

## Response to Tribunal Queries on Population Dilution and Residential Schools

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**(1) On the policy to dilute the Xinjiang population, the Uyghur and indigenous population - what is the final purpose: You stated that the Han settlements are crucial for the security of the region and that this is expressed in documents, that you wished to re-read before giving an answer - submit to the Tribunal later.**

### Summary of Intent as expressed and demonstrated

The final purpose of dilution, as described in Chinese government documents, is to achieve security and lasting rule of the CCP in Xinjiang under a shared “Chinese” (中华) culture. Under the same security umbrella, officials from Xi Jinping down to the local level call for the melding of ethnic groups in a “melting pot.” Party officials focus on two “problems” that they see as obstacles to the dilution and melding they believe is critical for security and continued rule: 1) indigenous population substantially outnumbering the Han in Xinjiang and 2) indigenous people living in concentrated areas. They seek to address these perceived threats by increasing Han population in the region through migration, increasing Han population in the region through promotion of childbearing, physically removing Uyghurs from areas where they predominate (and from Xinjiang entirely), and preventing Uyghur births.

The expressed intentions summarized above are reflected in actual policy design and implementation. There are other intentions expressed which do not match actual policies, suggesting that their role is primarily rhetorical. Notable among these are official claims that the “melting pot” should blend minorities with Han and Han with minorities, implying that the change in culture and identification is equal. In fact, the policies actually implemented all focus on weakening minority groups’ ethnic identification and bringing their cultural practices into line with the Han. This suggests an unspoken intent to absorb Xinjiang’s indigenous ethnic groups into the Han.

### Expressions of intent in state documents

Clear expressions of intent can be found in speeches by leaders, state media, local government planning documents, official research institution publications, and articles by state-supported academics. The connection between population dilution and security is entirely explicit and consistent across documents, as is the call for “melting pot” fusion.

The number of available documents on the topic is high. A large selection of them have been reviewed, summarized, and quoted from extensively in [“‘End the Dominance of the Uyghur Ethnic Group’: An Analysis of Beijing’s Population Optimization Strategy in Southern Xinjiang”](#) by Adrian Zenz. Rather than summarize these documents again I will introduce examples that are not included in Zenz’s article, which show how these policy goals are framed by Xi Jinping and then re-presented by lower officials and Party academics. (I recommend also reviewing the quotes in the Zenz article alongside my comments here, because they include statements that are even more forthright, for example, discussion of building an environment in which “ethnic boundaries and barriers are gradually weakened and eliminated.”)

The close relationship between Xi Jinping’s orders and lower-level policy making is particularly clear in state documents related to the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, commonly referred to by its

Chinese abbreviation, “Bingtuan.” The Bingtuan is a para-military conglomerate and governing arm of the Chinese state, and it has had an outsize role in population dilution based on migration. This is because the Bingtuan was primarily founded as a soldier-settler organization, which brought over a million Chinese settlers to Xinjiang in its first two decades. In the period of 2014-2017 the Bingtuan was tasked with a change in mission emphasis, moving from a focus on economic development to a focus on security and population “optimization.”

Xi Jinping announced the new strategic goals for the Bingtuan when he visited a Bingtuan facility in 2014 and delivered a speech. The original speech appears not to have been made public, but it is [summarized](#) and quoted from in state [media](#), Bingtuan documents, and Chinese academic papers. Bingtuan policy papers regularly cite this speech as the source of the organization’s guiding mission.

Xi’s speech outlines “[four major roles](#)” for the Bingtuan in ensuing years:

- “Adjusting the social composition”
- “Promoting cultural exchange” [between ethnic groups]
- “Advancing regional coordination”
- “Optimizing population resources”

The “major roles” are presented as means of achieving three central goals for the Bingtuan: “stabilizing the border region” (Xinjiang); acting as “a melting pot of all ethnic groups”; and serving as a “model zone of advanced productivity and advanced culture.”<sup>1</sup> All four of the “major roles” target the cultural and demographic distinctiveness of indigenous groups, especially the Uyghurs, in the Southern part of Xinjiang, where such groups are concentrated. Here I will focus primarily on “optimizing population resources.”

