a society as a whole, State media have played a crucial role in the securitisation of the Uyghur people, elevating the notion that this is for the greater good of the country.

Furthermore, the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) analysed news reporting's related to Islam on Chinese Central Television (CCTV). They looked at how the Chinese government used media outlets to shape public perception of Muslims in China between the years of 2005 to 2015. They further analysed over 10,000 posts relating to Islam and Muslims on Weibo (an app similar to Twitter), before and after Europe's 2015 refugee crisis. Their findings showed that news stories pieced by the government indicated how Chinese Muslims benefitted from the government's policies, such as the One-Child Policy (AEJMC, 2016). This, in turn, led the Han Chinese in believing the system was undermining them, and instead ethnic groups like Uyghurs were benefitting. Though the findings from AEJMC are dated, its aim is to show the system of racism towards Uyghurs that has been executed for years.

Findings also showed that China relied heavily on Western news agencies that reported particularly on terrorism and conflicts relating to Islam and Muslims which totalled 44.2 per cent of the total 15,427 CCTV news stories on Islam (ibid). In 2007 onwards, State media increased its reports on Uyghurs and found that most posts on Chinese social media blamed Uyghurs for the ethnic unrest and violence in Xinjiang, stereotyping Uyghurs as lazy, irrational, violent, weak and potential terrorists (ibid). Such rhetoric dehumanised Uyghurs by presenting them as a coordinated menace, ignoring the fact that the Chinese government have prevented their development and instead given it to the Han colonial settlers. Most of the stories published were one-sided, showing the Chinese governments intent to use media as an outlet to construct a discourse that frames Muslims as a threat to society, and people that need to be securitised. Uyghurs have therefore been discursively made into an inferior being that requires management and governance by the Chinese, which has only served to entrench that Uyghurs have failed to be Sinicised and are undeveloped and backwards.

Interestingly, the research found some posts that expressed sympathy for Xinjiang Muslims and criticised the Chinese governments, however, this has not been enough due to national and international media, to denaturalise the Uyghurs or Muslims. Ma (2019) notes a surge in Islamophobic rhetoric by the Han Chinese which has been circulated for years due to the CCP Han Chinese supremacism. This exemplifies power in its discursive articulation, where grand narratives have obscured the lives of Uyghurs, displaying them as a security threat.

Additionally, in 2017, reports emerged after satellite imagery detected what resembled large internment camps holding Muslims (Uyghurs, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz) in Xinjiang (Zenz, 2018). By the end of the year, it was reported that an estimated one million Muslims were being held in internment camps (Kuo, 2018). Despite the increasing media coverage in 2017, the Chinese government denied the very existence of such camps claiming that they "had not heard" of such a situation or "[w]e do not have such an idea in China" (AKIPress, 2018; Shih, 2018). However, The Global Times, the CCP's English-language tabloid newspaper, stated that over one million Xinjiang residents had been subject to "government-organised occupational education programs" to "improve social stability and alleviate poverty" (Zhao, 2018). Then later, saying that these are 'vocational education and training programmes' aimed at tackling religious extremism, which is now written into Chinese law as part of

counterterrorism measures (BBC News, 2018; Global Times, 2019). Legislative restrictions have subsequently played a role in shrinking Uyghur human rights, and the growth of acceptance by the Chinese majority has legitimised discrimination against the marginalised group.

Chinese officials released a video showing the world Uyghurs studying Mandarin and Chinese legal knowledge to attempt to prove that these are not concentration camps, but instead training centres for Muslims to integrate further with Chinese society (South China Morning Post, 2018). This is essentially a political programme that brainwashes Uyghurs and other ethnic Muslims into conforming to the CCP ideology, forcing them to integrate and become akin to the Han majority. As Uyghurs are subjected to these political internment camps, it persuades the general public and feeds the narrative that in order to achieve social order Uyghur ethnic, cultural and religious identity needs to be diminished through intense security measures. However, it is clear that this eerily resembles the grim precedents of the Stalinist gulag and Nazi concentration camps without (that we know of) the latter brutality.

What is important to note is that is it difficult, if not impossible, to remove someone's identity through such camps, especially if they are at an older age as Islamic practices are often memorised for years. However, these camps will have an impact on the younger Uyghur population, as their lack of familial communication will direct them to imitate what the Chinese State want all Uyghurs to shadow. The Chinese government are aware of this as their securitisation and extreme surveillance will work in their favour in the long run. It is difficult to comprehend how practising religion such as praying five times a day or fasting during the month of Ramadan poses an existential threat resulting in actions that are exceptional. It seems as though the Chinese authorities are using the practise of securitisation as a bureaucratic practise that manage and avert risks, and these risks are being manipulated into a social problem which is not necessarily existential.

In mid-2019, the BBC gained rare access to these camps and was met with highly staged and choreographed music and dance routines by Uyghur detainees. However, these were propaganda videos ordered by Chinese authorities to tackle international outcry by human rights defenders like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch along with other governments.

Additionally, though China has blocked major social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook, recent stories have revealed that Twitter helped to promote Chinese government propaganda and misinformation (Gallagher, 2019). The disinformation provided mainly revolved around the controversial internment camps in Xinjiang, with Twitter adverts from June and August 2019 promoted over 50 English-language tweets, including videos, from the Chinese State media the Global Times to intentionally obscure the truth about the issues in Xinjiang. The Global Times even went so far as to accuse "European politicians and media workers" in defending terrorists in Xinjiang (Global Times, 2019). As Twitter's policy stipulates that all promoted content on the site must be honest, Chinese State media are therefore in violation of its terms and conditions. This shows how far the Chinese

government will force the narrative and frame Uyghurs as terrorists as these Tweets are aimed at the international scene, as these sites are blocked in the country.

However, interviews of the few Uyghurs that have managed to escape these camps have challenged Chinese official's propaganda videos and statements. Aduweli Ayup, who was detained by Chinese authorities for opening a Uyghur kindergarten, alleges that he was raped and tortured by over twenty Chinese guards while in detention in Xinjiang for 15 months (Al Jazeera English, 2019). Gulbahar Jelil, another former detainee, described her experience "[m]y feet were shackled for one year, three months and ten days", and that women who were found pregnant through urine tests would have forced terminations ordered by Chinese officials (VICE News, 2019; Byler, 2018). Omir Bekali stated that "before every meal, we had to sing three songs to get permission to eat, '[w]ithout the Communist Party, there won't be a new China… the Communist Party toiled for the nation', because I refused to sing, I was tortured five different ways, they tied my arms and legs on a thing called the Tiger Chair, they don't care if people die in the dark, isolated room either, because I didn't speak their language, I didn't eat pork and I didn't follow their orders, I was in [solitary] for one month" (ibid; Denyer, 2018). Internees were subject to emotional, physical and psychological torture and forced to be separated from their families (Finley, 2019).

