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State discourses and effects of “Ethnic Extinction”

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As the Chinese political theory scholar David Tobin has shown in a recent book, the term “ethnic extinction” — or *mínzú xiāowáng* 民族消亡 — first appeared as a state-promoted social project following large-scale violence in 2009 in the Uyghur region.²

Ethnic Extinction in Textbooks and Ethnic Studies Scholarship

Tobin demonstrates that following the 2009 Urumchi protests, a discourse that centered on erasing ethnic difference through a program of cultural elimination began to emerge. This forcible campaign stood in contrast to an older incentive-based “ethnic assimilation” policy that held that a combination of Han settlement and economic development would gradually erode Uyghur ethnic distinctiveness. Now in high school and vocational college textbooks the Xinjiang Education Bureau called for the “transcendent ethnicity” of the Han to fuse with the “backward” Uyghur identity, pulling it into the “highest stage” of its development: “extinction.” And replacing it with a new “higher level” identification with the Chinese nation and a Chinese ethnicity. In fact, they were calling for an identity that was dominated by Han norms and Chinese language.

This rhetoric did not stay in Xinjiang policy documents and education texts. Instead, it was taken up by a so-called second generation of Beijing-based, mostly Han, ethnic studies scholars and policymakers, who envisioned a strong Chinese identity centered around a Han ethno-nation. While they advocated the continued limited use of minority languages in the Chinese education system in the short-term, over time they envisioned a “modern” Chinese identity, figured as inevitable and value-neutral, that would eliminate minority ethnicity language use.

One of these scholars, Ma Rong, who received his PhD in sociology from Brown University before returning to China, advocated that minority ethnicities should be stripped of formal political recognition and their schools become monolingual like the education system of the United States. Ma differed from other leading scholars such as Hu Angang and Hu Lianhe in terms of how quickly the process should be accomplished.³ But like Hu and Hu, he did not appear to recognize that the lack of educational autonomy protections for Native Americans, the social position that most closely resembles the Uyghurs, especially a “residential school” system, contributed to the erasure of Native American identities. Instead, as the anthropologist Timothy Grose has shown in another recent book, Ma and others advocated for a school system that closely resembled the settler colonial education system used in the United States and Canada.⁴ They called for a shift from a more loosely defined system of interaction, where differences were

¹ This statement is a revised and condensed version of an article titled “‘Ethnic extinction’ in northwest China” that first appeared in the journal *SupChina* on July 7, 2021.

² <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/securing-chinas-northwest%20frontier/417E88E45DFE0D7E2800E7B94B25A019#fndtn-information>

³ https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/elliott/files/elliott_tcj_case_of_the_missing_indigene__1.pdf

⁴ <https://madeinchinajournal.com/2020/05/06/negotiating-inseparability-in-china-timothy-grose/>

recognized and permitted, to an enforced program of integration that denied the autonomy of “local interests.” In an influential 2013 article Hu and Hu argued explicitly that “the bedrock of the Chinese Dream is the integration of the peoples of China into a single nation-race.”⁵ Over the span of several years this scholarship began to inform frontier education policy.⁶ Working in tandem with emergent Chinese policing theory and a newly developed counter-terrorism industry,⁷ it was operationalized as an aspect of the 2014 Xinjiang de-extremification campaign.

The “reeducation camps” and associated factories that were built by the Xinjiang Public Security Bureaus across the region beginning in 2015 should be seen as at least a partial outcome of this education policy. Like reform schools and workhouses that incarcerated Native Americans and other ethnic and racial minorities in North America, the ostensible goals of the camps are to teach detainees language skills, belief systems, and industrial discipline.

Uyghur children from across the region were immersed in a “bilingual” education system that sets out to eliminate local native languages and traditions, with focused teaching of Mandarin. This part of the “ethnic extinction” process was enforced by removing children from their homes and transferring them to members of another ethnic group, the Han majority. First, nearly all schools above eighth grade became residential schools, where students are held behind walls except on weekend home visits. Then, beginning in 2017, many elementary schools and nurseries also became residential schools.⁸ In this way, Uyghur children of all ages were increasingly separated from their parents.⁹ At the same time, as documented in thousands of job advertisements posted by government bureaus across Xinjiang, the teachers in Uyghur schools were replaced with newly hired Han elementary school teachers and daycare workers from other parts of China.¹⁰ The basic requirements for these jobs, aside from Mandarin fluency, was “support for the Party’s line, guidelines, and policies, conscientiously safeguarding the unity of the motherland, ethnic solidarity and social stability, while adamantly opposing ethnic separatism and illegal religious activities, and not believing in religion or participating in religious activities.”