The meaning of the population resource optimization policy is discussed in detail in an article entitled “Research on Giving Full Play to the Bingtuan’s Special Role in Optimizing Population Resources,” written by two scholars at the official Party school of the Bingtuan, which trains government officials.<sup>2</sup>

In its opening paragraph the article cites Xi Jinping as the source of the “four major roles” and “optimizing population resources” in particular. Population resources are described in terms of four aspects: size, quality, composition, and distribution. The composition category includes, among other aspects, “Han-ethnic composition.” The authors describe this aspect as follows:

Han-ethnic composition mainly refers to the proportion, regional distribution, and residential concentration of the population of different ethnic groups. Affected by factors such as ethnic habits, religious beliefs, and family planning policies, the birth rate of minority populations is far higher than that of the Han ethnic group, resulting in a continuous decline in the proportion of the Han ethnicity in the total population. At the same time, ethnic minorities are characterized by a high degree of concentrated residence. Highly concentrated areas of ethnic minorities are

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<sup>1</sup> A [media report](#) quotes Xi directly: “We must give full play to the special role of the Bingtuan in adjusting social composition, promoting cultural exchange, advancing regional coordination, and optimizing population resources, so that the Bingtuan can truly become a stabilizing tool for a stable and secure border region, melting pot of people of all ethnic groups, and a model area of advanced productivity and advanced culture.

<sup>2</sup> Li Wei-chao and Wang Li-juan, “兵团发挥优化人口资源特殊作用问题研究[A Discussion on Playing the Special Role of the XPCC in Optimizing the Population Resources]”, *西北人口 Northwest Population Journal*. 2020, 1: 116-126.

likely to become targets of extremist ideological infiltration and erosion, and we must attach great importance to them.

The paper goes on to outline the “problems” that the “optimization of population resources” needs to address. Within the composition category the authors list four problems. One of them is that “the population of ethnic minorities is growing faster than that of Han people and their residence pattern is distinctly concentrated.” The authors are concerned not only that growth is disproportionate within the Bingtuan, but also in Xinjiang as a whole, lamenting that “in terms of Xinjiang, the proportion of the Han in the total population also dropped from 41.38% to 32.32% ... while the proportion of ethnic minorities rose to 67.68%” between 1980 and 2017.

To address these “problems,” the authors go on to recommend the following policies, which have all been implemented since the article’s publication:

- Implement preferential policies and special benefits to create increased immigration from internal Chinese provinces to Xinjiang.
- “Improve the quality of ethnic minority populations” through education in the Chinese language.
- “guide ethnic minority populations to migrate” out of Xinjiang to cities in the interior.
- Encourage ethnic minorities to move to out of the Southern part of Xinjiang, where they are concentrated, and into the North.

These policies are offered alongside recommendations for expanding the size of the Bingtuan in an absolute sense and expanding its presence in the Uyghur-dominated South. The Bingtuan population has historically fluctuated between 80% and 90% Han, part of the reason that the Bingtuan is seen as a stabilizing force.

Numerous other, less detailed state publications repeatedly emphasize the Bingtuan’s role as a “melting pot to congeal all ethnicities” and “promoting advanced culture and Chinese (中华) culture.

“Melting pot” absorption is of course not the only consideration that state actors bring to questions of population distribution in Xinjiang, but it does appear to be the overriding concern. For example, planners also express concern about limited resources (especially water) in Xinjiang and worry that the population is already too large in many areas. Nonetheless, the “melting pot” goal overrides this concern where the Han population is outnumbered, and planners are working hard to increase the Han population even where they are aware of strains on resources.