The government claims what children under the age of 15 are to be cared for in "protection centres" or "welfare centres" while their parents are detained (ibid). However, local sources have suggested that these children are sent to overcrowded orphanages "locked up like farm animals and given meat just one a week within a diet of rice and soup" (Hoshur, 2019).

Former detainees have said that while producing State media propaganda videos, State officials would threaten to take them to a "worse place than here" if they made a sound to international journalists (VICE News, 2019). This State professed 're-education centres' has created psychological torture which has put China and its officials under the spotlight for committing mass human rights violations. Media propaganda has thus allowed for countless human rights violations which has been concealed by misinformation about these camps. Again, this illustrates the power of the media and how it can be used to continue the securitisation of a large group of people through mass incarceration.

Artificial Intelligence

In addition to the Chinese government using conventional methods – like media and police forces – to securitise Xinjiang, they have resorted to using futuristic tactics through artificial intelligence (AI). AI gives computers the ability to perform higher-level computing mimicking human function such as visual perception, speech recognition and decision-making (Jackson, 2019). Using a process called machine learning, engineers can feed data to AI systems to train them to identify patterns or traits (ibid). For example, AI has been used to advance data security, which has given States the ability to create the most sophisticated surveillance systems. Though literature is lacking in this area, China, an

early adapter of artificial intelligence systems, has been using this technology to bring its cities and industries into the future. This is one of the many of Xi Jinping's ambitious plans in becoming the world leader of AI by the year 2030, calling for 'cyber sovereignty' that enhances censorships and control over the State's internet (Larson, 2018).

It is estimated that China has invested over $7.2 billion in building 'smart' security systems across the Xinjiang province (The Guardian, 2019). This has aided China's vast system in advanced facial recognition technology, with the help of major Chinese AI companies such as Yitu, Megvii, SenseTime and CloudWalk, in expanding its efforts to track and control Uyghurs (Saltzman, 2019). The consequence of Uyghurs being constructed as a threat, to be kept at a spatial distance, has led to various illiberal security practices. These companies have claimed to have developed AI-driven predictive technologies that keep the State safe from any threats from the Uyghur people. China highlights the dangers of mass data without any sufficient control, especially in the era of Cambridge Analytica, the data marketing firm that collected over 87 million Facebook users' data allegedly influencing the 2016 US presidential elections.

Social media companies in China are required to store all personal data so that security agencies have access to any information (Human Rights Watch, 2019). This has helped with the installation of QR codes on the homes of Uyghurs, giving officials the ability to scan with their mobile phone devices unveiling the personal details of Uyghurs living there. Ultimately, China is using AI as a securitisation process which can also occur in non-emergency situations where measures and policies used are not exceptional in nature and do not need to be legitimised. A way of computerised surveillance and policing, this AI configuration has given the Chinese government a way of "[d]elving into all aspects of Uyghurs lives and physical movements [where] these highly invasive technologies sift through the large amounts of data generated by the Uyghurs, searching for suspect patterns" (ibid).

As China has fewer data protection regulations in comparison to other countries, Chinese software can collect more data on its users (Lee, 2019). This allows for surveillance to extend beyond cameras on building, including chips inside mobile phones and devices, face scanners and biometric checkpoints that track every single part of Uyghurs whereabouts. Mobile apps that police and other officials use can scan through Uyghurs digital communications, looking for anything the government deems suspect, this includes religious speech or lack of Mandarin written in posts. These apps go further, as deep-learning systems can search live "video feeds capturing millions of faces, building an archive that can supposedly help identify suspicious behaviour to predict who will become an 'unsafe' actor" (Byler, 2019).

Actions that can activate these 'computer visions' technologies involve dressing in Islamic attire such as a taqiya (skullcap) or failing to attend patriotic services. This information is sent to one of China's main system for mass surveillance called Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP), an app which has become a larger ecosystem of social monitoring and control in the province. Human Rights Watch (2019) were able to obtain the app and found that it has three broad functions: "collecting personal

information, reporting on activities or circumstances deemed suspicious, and prompting investigations of people the system flags as problematic". Analysis of the IJOP app exposed that "authorities are collecting massive amounts of personal information – from the colour of a person's car to their height down to the precise centimetre – and feeding it into the IJOP central system, linking that data to the person's national identification card number" (ibid).

Any activity that is deemed 'unusual' such as not socialising with neighbours or having Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) or WhatsApp, may result to a Uyghur individual being placed in detention centres, or what the Chinese government call 're-education centres' (ibid). All of these AI systems work together, learning from the behaviours and actions of 11 million Uyghurs to strengthen the surveillance systems. As Uyghurs look distinct from the Han Chinese, this 'minority identification' makes it a lot easier for software to single them out. This is overt racism whereby the use of algorithmic decision making can identify someone based on their race, ethnicity or features. The sheer fact that China is using AI to target, and isolate Uyghurs directly shows how hi-tech can be abused to such an extent that it allows for the continued securitisation of one of the largest ethnic minority groups in the country.

Furthermore, concerns that the Chinese government may be rolling out a nationwide DNA and biodata collection program has sparked outrage. Tahir Imin, a 38-year-old Muslim Uyghur reported to the New York Times that authorities drew his blood, scanned his face, documented his voice and took his fingerprints (Wee, 2019). Authorities explained that this was part of the free healthcare program that will come into effect in the near future. Human Rights Watch had reported this saying "[t]he mandatory data banking of a whole population's biodata, including DNA, is a gross violation of international human rights norms, and it's even more disturbing if it is done surreptitiously, under the guise of a free health care program" (2018). However, this is seen to be an issue that targets Uyghurs specifically, to chase down any Uyghurs that resist conforming to the CCP. This illustrates how AI has become a product of digital totalitarianism and has become a tool that is abused by the Chinese authorities. As a result, Uyghurs have become securitised and repressed through algorithms to propagate that they are now an easily identifiable threat that has no choice but to conform to the government's regime.

Why Securitise Xinjiang?

China has had a long history of regulating Xinjiang with the use of security; however, questions arise when discussing why. Although the Chinese government have been strategic in framing the securitisation on terrorism, there seem to be other underlying reasons for its security clampdowns. This is due to a handful of reasons, but this section will discuss two: a) the political economy of Sinicization and the construction of the new Chinese nationality and nation-State; and b) globalisation. Both of which are in the self-interest of China and will be explored further.

In respect to the former, the government's efforts in advancing Xinjiang economically through Chinese Sinicisation has been practical. The PRC announced in the last "White Paper on Xinjiang's Development and Progress" that Xinjiang was grossing 19.6 times higher than it was in 1978 (Information Office of the State Council of the PRC, 2009). Arguably, the colonialism by the Han Chinese has allowed for economic prosperity, which is what the PRC wants. Thus, if securitisation is increasing the regions gross domestic product, it will continue to do so to accumulate wealth.