A group of nearly 90,000 newly hired avowedly non-Muslim educators pushed existing state-employed Uyghur educators to the side.¹¹ In a 2020 conversation, a Uyghur woman now living in North America told me she asked her mother, a former school teacher, about the conditions of the elementary school in her home community. “She told me, ‘None of our people are teachers

⁵ <https://www.cnki.com.cn/article/cjfdtotal-qhdz201304013.htm>

⁶ https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/elliott/files/elliott_tcj_case_of_the_missing_indigene__1.pdf

⁷ <https://madeinchinajournal.com/2019/10/25/preventative-policing-as-community-detention-in-northwest-china/>

⁸ <http://www.jpolorisk.com/break-their-roots-evidence-for-chinas-parent-child-separation-campaign-in-xinjiang/>

⁹ <https://www.ft.com/content/f0d3223a-7f4d-11e8-bc55-50daf11b720d>

¹⁰ <https://archive.fo/jm3WW>

¹¹ <https://archive.fo/vGIInq>

anymore. Those that are older, like me, have retired. The younger ones now work as cleaners in the school.”” In order to remain in teaching positions, Uyghurs had to prove they could speak and teach Chinese language with near-native fluency and have spotless family backgrounds. For most Uyghur educators, this was simply impossible.

Uyghur children across the region are now effectively raised in a non-Muslim, Mandarin-speaking environment. Beginning on September 1, 2017, primary schools across the region began to change their “bilingual” curriculum to a Chinese-only “mode 2” program.¹² An announcement published by the education department of Bortala County noted, “In the end, only Chinese will be taught.”¹³

Manuals of Ethnic Extinction in Domestic Life

For Uyghurs and Kazakhs on watchlists, primarily those who are the relatives of prisoners and detainees, the reeducation campaign is even more intensive. The Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs has assigned civil servants to serve as monitors for this targeted population. These 1.1 million civil servants are instructed to describe themselves as “relatives” of the Muslim families to which they are assigned.¹⁴ The manuals they use tell them to make sure that the families are not practicing Islam, that they profess their loyalty to the government, and that their children are learning Chinese.¹⁵ They are to ensure that Uyghurs do not perform life rituals like marriages and funerals in traditional ways outside the control of the state. They also tell them to “comfort” the families during the difficulty of the campaign.¹⁶ But often these exercises in comfort amount to sessions where Uyghurs are told what to think and feel. They appear to be efforts to reaffirm Party doctrine and make Han people feel good about all they have done to “save” Muslims.¹⁷ Yet as much as Han control has always been a central element of the People’s Republic of China, the unabashed push for Han dominance has become much more explicit under the Xi Jinping administration. As Tobin shows in his book, during Mao Zedong’s time, “ethnic extinction” was a solely negative project associated with the Chinese Nationalists who would later flee to Taiwan and Western imperial colonial projects. Mao, in fact warned against Han ethnocentrism, something he referred to as Han chauvinism. As he put it in a 1953 Party directive, “We must go to the root and criticize the Han chauvinist ideas which exist to a serious degree among many Party members and cadres.”¹⁸ Instead, the Chinese Communists must strive, he argued, to help other nationalities achieve their own communist autonomy.

¹² <http://archive.fo/6F86b>

¹³ <https://archive.fo/cSv4w>

¹⁴ <https://www.chinafile.com/reporting-opinion/postcard/million-citizens-occupy-uyghur-homes-xinjiang>

¹⁵ <https://xinjiang.sppga.ubc.ca/cadre-handbooks/>

¹⁶ <https://archive.fo/WkSOo>

¹⁷ <https://supchina.com/2019/05/14/saved-by-state-terror-gendered-violence-and-propaganda-in-xinjiang/>

¹⁸ https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_25.htm

The multiethnic stance of the early period of the PRC has now been openly reversed. In December 2020, a Han official was placed in charge of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission for the first time in 66 years.¹⁹ This legal body was set up explicitly to defend the rights of minorities. In 2019, the State Council Information Office issued a white paper on Uyghur history that stated directly that Uyghurs are not a Turkic people, that Islam is not their “natural” religion, and that maintaining normative halal standards was anti-civilization.²⁰ It appears now as though an unapologetically Chinese ethno-state is here to stay.