While the above expressions of intent are reflected in policies enacted on the ground, other expressions are not. Several documents describe the “melting pot” and embedding as a two-way street, as is implied in Xi Jinping’s phrase, “cultural exchange,” suggesting that Han Chinese will have to change as much as indigenous ethnic groups. However, there is little or no evidence of programs that encourage Han people to change their daily habits and lifeways to those of indigenous groups. While Uyghur children must learn Mandarin, Chinese children have no requirement to study Uyghur. Uyghurs are required to refurbish their homes with “modern” Chinese-style furniture, but no Han people are required to adopt Uyghur furnishings. Uyghur students must learn Chinese moral and philosophical classics, but Chinese students need not study Uyghur equivalents. In short, while almost every element of Uyghur life is under pressure to become more Chinese, virtually no aspect of Han life is under pressure to become more Uyghur. This suggests that the “melting pot” is intended to absorb the Uyghurs and other

indigenous ethnicities into the Han, assisted by the dilution of the indigenous population and the curbing of their reproduction.

**(2) On the intent behind boarding schools - you recommended looking at the 2017 report issued by the Xinjiang Bureau of Education which contains information on the subject. You mentioned getting more Han teachers, teaching Chinese, having it as a language of operation not just as a language of education, involving home visits to coerce Uyghur families to send their children into boarding schools.**

Cultural assimilation is clearly an important goal of the boarding schools and its elements are discussed in the Xinjiang Education Department report on 2017 activities (published in 2018). That report was published by the national Education Department as part of a compendium of reports from multiple provinces and regions.

The following passages directly address your query:

“In order to implement the general goals proposed by General Secretary Jinping regarding Xinjiang’s social stability and long-term security, the autonomous region, based on the overall social stability of Xinjiang, has decided to make great efforts to run boarding schools in the compulsory education stage in rural areas, to promote the teaching of the national standard language [Mandarin Chinese], and to create a stable and peaceful learning environment for students, blocking the influence of the family’s religious atmosphere on the children to the greatest extent and reducing the occurrence of ‘teaching science in school, listening to the scriptures at home, with thinking and ideas suffering the shocks of moving back and forth’” (232)

All schools should “create a campus culture of comprehensive use of Mandarin; universally develop activities such as recitation of Chinese classics, reciting excellent poems, listening to Mandarin broadcasts, and singing Mandarin songs; uniformly use Beijing time on campus; and uniformly use Mandarin for communication...” (233-4)

In reporting on the education department’s recent successes, the document boasts that “the recruitment of teachers, especially the number and proportion of Han teachers, is unprecedented in history.” (236)

In further recruiting teachers the report says, “regard political quality and the ability to teach the national standard language as the primary standards.” (238)

“Effectively give full play to the role of the autonomous region’s “*fang hui ju*” [home visitation and monitoring program] working team in villages, implement door-to-door visits, and urge guardians to send school-age children and adolescents to school and complete compulsory education” (237)

**(3) Any further issues you wish to raise and/or which arise from (1) and (2) above.**

The “melting pot” terminology has a distinctive history in China, originally indicating the assimilation of minorities to Han culture and identity. It was used in the early twentieth century, most notably by Sun Yatsen, who is widely regarded in China today as the father of the modern Chinese nation. His seminal works are still praised and promoted by the PRC government. Sun advocated a “melting pot” approach to ethnic diversity in China and promoted an overarching “Chinese” (*Zhonghua*) race/culture to subsume all peoples within China’s borders. He was explicit in advocating that the other, smaller ethnic groups assimilate to Han culture, something he thought would be the natural outcome of mixing given the overwhelming numerical superiority of the Han. The Communist Party of China subsequently abandoned much of Sun’s ethnic ideology for an approach borrowed from the Soviet Union. The term *Zhonghua* receded in favor of *Zhongguo*, and the “melting pot” approach was replaced by an emphasis on the individual flourishing of distinctive ethnic groups in a “multi-ethnic nation-state”. In the last ten years the central government has turned away from theories and policies supporting ethnic distinctiveness, following the advice of scholars who began to explicitly attack the existing ethnic policies in the 1990s. State pronouncements have now followed those scholars and returned to the terminology of Sun Yatsen, including the frequent use of *Zhonghua*, framed as an overarching state/race based in Han Chinese culture, and the idea of the “melting pot” fusing all people into this overarching ethnic/racial identity.