Various scholars have focused on the socio-economic discrimination and human rights abuses of Uyghurs implemented through China's ethnic policies (Wayne, 2008; Davis, 2008; Chung 2006; Dillon, 2004; Rogers, 2018). Han colonialism within Xinjiang left many Uyghurs on edge due to the imbalance in economic lifestyle. However, despite the region's growth, its economic impact has benefited the Han Chinese more than the Uyghurs. Analysis has shown disparities in the income gap between the two ethnicities; Uyghur per capita income is significantly lower than that of Han Chinese due to low education rates which have widened over time (Wiemer, 2004; Benson, 2004; Cherng, Hasmath and Ho, 2019). Though Sinicisation has developed the region economically, this has worked in favour of the Han Chinese rather than the Uyghur population. This plays a potent role in Uyghur life affecting their life expectancy and infant mortality rates (Dautcher, 2004; Ding, Dong and Maurer-Fazio, 2018) which provides Uyghurs with a reason to strengthen their nationalist feelings to attain independence from the PRC. However, the concept of an independent East Turkestan or Uyghuristan poses an existential threat to China that needs to be counteracted by measures seen as necessary, whether or not legal.

Given that Beijing regards religious activity in Xinjiang an existential threat, it has imposed strict restrictions that prevent Islam from expanding across the State. These include the construction of mosques, travelling for Hajj or Umrah (pilgrimage) and Islamic text publications. These extraordinary measures and policies aim to assimilate Uyghurs within the new Chinese nationality and support the CCPs nation-building process. By diluting Uyghurs identity and traditions, this will give a higher chance of acculturating with the dominant Han, and thus helping the State economically and politically to strive. Though these have been implemented for many years, they are harsher towards to Uyghur Muslims as their willingness to acculturate is slim as their desire to preserve their distinct history, culture and traditions are firm. Effectively, this has amounted to the State framing Uyghurs as "others" who are distinct from Han interests and values, a practice that has only increased in the last couple of years.

In 2015, it was reported that teams of officials engaged in fanghuiju "a programme to 'visit the people, benefit the people, and gather the hearts of the people' [who] were dispatched to rural southern homes, tasked with reporting 'extremist' behaviours, including a range of innocuous everyday Islamic practices such as fasting during Ramadan, sporting a long beard, avoiding alcohol, or possessing Qur'ans, as well as attitudes not wholeheartedly supportive of the CCP" (Byler, 2018; Famularo, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2018). This is believed to help speed the acculturation process to achieve

economic prosperity by having a one nation-State with a new Chinese nationality but has instead violated countless human rights.

Secondly, though briefly discussed, another contributing factor is due to its economic value and convenience. Xinjiang was once the heart of the ancient Silk Road, placing it in the centre of the Asian continent, making it easy for trade and travel. This once ancient trading gateway has recently been developed and initiated by Xi Jinping, who introduced the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Essentially, this is an immensely ambitious development strategy that aims at stimulating economic growth throughout Asia and around the world. The intention is to build vast amounts of infrastructure that connects over 150 countries and international organisations in multiple continents. This will be divided between one maritime route named the Maritime Silk Road, and six land routes, the Silk Road Economic Belt – where Xinjiang plays a crucial role. With "plans for pipelines and a port in Pakistan, bridges in Bangladesh and railways to Russia – all to create what China calls a 'modern Silk Road' trading route that may kick start a new era of globalisation" (Chatham House, n.d.). It is estimated that in 2018, the trade along the BRI between China and other countries totalled $1.3 trillion (Xinhuanet, 2019), and this will only increase. Securitising the region has promoted the economy not only domestically but internationally, thus it is unlikely for the Chinese to alleviate its tight grip on Xinjiang.

Chapter 3: International Human Rights Law

Chapter 2 showed that the securitisation of the Xinjiang region had not been implemented to fight alleged international and national Islamic terrorism. Instead, the Chinese Communist Party have forcefully attempted to assimilate and acculturate the Uyghur ethnic minorities into the more massive Chinese nation (for economic reasons), which it has failed to do. Though the majority of the Uyghurs may be temporarily yielding to Beijing's Sinification campaign, their securitisation strategy has allowed the Chinese government in restricting Uyghurs from their human rights stipulated in international human rights law. This chapter takes an interdisciplinary perspective on human rights in order to understand China's approach to possible reasons for violating the rights of Uyghur Muslims. Firstly, it will explore China's stance on human rights, arguing that despite its ratification of international legal instruments and the Chinese Constitution and laws promoting and protecting human rights, it still violates Uyghurs fundamental rights. Next, it will explore why and how the law is violated through the political science lens identifying key influences and causal mechanisms of China's State terror. This chapter will then revisit the 1990s 'Asian values' debate, which gives the Chinese State an excuse to deflect any criticisms of its approach to securitise Uyghurs. Finally, it will discuss how the international community has failed to put enough pressure on the Chinese government systematic human rights violations.

China and International Human Rights Law

The most fundamental right for protection of human rights emerges from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), proclaimed and adopted by the General Assembly of the UN in 1948. The Preamble discusses the importance of human rights and their universality and ensures that States are guaranteeing the rights of all individuals. From the provisions enshrined in the Declaration, the UN adopted other human rights treaties creating a universal code of human rights norms that governs almost all areas of the relationship between an individual and the State. However, within today's international system, it is clear that some States, like China, violate the very principles protected in the UDHR and various UN human rights treaties.

China's compliance with international law and human rights instruments has always been controversial. China is an authoritarian State ruled under a one-party system; as such, its government has historically valued State sovereignty over individual rights (Anderson, 2016). The State did not officially recognise human rights until the early 1990s after the Tiananmen Square democratic movement. One of their first significant treaties the White Papers gave all citizens the rights to free speech and assembly, and specifically outlawed any media censorship.

Often, there is an assumption in the West that China does not treat the international human rights framework as necessary but is something the State still frequently references. The State has signed a wide range of human rights treaties and in recent years supposedly accepted the universality of human rights. China is now one of the major players at the UN under President Xi Jinping's regime,

supporting peacekeeping operations and stressing the importance of global cooperation to protect and promote human rights. In the last few years, China has developed a significant seat in the UN, becoming the third-largest donor to the UN's regular budget (Wintour, 2018).

As the United States recoils from its global leadership role under the Trump administration, China has filled in by presenting itself as a prominent promoter of internationalism and free trade while also emerging as a pivotal player in international human rights. However, China's active role at the UN has not gone unnoticed, especially as many remain sceptical as the Chinese State's values are not compatible with other States on human rights. China has always viewed human rights as aspirational rather than legitimate, as it argues that socio-economic rights and the right to development takes priority and insists that human rights should apply according to a State's political conditions (Sceats and Breslin, 2012).