The harms of Chinese ethnonationalism are most sharply felt in Xinjiang. Not only has it produced mass imprisonment of as many as 1 in 10 Uyghur men, family separation that results from internment and residential boarding schools has become endemic.²¹ In Uyghur villages the education policy combined with the broader “de-extremification” campaign has targeted the basic material forms of Uyghur history. A historian of Uyghur material culture, Rian Thum, has also shown that the Chinese government has bulldozed over 100 graveyards across the region as part of a state project to “standardize” burial practices. Thum argues that “the desecration of shrines, the forced reordering of household space, and the demolition of cities in the name of modernity, civilization, and development have all been common tactics of conquering empires and, especially, settler colonial projects around the world.”²²

For Uyghurs, ethnic identity is built from the place where they are born and their ancestors are buried. The priorness of being rooted in a place, and all of the claims to self-determination that such a position entails, is what makes it a primary target of elimination by the “reeducation” system in the Uyghur region. Drawing on examples ranging from North America to Australia, the historian Patrick Wolfe notes that “settler colonialism destroys to replace.”²³ Ethnic extinction is not just about desecration, in some ways it is also about making something new. Through this process, Uyghur land is remade into Chinese property, and Uyghur behavior is controlled and ordered by the state. The standardization of Uyghur funeral practices is a way of reclaiming Uyghur cemetery space for real estate development, “happiness” park construction, and parking lots, and, in some cases, simply blank space. Bulldozed graveyards are also physical manifestations of ethnic extinction.

In a 2018 interview, a Han government official told a reporter that what is happening to the Uyghurs was specific to them.²⁴ “They just don’t have human rights,” he said. Ethnic extinction

¹⁹ <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3114638/china-puts-han-official-charge-ethnic-minority-affairs-beijing>

²⁰ https://web.archive.org/web/20201005142750/http://www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/node_8013442.htm

²¹ <https://livingotherwise.com/2021/01/04/the-elephant-in-the-xuar-ii-brand-new-prisons-expanding-old-prisons-and-hundreds-of-thousands-new-inmates/>

²² <https://madeinchinajournal.com/2020/08/24/the-spatial-cleansing-of-xinjiang-mazar-desecration-in-context/>

²³ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14623520601056240>

²⁴ <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/china-undercover/transcript/>

is often framed as a kind of dissipation, a disappearance of a minority into the majority group. But, because Uyghurs have now been marked as undeserving of the protections of the common people — the *laobaixing* — ethnic extinction, at least for many, is a process of demolition. This in turn is destroying the space of class-based solidarity between Han and Uyghurs. The space of dissonant fusion where ethnic difference is recognized and protected is likewise on the brink of extinction.

1 **11 September 2021 (9:07:30 – 9:43:40)**

2 **Darren Byler**

3

4 DB – I will keep my remarks fairly short and will reserve time for discussion and mostly
5 focus on the most recent report talking about this term “ethnic extinction,” or *minzu*
6 *xiaowang*. My understanding of this is drawn on another witness, David Tobin's book
7 where he analyses high school and educational school textbooks that were published
8 by the Xinjiang Education Bureau or ministry very shortly after the violence in Urumchi
9 in 2009. In these textbooks, they begin to really emphasise ethnic extinction as a sort
10 of invertibility, something that is underway where ethnic groups will be dissolved into
11 a kind of higher civilisation, that is enacted to the Chinese nation or Chinese national
12 civilisation. It really is a kind of social Darwinism that is being endorsed in these
13 textbooks and is being taught to the students and that is representative of this kind of
14 thinking that informed, what is called the second generation of *minzu* policy, which is
15 adapting these norms; de-emphasising ethnic difference and instead emphasising
16 national identification with the Chinese nation.