While China has not been shy with its views on human rights, it has not used its diplomatic capabilities to frame international human rights in this manner. Instead, the State uses a protective agenda within the UN human rights institutions focusing on avoiding criticisms of the country by the UN and other States. Thus, China has sought to weaken the aptitude of the UN on reporting on States that violate human rights and emphasised its commitment to the principle of non-intervention in matters within the domestic jurisdiction of any State. However, it raises the question as to whether China has ulterior motives in pushing this agenda forward, as China has sidestepped many of these international norms and the government's attitude on the matters have primarily gone unchanged. The most regular victims of human rights violations are critics of the government such as journalists, lawyers, artists and activists. The State is known to harass, imprison and sometimes torture opposition members, in many cases without just cause.

However, in China today, this goes beyond critics of the government and has targeted ethnic minorities such as the Uyghurs. John Fisher, the Geneva director at Human Rights Watch, issued a joint statement of twenty-two member States to the UN calling for China to end its mass arbitrary detentions and violations against Muslims in Xinjiang (Human Rights Watch, 2019). "Governments are increasingly recognising the suffering of millions of people in Xinjiang, with families torn apart and living in fear, and a Chinese State that believes it can commit mass violations uncontested…[t]he joint statement demonstrated that Beijing is wrong to think it can escape scrutiny for its abuses in Xinjiang, and the pressure will only increase until these appalling abuses end" (ibid).

At present, China is a party to four conventions on human rights: UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD); UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Despite China ratifying various international human rights treaties, Chinese laws and the government's incessant securitisation of Xinjiang violates Uyghurs and other Muslims in the region's human rights.

The government's intense securitisation, which has led to forced internment and religious suppression of Uyghurs arguably violates each of these treaties. For instance, Article 1 of CERD (1969) defines discrimination as the "distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin" with the aim or result of "nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life". This prohibition makes it impossible to reconcile considering the involuntary detention of Uyghurs based on their ethnic, religious and cultural identity. Surveillance, State media and advanced technology have all played a vital role in the ongoing discrimination of Uyghurs, making the Chinese government in violation of CERD. China's Anti-Terrorism Law which took effect in 2016, give authorities sweeping powers to combat militants and separatists, providing them with the right to monitor all private communications. The banning of beards, Muslim names, speaking in Uyghur, attending mosque prayers and fasting during the month of Ramadan are just a few that arguably violated this Convention. China claims Uyghurs are separatists and though the definition of "terrorism" in Chinese law is broad, it has hindered Uyghurs freedom of speech and religion, which again makes the State in violation of CERD.

Similarly, Article 1 of the ICESCR (1966) recognises explicitly "[a]ll peoples have the right of self-determination" therefore "by virtue of that right" can "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development". Though some signatories to the ICESCR gave reservations on the scope of "peoples" on the promotion of cultural rights, China has not, which suggests a broader interpretation of the term. Duty is on the Chinese State to promote and protect the development of Uyghur culture. The framing of Uyghurs as security threats and suggesting their culture, religion and ethnic identity needs governance and anti-terrorism laws prevents them from exercising their rights. This illustrates how domestic counterterrorism laws counter rights provided under international law suggesting that China does not cooperate or respect international human rights law.

Furthermore, though relatively new in the field of human rights, China's use of artificial intelligence (AI) has also violated the ICESCR. Article 15 of the ICESCR (1966) states "[t]he States Parties to the present Covenant recognises the right of everyone: [a] To take part in cultural life; [b] To enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications; [c] To benefit from the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author". The Chinese governments AI system has been created to facilitate discrimination through their minority identification. This violates Uyghur rights as the government represses Uyghurs from taking part in cultural life indirectly or directly "for example through the surveillance that inspires fear of being identified or suffering reprisals for cultural identity, leading people to avoid cultural expressions altogether" (Access Now, 2018). Its AI systems have criminalised the Uyghur culture as they have been disproportionally arrested and linked with terrorist activities as a result. This has created social division and inequality between the Uyghurs and dominant Han and prevents Uyghurs from exercising their right to their culture. This again shows how despite China having a legal duty to uphold its citizen's rights stipulated in the ICESCR, it has instead used AI systems to violate Uyghurs rights.

Nevertheless, the Chinese government introduced the Beijing AI Principles, which calls for "the construction of human community with a shared future, and the realisation of beneficial AI for humankind and nature" (2019). However, despite the Principles calling for healthy development, the Chinese State's use of AI on Uyghurs has done the contrary. Within the Principles, it decrees to "avoid malicious AI race" (ibid) like facial recognition, geolocation and voice recognition (Stoecklin, 2018). The State, with help from Chinese AI companies, has developed a sophisticated system that has shown to isolate and target Uyghurs. Therefore, this shows how the Chinese government have not only violated international human rights treaties such as the ICESCR; it has also violated its AI Principles as its AI configurations discriminate against Uyghurs.

In addition to this, China has signed and ratified CAT making them bound to prevent any acts of torture. Article 2 of CAT (1987) explicitly states that "1. [e]ach State Party shall take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture in any territory under its jurisdiction…2. [n]o exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture". Uyghurs and other Muslims have been held in secret locations with no oversight into police interrogation methods; the government has fostered an environment where torture is likely to persevere. China has failed to address torturous practices within these facilities, especially in light of Uyghur and Kazakh refugee testimonials of their persecution within the camps. China, consequently, fails to respect the provisions of CAT, which unequivocally prohibits any practices of torture. The State not only fails to prevent torture, but it has also failed to establish an independent body to investigate allegations of torture. Detainees in the internment camps are frequently interrogated without the company of lawyers or independent monitors which increases the prospect that detainees will be faced with mistreatment (Amnesty International, 2018). The Chinese government has, therefore, made no efforts to prevent or investigate these accusations, which in turn, violates CAT.

Moreover, China has failed to enact domestic laws and put in place appropriate judicial processes to persecute acts of torture. Chinese law does not prohibit the use of torture unless it is to extract confessions (Criminal Law of the PRC, 1997). This law only prohibits torture by judicial officers and officers of detention facilities and does not cover all torture by "others acting in an official capacity" like torture in political education facilities (ibid). This justification of torture, however, violates Articles 2 and Article 4 of CAT. Article 2(3) states "[a]n order from superior officer of public authority may not be invoked as a justification of torture", and Article 4 expresses "[e]ach State Party shall ensure that all acts of torture are offences under its criminal law… the same shall apply to an attempt to commit torture and to an act by any person which constitutes complicity or participation in torture…2. [e]ach State Party shall make these offences punishable by appropriate penalties which take into account their grave nature" (CAT 1987). Thus, despite the torture occurring by other officials under international law, it still constitutes a violation and is not excusable by the Chinese government or its criminal laws. It is also likely that false confessions will occur as detainees may confess to avoid more suffering. This again illustrates that the Chinese State is not only in violation of CAT to which they are

bound by, but the State has fostered a biased judicial system that has allowed authorities to continue to torture many Uyghurs and Muslims in internment camps.

Furthermore, the forced separation of children from Uyghur women and placing them in orphanages appears to violate CEDAW. CEDAW (1979) recognises the social value of maternity and forced separation of children is considered to be in violation. Article 2(e) of CEDAW also protects women from all forms of discrimination by persons, organisations or enterprises (1979). However, China's consistent discrimination of Uyghur women, such as forced sterilisation makes China in violation of the treaty. The CEDAW Committee in General Recommendation No. 24 has explicitly noted that States are not permitted to force or coerce sterilisation (1999). Testimonials and accounts given by Uyghur women suggest that the Chinese authorities gave them unknown pills and forced injections in order to stop them from having children (UHRP, 2019). This has raised concerns that Chinese State are committing cultural genocide as they are coercing Uyghur women to be sterilised with the intent to prevent the reproduction of Uyghurs in the country (ibid). Again, China's lack of cooperation makes the State in violation of CEDAW despite being bound by the treaty.

Additionally, China welcomed the adoption of laws aimed at eliminating discrimination against women, including the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) 2012-2015.Within the NHRAP 2012-2015, Article 3 includes the rights of ethnic minorities, including women and children. However, the NHRAP 2015-2015 fails to adequately protect ethnic minorities as forced sterilisation violates the rights of Uyghur women. Not only is China in violation of international law, but the State's lack of adequate protection for Uyghur women make them in violation of its domestic laws. China is bound by both laws they have acceded and need to fulfil its obligations in order to participate in the field of international human rights actively. China considers Uyghurs as an ethnic minority therefore its lack of protective measures for Uyghur women both on an international and national scale is unlawful.

Although China has signed the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966 (ICCPR) in 1998, it still has yet to ratify the covenant. Nevertheless, China's 2009-2010 NHRAP explicitly mentions the ICCPR as part of the plans "fundamental principles". The NHRAP 2009-2010 pledges to advance the rights recognised by the ICCPR referencing the prohibition of torture, arbitrary detention, the death penalty and the right to information. However, China has not only failed to implement this but have increasingly undermined civil and political rights of its citizens. In its first, second and third review of its National Plan of Action for Human Rights, before the Human Rights Council, China has consistently reported that they are in the process of steadily introducing new legislative reforms to prepare for its ratification of the ICCPR (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2009; United Nations Human Rights Council, 2013; United Nations Human Rights Council 2018). However, these claims have been repeated for over ten years with no action and contradict reality due to its worsening climate for civil and political rights regarding millions of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in internment camps.

During the period between signing a treaty and becoming a full party, the State must, at a minimum, refrain from any acts that would violate the treaty (Lewis, 2019). China has failed to maintain this, and the State has seen repression and retrogression, not progression and protection of civil and political rights, not only of Uyghurs but many others. Calls for China to "unsign" the ICCPR has grown over the years due to the States unwillingness to commit to the treaty (ibid). Arguably, China's lack of cooperation on civil and political rights, suggests that it is unlikely for the State to ratify the treaty anytime soon, especially as it has been avoiding the ratification of the ICCPR for over twenty years. Thus, it can be expected that the State will continue to violate many Uyghurs civil and political rights.

Despite the NHRAP 2009-2010 claims to take inspiration from the ICCPR, though not being a party State, it suggests that Uyghurs human rights should still be protected, maybe not by international treaties, but domestic law. This is stipulated in China's Constitution, which recognises various rights that are now in danger in Xinjiang. Article 4 of the Constitution (1983) prohibits "any act which undermines the unity of the nationalities". However, the intense securitisation and surveillance of Uyghurs challenge Article 4, as China has attempted to eradicate Uyghurs cultural, ethnic and religious identity. Forcing Uyghurs to refrain from religious practises, speaking in Uyghur and pressuring them to acculturate into the dominant Han Chinese society undermines Uyghur nationality. This, along with China's aim of creating a one-nation State, suggests that it has no aim to encourage Uyghur nationality. China's treatment of Uyghurs thus violates its Constitutional provisions.

Article 22 of the 1983 Constitution protects "sites of scenic and historical interest, valuable cultural monuments and relics and other significant items of China's historical and cultural heritage". Evidence provided by satellite imagery has shown that over ninety sites, including mosques and major shrines, showed structural damage (The Guardian, 2019). Further images showed that major mosques were completely destroyed, and gatehouses, domes and minarets removed (ibid). This not only violates Article 22 of the Chinese Constitution but has shown how severe China's restraint has been regarding Uyghurs freedom of religion which is guaranteed under Article 36. The ICCPR (1966) also protects freedom of religion in Article 18 and protects the social and cultural developments of individuals. Even though China has not ratified this treaty, the State still must respect these provisions.

The destruction of these buildings and the State's restriction of Uyghur religion has prevented them from preserving their ethnic, cultural and religious identity despite the protections stipulated in the Constitution. As Article 35 of the Constitution 1983 states that "[n]o organ, public organisation or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not believe in, any religion" it is clear that the Chinese government have failed to protect these rights. Its destruction of religious and cultural sites and its restrictions on religion have led to many policies and extraordinary measures by the State that prevents Uyghurs and other Muslims from practising Islam. Again, this shows how China has violated its laws and failed to refrain from practising such violations under international law by restricting Uyghurs religious rights.

Interestingly, Article 35 suggests that the State will only protect "normal" religious activities but does not stipulate what constitutes regular religious activity. The Chinese government's efforts to frame Islam as a threat to national security and fighting the GWOT gives them the flexibility to imply that Islam is abnormal, which may allow the abuse of Muslims in China. Nevertheless, the many human rights provisions included in both NHRAP and the Chinese Constitution aim at protecting and promoting religious and cultural rights of ethnic minorities such as Uyghurs, however in practice this is not the case.

China still holds a narrow view of the legality of international human rights law norms than other States. China has always held that international law of sovereignty protects it against external interference concerning actions occurring in its jurisdiction. Within its territory, Chinese laws itself prohibits the countless violations of Uyghurs, inferring the lack of judicial constraint and sincerity to human rights. What is important to note is that China has continued to maintain the idea that socio-economic development takes priority over civil and political rights to achieve economic success. This explains why China has ratified the ICESCR and only signed the ICCPR. By prioritising socio-economic rights instead of civil and political rights does not necessarily mean the State will not economically thrive, as seen in Germany or the UK. However, it is doubtful that the Chinese State will alter its views.