17 So, what has come out of this system is the residential school system that closely
18 resembles the North American education system for native Americans in the United
19 States and the system in Australia for aborigines where children are separated from
20 their parents and taught the Chinese language and Chinese ideology. The Uyghur
21 identity or Kazakh identity that these students have is de-emphasised and something
22 that is lacking and something that is less than the national identification. The way that
23 this was really implemented was... there was creations of it and evolved over time but
24 in 2017, it was when the State hired 90 000 new educators as it says in state

25 documents very directly and I looked at thousands of job advertisements for the
26 teachers that they were hiring. Over and over, it says the qualifications for teaching in
27 Xinjiang are that the person should have a political background that is free of any
28 problems, that they should speak Chinese at a very fluent level; native speaking is
29 encouraged or preferred and that they should have no affiliation with religious practice.
30 It says religion but because it is Xinjiang, we are talking about Islam. Islam is not
31 something that the teacher should have a relationship to.

32 What I found from my interviews with teachers and children of teachers in the region
33 that as this new group of teachers was hired, Uyghur teachers that were already
34 teaching in the system were often pushed aside. They became janitors, maintenance
35 folks, people that were assistants to the teachers. These new educators really became
36 a priority within the new system, throughout all of Xinjiang. My feeling and I think the
37 evidence shows that what is really happening here is a transfer of children from one
38 ethnic group to another. From the minority to the majority because the children are
39 really being raised within this education system. The boarding schools varies in terms
40 of how separated the children are from their parents but many cases they are
41 separated for at least a week at a time, often for much longer. In some cases,
42 especially for the children of detainees or people that are imprisoned they become the
43 wards of the state. One state document I found shows very clearly that the education
44 system is intended to shift to what they call a “mode 2” form of instruction that is
45 Chinese only.

46 *[Intervention Chair] – It is difficult to understand you clearly.*

47 DB – What I was saying was that the school system is being shifted to what they call
48 “mode 2 form of instruction”; Chinese only as mode of instruction. Even if the school

49 is officially labelled as bilingual, the internal documents and they are not even that
50 internal, I found these on government websites, says that the intention is to move to
51 “mode 2” - that is only Chinese language.

52 The other thing that I look at in this report is mostly Han civil servants that were sent
53 to become the relatives of Uyghurs and their families and Kazak families. It is quite
54 clear that the groups that they were supposed to target were the family members of
55 detainees and prisoners. That was the first targeted group and then there is others
56 that simply live in a sensitive area or village who were also assigned family, Han
57 Chinese older brothers and sisters.

58 The manuals say very clearly that the families are not to practice Islam. That is one of
59 the things that they are observing. They are asking the families; Uyghur families, to
60 confess their loyalties to the government and make sure that they children are learning
61 Chinese. Very often the children act as interpreters for the Han or State workers that
62 are being posted in their homes. The visitors are also to ensure that Uyghur rituals like
63 marriages and funerals are done in a way that is standardised according to the new
64 norms that are being imposed. It is having an effect on life ritual and social
65 reproduction itself. They are also supposed to comfort the family because they
66 understand it is difficult to have a family member missing and financial hardship that
67 is associated with that.

68 The third thing I am looking at in the report is a white paper from the State Counsel
69 Information Office that speaks to Uyghur history and really revises Uyghur history. It
70 says very directly that Uyghurs are not a Turkic people; a counter factual claim. It says
71 also that Islam is not their “natural religion”, and it also says that maintaining normative
72 halal standards as other Muslims would do in other places of the world is an anti-

73 civilisation practice. This opens up and is part of really removing Uyghurs from their
74 land and way of life. We see that in the desecration of sacred lands, cemeteries and
75 shrines, the demolition of mosques or the halting of mosque activities which is fairly
76 widespread, particularly in rural areas. Taken together all of these forms of institutional
77 capture and transformation is what is accelerating the ethnic extinction framing that
78 the textbooks used over the last decade.

79 *COUNSEL – You’ve detailed that the push for Han dominance has become much*
80 *more explicit under Xi Jinping and you state that the Chinese ethno-state is here to*
81 *stay. To what extent does that mean the ethnic extinction project is to continue in its*
82 *current form?*

83 DB – It seem that the institutional processes are capturing Uyghur institutions and that
84 it is spreading to, like the last witness mentioned, to places like Inner Mongolia and
85 Tibet. That capture process is really accelerating. Once an institution has been
86 transformed in focus it is difficult to redirect it. I can’t say for sure that Xi Jinping won’t
87 reverse directions, but it is a very troubling trend and hiring 90 000 teachers is a large
88 logistical challenge and moving them costs a lot of money. The state invests a lot in
89 pushing forward with this campaign and that makes it hard to imagine a dramatic
90 reversal.