Throughout history, Xinjiang has been known for its economic affluence, Uyghurs were not limiting this until the government restrictions impeded their education, health and job prospects due to Han colonialism. This raises the question of whether the ranking of socio-economic rights over civil and political rights is used as a means to violate Uyghurs fundamental rights. China's failure to ratify this treaty suggests an underlying motive notably as Article 26 of the ICCPR establishes a Human Rights Committee. The Committee allows those who ratify the treaty to be investigated if allegations of abuse by individuals or organisations arise. China has been accused of countless human rights abuses, not just against Uyghurs but also Tibetans, showing that this not just an issue of the economy. This illustrates that China's position on human rights is still merely aspirational, and their position in the field of international human rights aims at protecting them from backlash and condemnations from the international community.

Traditionally while the law has taken a stronger presence in the field of human rights, it is essential to acknowledge the political science approach. Although law and politics are inter-related, legal scholars mainly form judgements based on whether the law has been violated or observed, however, political scientist, explain the reasoning and in what way the law is violated or observed. Political scientists analyse political activities, political thoughts and political behaviour through data and research to identify key influences and causal mechanisms. This is particularly useful in understanding whether international human rights instruments promote and protect human rights and provides information on whether a State conforms to the framework. This next section aims at looking at the findings from various observations conducted by political scientists to see the impact of States behaviour as a member State to various international human rights treaties. Though some observation and data were

collected almost a decade ago, its application can still be valuable in understanding China's approach to human rights covenants.

Studies on the ratification of CAT suggested that States that ratified CAT were more likely to torture and engage in worse torture practices than non-ratifying States (Vreeland, 2008; Hill, 2010; Cole, 2012). As a party to CAT since 1988, China has arguably violated the rights of Uyghurs and other Muslims due to its suspected torture in internment camps, supporting these findings. Vreeland (2008) went further and suggested that this was also dependent on the State's regime type – democracies showed modest improvements after the signing of CAT than authoritarian regimes that had no opposition. As China is ruled under a one-party system with no separation of powers, no checks and balances and no multiparty elections, it is difficult to hold the State accountable. The State has become a dictatorship by one highly dogmatic and ideological political party (the Communists) that is unaccountable to anyone except whatever inner-party power struggles occur under the surface. This allows the one ruling party to dictate and utilise their power to violate individuals' human rights with no accountability even if it means violating international law. Subsequently, international human rights instruments may only work in State's that have opposition parties to empower groups to assert the norm, leading to more confrontation followed by a counter-response and transparency on such issues. As such, China is less likely to comply with these standards as State sovereignty trumps individual rights and international obligations impede on this position.

It is not just opposition parties that can hold governments accountable, but also civil society organisations. China has introduced legislation that expands the State's power to regulate and monitor foreign and domestic human rights organisations. The decrease of civic space has provided challenges to various human rights organisations, and activists as government restrictions have prevented them from protecting and promoting human rights in China. Neumayer (2005) states that "in very autocratic regimes with weak civil society, ratification can be expected not to affect and is sometimes even associated with more right violations". This raises the question as to whether the Chinese State ratified significant human rights treaties as a public relations stunt rather than for compliance; it seems the former trumps the latter. Thus, this shows insights on the position of the Chinese State on human rights, suggesting that it is likely that the State will continue violating Uyghur and other Muslims human rights despite its international duties.

Furthermore, Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui (2005) examined whether the amount of human rights treaties ratified by States affected their behaviour by examining the ICCPR, ICESCR, CAT, CEDAW and CERD. They found that States that had ratified more human rights treaties had no effect on how they respected human rights, and those who have ratified were more likely to violate rights than non-ratifying States. It is, therefore, overly optimistic to presume that being a party to an international instrument means that a State will promote and protect human rights.

Various scholars have argued that international mechanisms are inherently weak and that they only serve a promotional function instead of an instrument that promotes and protects rights (Donnelly,

1989; Forsythe, 1991; Opsahl, 1995; Robertson, 1981). States, like China, can recognise these weaknesses and ratify human rights treaties as it will not threaten their sovereignty or their desires to implement certain rights restricted policies. These States, then, ratify a convention for international approval, rather than acknowledging certain rights.

Though the Chinese State may argue that their failure to oblige to international mechanisms is due to a matter of national security, this seemingly weak argument is unclear to how practising Islam correlates to a national security threat. Political science, thus, highlights that although international laws aim to improve human rights obligations, they do not necessarily work in practice.

For China, the ratification of specific human rights instruments has not changed their behaviour towards the seemingly endless conflict on Uyghur and Muslims. Though these findings help evaluate and compare whether States comply with international human rights instruments, the international dynamic of privileging security issues over the protection of human rights is prevalent in China and its approach to Xinjiang. Instead, it is China's domestic laws such as the Anti-Terrorism Act that have contributed to the furtherance of human rights violations against the Uyghurs and other Muslims residing in Xinjiang.

The Chinese/Asian Values Debate and Cultural Relativism

Chinese values are often conflated with Asian values as they share similar morals and ethics. Asian values which garnered particular attention in the 1990s by prominent political leaders such as current Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad and former Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew. This presented an Asian discourse which argues that human rights are culturally relative to Western societies ignoring the universalist approach that views rights as expected purely by being human (Donnelly, 2006; Ignatieff, 2003; Campbell, 2006). Thus, for many Asian States like China, international human rights are considered Western concepts of human rights.

Numerous definitions of Chinese values have been set forth and generally refers to influences taken from Confucianism (De Bary, 2011). Confucianism has impacted and influenced China for centuries, "guiding people's behaviour since the Han dynasty" and underpinning the foundation of East Asian societies (Ambler, 2003; King, 2018). Its impact on East Asia developed a model of modern civilisation separate from the Western model of modernisation. While the West rely heavily on individual rights, Asian values instead revolve around a collective society, strong leadership, law and order and family (Bruun, and Jacobsen, 2000). This has often been argued with profound bluntness, as when the Foreign Minister of the PRC declared at the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 "individuals must put the State's rights before their own" (Tang, 1995).

Advocates of Asian values have asserted that these values have aided the development of economic growth and material welfare in Asian societies, as seen in the 1980s and 90s. For these societies, the Asian values discourse was the causal factor to the region's economic prosperity – giving it a certainty

to their debate. In 1997, when the economy plummeted, the Asian values rhetoric was pushed to the background, however, at the same time the Asian values debate is still persistent and used as a basis to counteract the notion of universal human rights. For China, thus, the debate provides a pretext to why human rights instruments are purely aspirational, as human rights for them is understood differently.

Non-Western governments often argue that international human rights instruments are a Western political tactic aimed at reinforcing the agenda of universal human rights and fails to look at the cultural relativist approach. Cultural relativists believe that values and practices should be understood based on a person's culture rather than judged based on what is the "norm" (Gordan, 2018; Freeman, 2013; Herskovits, 1972). International law and community do not acknowledge this, so their eco-political ideologies clash with non-Western principles. Matua (2001) supports this by arguing that human rights are a Western concept that is detrimental to and will conflict with non-Western values such as the Chinese/Asian values discourse. As Western history is not parallel to Chinese history, the creation of the international framework is unrelatable to Chinese culture and traditions. This has even guided the Russian-Chinese Declaration, the Declaration on the Promotion of International Law. This Declaration contests the Western dominance exerted in international law, as China and Russia reject the Western notion of international law which does not consider their best interest (Mälksoo, 2016).

China claims that it is a rule of law State, differing from the Western concept of the rule of law, meaning certain international treaties do not apply to them as they can interfere with internal affairs and are not culturally applicable to non-Western societies. For instance, its refusal to ratify the ICCPR is due to the belief that civil and political rights will negatively affect the political and economic climate. Therefore, the restriction of Uyghurs and other individual rights lets the State obtain social order to guarantee national development as Uyghurs, and other minority rights have the ability to undermine and subvert State power and Han Chinese values. For China, Uyghur ethnic, culture and religion is the demise of Han Chinese values that have been around for centuries. If civil and political rights were easily obtained, it would provide Uyghurs, the means to self-determination and autonomy, which may lead to an independent Xinjiang. So, in order to preserve Asian values or Han Chinese values restriction on human rights and international law is necessary to prevent the destruction of China and create a one nation Han Chinese State.

However, it is undeniable that in the Chinese human rights debate, the Chinese understanding (or lack of understanding) has had a protuberant impact on individuals like the Uyghurs. It is too simplistic to imply that international conventions and international human rights standards are only Western concepts and are only applicable to Western democracies. Instead, "they [human rights] are the cultural and ethical constructs that have been built on discussions, negotiations and power struggles among the States participating in the UN mechanisms and other international platforms" (Poon, 2018). Western values have had a profound influence on Chinese society, it has not substituted traditional Chinese values, but it has complemented it from politics to economy.

The CCP plays an increasingly significant role in the global community and would be in denial to suggest they do not consider a universalist approach to human rights. This is due to their prominent role in the UN. The political implications of framing the human rights discourse as aspirational or interfering with international affairs may lead more harm than good. It delegitimises international law, and subsequently allows authorities to continue human rights violations based on cultural relativism and Western imperialism. Classifying international law and its instruments as a neo-colonial political tactic stigmatises its role in the international community regressing their purpose for change. Carothers and Brechenmarcher (2014) argue that governments "typically fly the anti-foreign banner to justify and build support for such actions, playing the nationalist card in bids at greater control over the political system", which is apparent in the Chinese values debate. The Chinese government use this excuse in order to continue violating individuals' rights like Uyghurs.

As a superpower in the UN, their authority and veto power give them the ability to change the human rights framework and puts them in a position to reshape norms, alter expectations and make new realities. China's aim to uphold a predominantly one-way relationship where they retain control and power by defaming the concept of human rights and international law for not obtaining Chinese or Asian values has given them the excuse to continue violating human rights.

International human rights instruments are put in place to ensure that States are held accountable for abusing individual rights, not to warrant control over specific States. Rights are universal as they apply to all individuals, and it is clear that China uses the Chinese/Asian values debate as they have ulterior motives other than protecting cultural integrity. This poses a significant threat to many Uyghurs and Muslims in Xinjiang as China's authority in the UN gives them the power to ignore calls to end intense security, surveillance and human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

The International Community

The UN has urged China to end its discriminatory measures against the Uyghurs in 2018. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination ordered China to end mass surveillance and shut down internment camps after Western countries, including the UK, raised its concerns. However, China denied the very existence of such camps and guaranteed Uyghurs and Muslims living in Xinjiang were fine (Nebehay, 2018). As China continued its discriminatory practices against Uyghurs, the UN started discussing possible next steps at the annual session of the Human Rights Council. The UK and Turkey expressed concern on the rights of religion and cultural identity of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, but still, no action was taken.

By March 2019, the US summoned the Human Rights Council for a meeting to discuss and draw attention to the issue and start to build a motion for action. In response, China hosted diplomats from various countries such as Pakistan, Russia and Cuba to take a look at their so-called 'vocational training centres' to convince them not to attend the event. However, Canada, the Netherlands,

Germany and the UK sponsored the event, resulting in various diplomats attending and discussing the conflict of Xinjiang as a violation of human rights.

The UN, human rights chief, requested China to make an independent inquiry into reports of its abuse in Xinjiang, but no specific measures were drawn (ibid; Coming-Bruce, 2019). As China has framed the narrative that the camps are implemented to combat terrorism and for national security, most of its allies, believe it. However, this has not stopped many other States aims to stop the persecution of Uyghurs and Chinese State terror. However, this has proved difficult in a collective action problem like Xinjiang.

As its no State's individual responsibility to ensure human rights are upheld, the UN needs to facilitate cooperation and mediate between States to find a solution to the issue of Xinjiang. However, no UN meeting has led to a plan of action due to the limits intrinsic in the structure of the organisation. For instance, due to the alleged accusations of torture in the internment camps, China violates Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court 2002 (ICC) which prohibits the use of torture and persecution. However, as China is not a party member of the Rome Statute, it is left in the hands of the UN Security Council (UNSC) to refer the case to the ICC as it had global jurisdiction (Rakhima and Satyawati, 2019). However, China is one of the five permanent members of the UNSC, which means they have veto power on all decisions, including that of the treatment of Uyghurs and Muslims in Xinjiang. This shows the restrictions of the UN in remedying the issue in Xinjiang and instead leaves individual States being faced with an ultimatum; continue to propose solutions and pressure the Chinese government into respecting human rights or risk antagonising relations with China.

In January 2019, US Senators Marco Rubio and Robert Mendez introduced bills within the State Department, FBI, and US intelligence agencies to assess China's behaviour of Uyghurs in internment camps after mounting concerns from academia, NGOs, and the Uyghur community in the US arose (Szadziewski, 2019). The Uyghur Human Rights Policy (UHRP) Act of 2019 and the Uyghur Intervention and Global Unified Humanitarian Response (UIGHUR) Act 2019 "offer a framework to sanction Chinese officials responsible for human rights abuses in Xinjiang and mobilise the US law enforcement to end harassment of Uyghur Americans demonstrating the parallels between activism and State action" (ibid). However, the prospect of these bills is unknown primarily due to the US current political climate on China as its competitor and its antagonism towards Muslims.

China has responded with a letter to President Trump stating "I would like to advise those US lawmakers, who are paid by taxpayers' money, to focus on doing their job and serving the Americans, instead of poking their noses in other countries' domestic affairs, acting as some kind of human rights judge" (PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018). Though it may be difficult to be optimistic about the effectiveness of the bills, these legislative measures are the first meaningful response to the human rights issue transpiring in Xinjiang. However, slow bureaucratic processes in the US and President Trumps unwillingness to cooperate suggests that the situation in Xinjiang will continue.