91 *COUNSEL – The ethnic extinction project, as you have highlighted in your report, is*
92 *rooted in Chinese academic thinking and also other settler colonial projects. You seem*
93 *to be suggesting in your report that total assimilation rather than physical extermination*
94 *of the Uyghur population is a key goal. What might account as a commission then as*
95 *crimes against Uyghurs?*

96 DB – Can you repeat the last part of that question?

97 *COUNSEL – My reading of your report is that you seem to be suggesting that the*
98 *policy goal here is total assimilation rather than the physical extermination of the*
99 *Uyghur population. What might account for the commission of alleged crimes against*
100 *the Uyghurs?*

101 DB – Total assimilation is a violent process. Separating children from their parents,
102 transferring them from one ethnic group to another is part of that assimilation process.
103 Mass internment is a part of that as well. I think in my interview with Han civil servants
104 in people's homes, they talk about this as a benefit for the Uyghurs. They understand
105 that it is going to be difficult but that in the end they will be grateful because they have
106 saved them from themselves. That is the sort of sentiment that I hear from state
107 officials and employees of the state. It is not dissimilar from other settler-colonial
108 projects. There is a justification that people give to themselves to justify their actions
109 but it is a violent process and that is unmistakably.

110 *PANEL – In your report you cite a couple of academics including Ma Rong as a way*
111 *of example. Can you contextualise for us the status, the impact, the influence that*
112 *scholars such as him would have on policy makers and policy?*

113 DB – Ma Rong is one of the most influential scholars of Inner Asia, He was influenced
114 by Southeast Asian culture, he spent time in Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia. He
115 received his PhD from Brown University in sociology. I think, my sense of reading his
116 work was that he was really influenced by American multiculturalism. That is what he
117 wanted China to achieve in some ways. By emphasising Chinese language education
118 and de-emphasising ethnic difference, he felt that he was opening up China to the
119 minorities. He and Hu Lianhe and Hu Angang were the three main figures in this new
120 framing of ethnic policy and were influential. They work in central universities, and they

121 are connected to the Communist party. It is not entirely clear to me and I am not an
122 expert on the inner working of the polit bureau, how their education policy went from
123 their writings into an actual policy and action. Discussion of this was widespread;
124 something that many scholars and government officials were aware of and would read
125 and certainly permitted and embraced by Xi administration at that time. I think the
126 discourse moved from the scholarship to the policy fairly rapidly, but I don't know the
127 pathways in which it moved though.

128 *PANEL – In your report you discuss extinction of Uyghur identity. If I change the word*
129 *to destruction because one of the things we are as a Tribunal tasked with is,*
130 *considering, amongst other things, whether genocide is being committed. What do you*
131 *and I asked this question already of one of the witnesses earlier; what does destruction*
132 *look like in 10 or 20 years because the people may look the same but what would that*
133 *involve? What does extinction mean, assuming that it does not involve mass killing or*
134 *the perpetration of Article 2 of the Genocide Convention but it did involve (e) [Forcibly*
135 *transferring children of the group to another group] but it would involve (b) - (d), in*
136 *other words, the others. What would it look like if we would walk around Urumqi? What*
137 *would it feel like and look like in your mind, extinction or destruction?*

138 DB – I use that term because that is the term that is used in the text as it helps to
139 understand the thinking logics. What will this look like in 10 - 20 years? We have family
140 separation which is endemic throughout society. Many children separated from their
141 parents. Children are being taught to see their own identity as something that is
142 lacking. The result will be some sort of lost generation of children who feel alienated
143 from their own society and the Chinese one that they are mean to embrace because
144 they are still able to feel different even though as they are supposed to feel assimilated.
145 The trauma that comes from separation is also something that will play out for

146 generations. I don't know how it is going to look like in the streets, if you have a
147 conversation with someone and you understand what is happening to their families, it
148 will begin to bring up drama almost immediately. What we found in other settler colonial
149 contexts is that those that have gone through residential school system often have
150 psychological problems down the road, there is substance abuse issues that often
151 raise to the fore. It plays out in myriad ways but what is clear is that society itself will
152 be deeply damaged.