Furthermore, in an open letter to Xi Jinping, Western powers have stated that its treatment of Uyghurs and other Muslims is not only immoral but harmful to China's economy (Associated Press, 2019; Putz, 2019; The Economist, 2019). They argued that the ongoing human rights violations in Xinjiang had created a "climate of uncertainty" for investors who are pivotal to China during its monetary decline (ibid). However, China has enlisted like-minded governments, such as Russia and Saudi Arabia and thirty-five others, to back its policies in Xinjiang in a written letter to the UN (Miles, 2019; Faiz, 2019). The letter praised China's remarkable achievements in the field of human rights and supported China's approach to undertaking specific measures against its Uyghur and ethnic groups. However, it seems for many of these States there is a concealed motive to their appraisal.

Many of these States have partnered with China's BMI or heavily rely on China's low-interest loans (Faiz, 2019). Thus, Western criticisms that China's economy will decline is improbable, as the solidarity of these States, mainly due to its economic advancements, suggests the opposite. This is greatly odious considering amongst these are Muslim majority States who have expressed their concerns of the mistreatment of Muslims elsewhere. Again, this shows how China's economic impact has enabled the State to avert any criticisms of its human rights violations of the Uyghurs and other Muslims in Xinjiang. If solutions to China's human rights abuses in Xinjiang continue to be pushed back, there is no doubt that this will continue to infringe Uyghurs fundamental rights.

It is clear that although the international community have attempted to put pressure on the Chinese government into ending its draconian regime against the Uyghurs, it has not been enough the ensure the protection and promotion of the ethnic group. With the UNs inability to intervene and China's perpetual deflections, it is impossible to know how long before China is compelled to end its human rights abuses.

Conclusion

All in all, the securitisation of Xinjiang has played a significant role in perpetuating the dehumanisation and desensitisation towards the tragedies of Uyghur suffering that is still occurring. This has led to tensions between the Chinese government and Uyghurs which have further intensified social division along ethnic lines that are deepened by religious, cultural and ethnic differences. Uyghurs unwillingness to be Sinicised has primarily framed them as a non-compliant group that threatens Chinese national security. The post 9/11 era became a catalyst for the Chinese government to depict Uyghurs as terrorists who held extremists' views. It has thus given the State vindication to use the fight against global terrorism to implement security and extraordinary measures.

State-run media and artificial intelligence have been inextricably tied to the practices of securitisation, shaping public perception and establishing an overtly racist system. This has alienated and reduced Uyghurs to security threats that need to be controlled. Normative discourse has legitimised discrimination of Uyghurs by the dominant Han Chinese perpetuating a hierarchy whereby Uyghurs are reduced to the dangerous other. Isolation and alienation have given the State the position to antagonise between both ethnicities were the dominant Han have accepted and requested punitive measures against the Uyghurs from the government. The securitising narrative has thus allowed the State to force millions of Uyghurs into internment camps in hopes to eradicate their cultural, religious and ethnic practises.

Biometric identifiers such as facial recognition have been advanced and used to target Uyghurs and subject them to inexcusable conditions. This should have provided the Chinese State with the opportunity to rethink their securitisation strategy to the Uyghurs. However, Xi Jinping stated that he believes that the States strategy in Xinjiang will be maintained as it has surpassed its expectations (Wong, 2014). Thus, showing the unlikeliness of change as China's insistence will continue its securitisation of Uyghurs.

As Xinjiang was once part of the ancient Silk Road, its convenient geographic location has been one key factor to its securitisation and mass surveillance. Han colonialism of the region along with China's Belt and Road Initiative has benefited the Xinjiang region and the country as a whole. This paper has shown that for China, economic progressions have taken precedence over individual rights, thus leaving Uyghurs in a desolate and distressing position.

The securitisation of Uyghurs has led to the Chinese State violating countless international human rights laws. Despite China's leading role in the field of international human rights, this paper has rejected the State's position as a mere international stunt as its behaviour of Uyghurs is contradictory. Ratification or signing of any human rights violation the Chinese State is a party to have been violated due to its forced internment camps. For most Uyghurs, its reliance on international human rights law becomes disappointing as the Chinese State fails to uphold and oblige to laws, they are bound to

maintain. Its excuse to not follow international human rights laws as it impedes on international affairs and national security presents an unreasonable explanation. This is mainly due to the lack of understanding of how Uyghurs practising Islam possesses enough power to destabilise the Chinese State.

The Chinese State's argument that international human rights are a form of Western imperialism as it fails to acknowledge the Asian/Chinese values debate or cultural relativism has been challenged. China's play of such debate has given the State an excuse to gain greater control over their political system. Rather than using international human rights instruments as a law, they are bound by; the Chinese State have used the values and cultural relativism debate as a guise to continue to violate the rights of Uyghurs. If these debates held weight, then it can only be assumed that domestic law takes priority, which has yet to be seen.

Feeling that international human rights law has failed to protect Uyghurs, the Chinese Constitution and its laws have also failed to protect their fundamental human rights. China's Strike Hard campaign and its anti-terrorism laws have affected the lives of millions of Uyghurs in Xinjiang. This has infringed on Uyghurs lives, preventing them from practising their faith, such as fasting of praying, as this is deemed a security risk. Albeit the Chinese Constitution and its National Human Rights Action Plans to protect and to promote ethnic minority rights, the State has consistently breached its obligations. Uyghurs rights to culture, religion, ethnicity and privacy are only a few violations the State has committed. China being ruled under a one-party system with no opposition to hold the State accountable for such abuses making it easier for the government to be uncooperative. Rather than the Chinese State using its power to respect its Constitution and its laws, instead it has violated Uyghurs rights.

Calls from the international community to urge the Chinese State to terminate its ill-treatment of Uyghurs, particularly in internment camps, have been unsuccessful. Though the US have presented activism and action through the UHRP and UIGHUR Acts, the lack of support from the international community and the Chinese government fails to tackle the issue. This is mainly due to China's economic influence as its Belt and Road Initiative provides economic reassurance to many States around the world. The UNs inability to interfere and other States turning a blind eye to the situation in Xinjiang leaves Uyghurs in a position of uncertainty.

Though the securitisation theory has served a way to legitimise the Chinese State's abuses of Uyghurs, by galvanising them as security threats, it has failed to consider the possible side effects. Further literature and research are needed in this area to illustrate the possible impact of securitisation. However, this is difficult as China's technological advancements and historical outlooks are unlike anything anyone has ever seen before.

Therefore, while the securitisation of Xinjiang has enabled the Chinese government to clampdown on the Uyghurs, it is clear that the underlying reasoning is due to the economy. China's sophisticated practices of securitisation on Uyghurs has led to a forced Sinification strategy that violates Uyghurs cultural, religious and ethnic rights. This has benefitted China's economy as Xinjiang plays a crucial role in its economic initiatives, but this has left millions of Uyghurs in danger. It is unknowing how long Uyghurs will suffer; however, it seems as though China's surveillance State will remain for years to come.

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