153 *PANEL – You talked about the objective of the Chinese authorities to be a single nation*
154 *race. There are obvious reasons why they might want it but why would they want that*
155 *from your experience?*

156 DB – I think it is part of the story that they tell themselves of their nation; that their
157 nation is a revolutionary nation. That it is anti-imperialist, that is inclusive, that it is
158 liberated the people on the frontiers like the Uyghurs. So it is hopping them along. The
159 way that they talk about the future of the nation is about the Chinese dream and also
160 about global China and extending power and the economy and civilisation throughout
161 the world. Sort of restoring Chinese dominance in the world. I think on a more concrete
162 level, it means having access to the resources of the Uyghur region. Having access to
163 the labour of the Uyghur population as well. One of the issues in China is the raising
164 costs of labour in Eastern China; that is where the manufacturing centre of China or
165 going to places like Vietnam or Bangladesh so if you have this new sort of population
166 that can be put to work on a mass scale in textiles, that's a way of keeping
167 manufacturing close to home. There is a pragmatic economic to some of what they
168 are doing as well.

169 *PANEL – We heard about the inability of Uyghurs to cross borders; to leave either the*
170 *region or the country. We also heard a good deal of evidence about surveillance*
171 *equipment and fear and control and so on. It has been described; the Uyghur region,*
172 *as an open-air prison. Is that something you would recognise?*

173 DB – Yes, absolutely. The systems of control are comprehensive. They use a great
174 management system which means people are not permitted to travel beyond particular
175 sections without permissions. So, there is a check point system that is very similar to
176 crossing a border as you move between counties where you have your IDs scanned,
177 face scanned. So, there is various types of restrictions on people's movements, even
178 moving from one county to another requires a process. So moving to other parts of the
179 country or leaving the country is may steps beyond what many people can even
180 imagine at this point. The control is quite intense. It is a kind of digital enclosure system
181 that has a material aspect to it with these checkpoints. There is tracking of people's
182 phones, of people's movements as they go from space, their car is being tracked.

183 It means that many people are under a kind of neighbourhood arrest and this is
184 widespread at the scale of the population. One of the save city systems, I have
185 examined talks in detail about how everyone in the county is tracked at all times. If
186 anyone is coming to a county if they are not registered in that county, the police system
187 will alert them to this presence as they move through space. They also talk about face
188 recognition; systems being used in key transit places like train stations and bus
189 stations and of course in the mosques as well. The mosque itself should have face
190 recognition system.

191 You can see that the built environment itself is watching people and informing on
192 people. They also hired 60 000 or so grit workers that work throughout that space and

193 work as human surveillance informants, monitoring the population as they move
194 through checkpoints. Yes, it is one of the most comprehensive police states, carceral
195 systems in the world which makes the ability to escape it quite difficult if you are a
196 Uyghur or a Kazakh person who is targeted by the system. The interesting part about
197 this system or the novel aspect is, that because it is using so much digital surveillance,
198 the Han population which isn't targeted by this system can carry out their lives fairly
199 uninterrupted with some minor inconveniences. There is a kind of dual or bifurcated
200 world. The kind of apartheid system is actually right on top of itself which is unique in
201 the history of settler colonialism or apartheid systems. That is what the system is doing.
202 It is not clear what will happen longer term. Eventually, these technologies will
203 probably be updated. There need to be continued investment in them if they are paying
204 for all of these people to run the system and command the system. Political will is
205 necessary to maintain it. We will see if it will stay in place.

206 *PANEL – To operate a system leading to the extinction of the type you identify, the*
207 *person above the person who is being managed, manipulated and controlled, may or*
208 *may not believe in the principle but may simply be following orders. The person above*
209 *him may or may not believe in the principle. He or she may be working just according*
210 *to orders - do you have any idea, impression or evidence of how far up in probably*
211 *inappropriate words, the management chain believe in the extinction policies rises?*
212 *How far up?*

213 DB – That is a difficult question to answer because it is such a complex one in terms
214 how many people are involved in this system. We can identify some general trends
215 among the Han population who is resident in this space. There has been a Han
216 presence in the region for hundreds of years but a small number of people have been
217 there up until the 1950ies. In the 50ies and 60ies a larger number of people moved to

218 the region, more in the North, more in the Kazakh areas and those people identify
219 themselves as locals, as Xinjiang people or old Xinjiang people. They see Uyghur and
220 Kazakh food as their food, they have more of an attachment to life as it was before
221 and my sense from the interviews is that those folks often see that is happening as
222 unnecessary, as costly, as counter-productive or potentially counter-productive. They
223 are fearful of retaliation of Uyghur people eventually, which is shared by leadership as
224 well. Which is one reason why they want to maintain the system or shift people from
225 the camp or factory system into prison itself.

226 The other share of population that came are people that came for resource extraction
227 system that was built up in the 1990ies and 2000s that is part of the Open up the West
228 campaign, which is the precursor of the Belt and Road initiative. Those people came
229 as economic migrants, looking for a better life. They don't really know how life there
230 was before. They are much more on the side of the government when it comes to
231 crack down on the Uyghur population, to do what is necessary to feel save. I think
232 many people especially those that are in Southern Xinjiang, the Uyghur majority areas,
233 they understand that they are taking the land of the Uyghurs and they understand that
234 theft produces a response and they want to be protected as they do that.

235 I am speaking in very general terms here but the fear is that there will be retaliation for
236 what they are doing and they feel that this is the Chinese state really carrying for them,
237 protecting them, they are proud of the sophistication of the systems because it is
238 showing the world class position of the state. There is that view as well. So, what I am
239 saying is that some people depending on their positioning view this system as
240 productive and that extinction is a necessary thing to do. They might not use that term
241 because that is coming out of a scholarly position which most people don't have. In
242 general, they would agree with those sort of evils.

243 *PANEL – You talked about an in-built floor in this educational system, where, because*
244 *the children are still being treated as different, they are not going to come to see*
245 *themselves as the same as the majority. So, there is a kind of “doomed to fail” aspect*
246 *of it including trauma as you described. You described the trauma of it. Have you seen*
247 *anything that suggests that Chinese academic or government officials are thinking*
248 *about this and what the longer term implications are going to be? If this policy*
249 *essentially doesn’t work.*

250 DB – Right. One of the aspects of the system is that it is racialised. The racial pheno
251 types of a Uyghur person, most of them cannot pass, it is foreign. And so, at the level
252 of the body, it is not fully possible for them to assimilate. They will still be seen as
253 foreign or different. Even at that level it is difficult. Many of my Ughur informants, many
254 I have spoken to at times and talked about, studying Chinese all their life, speaking it
255 very fluently even without an accent, they will still be ostracised. If you do speak
256 Chinese, ostracization is lessened but typically there are still if you are meeting a
257 stranger these kinds of reactions. I experienced it. So yes, that is a major problem.
258 The system is not particularly well thought out. I think the Chinese state is figuring
259 things out as they go. They are drawing on certain historical precedents when it come
260 camp systems, they have used them in the past during the Maoist period, in relation
261 to the Falung Gong, so there is a reflex to put people in camps when you are dealing
262 with a large population of people.

263 Other aspects of this, the mass separation of the children, that’s unique to this moment
264 and I think they haven’t thought about what is going to mean longer term. My sense is
265 that Ma Rong, you know as one of the architects of this sort of thinking, I think he
266 misunderstood multi ethnic policy in the United States, when he is saying he want
267 something like American multi-culturalism. He was thinking about something like

268 immigrant societies rather than native peoples who have an attachment to the land,
269 their own language, the state came to them rather than them going to that state. He
270 wasn't thinking about what happened when you begin to erase an entire people who
271 have no fault of their own being captured by the state. All that is to say, I don't think
272 they have a plan, they are making it up as they go and that is one of the real travesties
273 of what is happening.

274 *PANEL – A specific question about education policy and the enforcement of education.*
275 *We learned that the XPCC controls a large part of the region. Are the same policies*
276 *and the same approach taken in areas under its control in Xinjiang as it is in the rest*
277 *of the province? Does the education department for the region covers everything in*
278 *the region?*

279 DB – That is a good question, the Bingtuan, the XPCC, most of the land that they
280 control is farm majority land and they are in charge of a number of camps and they
281 run prisons and things like that. But I think they have less, a smaller Uyghur population
282 of students in their control. They might have some mandatory things when it comes to
283 education policy. They could have a slightly different one, so that it is just in a way
284 policy is implemented in the locality. I haven't seen a major difference in terms of how
285 policy is rolled out. My sense is that it is probably quite similar to how the way
286 education policies are being implemented in other parts of the region.