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Second Uyghur Tribunal

September 12, 2021

Testimony by

Geoffrey Cain

**Author, *The Perfect Police State: An Undercover Odyssey Into China's
Terrifying Surveillance Dystopia of the Future***

Summary

- From August 2017 to February 2021, the author, an investigative journalist, interviewed 168 Uyghur and Kazakh refugees, former concentration camp detainees, their family members, diplomats, government officials, scholars, former technology workers who had left Xinjiang, and former Uyghur intelligence operatives for the PRC.
- Among the 168 interviews, the author selected three core interviews for publication in his book, *The Perfect Police State*. These interviews provided detailed insider information on the workings of one concentration camp in Kasghar, on the construction of Xinjiang's surveillance state and surveillance technologies in Urumqi, and on the PRC's global intelligence networks designed to spy on the Uyghur diaspora in Afghanistan and Turkey.
- The author located three themes within all the interview material, including in the three core interviews. These themes were: (1) a strategic, sustained campaign on the part of the PRC for psychological torture against the Uyghur population, designed to erase identity, heritage and culture, (2) physical torture as an enforcement mechanism for the methods of psychological torture, and (3) the excess deployment of novel technologies in AI, facial recognition, voice recognition and biometric data-gathering to enhance the effects of psychological torture, by creating a foreboding fear that everyone was constantly being watched, but did not know when or where.

I. Methods

From August 2017 to February 2021, the author, an investigative journalist, interviewed 168 Uyghur and Kazakh refugees, former concentration camp detainees, their family members, American and European diplomats, Chinese government officials, academics, Uyghur technology employees who once worked at major Chinese corporations and had left Xinjiang, and former Uyghur intelligence operatives for the People's Republic of China (PRC). He most recently visited Kashgar and Urumqi in December 2017. The product of this field research was *The Perfect Police State: An Undercover Odyssey Into China's Terrifying Surveillance Dystopia of the Future*, published in June 2021 by PublicAffairs, an imprint at the Hachette Book Group.

The interviews were primarily carried out in Ankara, Istanbul and Zonguldak, three cities in Turkey; Cairo, Egypt; Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan; and Washington DC and the nearby suburbs in Virginia. All these locations were home to significant Uyghur, Kazakh and Kyrgyz communities who had escaped China and had become refugees elsewhere, or whose families had been taken away to concentration camps in China.

After the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, remote interviews were carried out with Uyghur and Kazakh refugees who were based in the Netherlands, Germany, France, and Kazakhstan. To protect the safety of sources whose friends, families and loved ones remain China, where they are vulnerable to being detained and harassed by authorities, the author did not publish a majority of these interviews.

Ensuring the rigor of documentation, the author compared the refugee testimony he gathered with the published reports of other refugees, academics and journalists, the location and structure of concentration camps and other key locations on Google Maps satellite imagery, Chinese-language press releases and official company reports, investigative journalism already published in other periodicals such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Buzzfeed*, and Chinese-language media such as Xinhua and local periodicals in Xinjiang.

A professional fact-checker and journalist, Wen-yee Lee, a citizen of Taiwan, double-checked the author's work, the testimony of refugees, and the written documentation to ensure the accuracy of translations from Mandarin Chinese.

II. Key sources

The author granted anonymity to two key interviewees who appeared in the published work. They are “Maysem,” a young woman now in her thirties from Kashgar, who obtained a master’s degree in the social sciences from a university in Ankara. She remains in Ankara as a refugee after being taken to lower-level “reeducation center,” followed by a high-security “detention center,” in late 2016 for about a week. Maysem asked for anonymity and for the author to obscure some details of her story because she believes her entire family has been taken to a camp as of late 2017 or early 2018.

The other key anonymous source was “Irfan,” who now resides in Turkey and had obtained a mid-senior management position as an information technology (IT) worker at a major Chinese telecommunications firm in Urumqi, his hometown. Irfan asked for anonymity because he was revealing what the PRC would probably consider state secrets, surely leading to the imprisonment of his family in Xinjiang, and his own imprisonment and perhaps even execution should he ever be required to return to China.

Under contract with the Ministry of Public Security, Irfan led teams of IT workers and engineers who, from the late 2000s and early 2010s, began establishing networks of surveillance cameras all over Urumqi. Irfan witnessed the escalating surveillance by the Ministry of Public Security, including the rollout of dragnet artificial intelligence (AI), facial recognition and voice recognition systems, and digital surveillance camera technology from 2010 to 2015 until his departure from the telecommunications company in 2015.

Irfan also detailed the connivance, complacency and involvement of major Chinese telecommunications firms in creating the surveillance apparatus in Xinjiang. All the firms he detailed have been sanctioned by the U.S. Department of Commerce, a government body that, under both the Biden and Trump administrations, has similarly accused these firms of involvement in human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

The author did not grant anonymity to interviewees who had already become public figures and whose stories were available in the public domain, search engines and media websites. One key public interviewee was Yusupjan Ahmet, who came from Karamay, Xinjiang and who had migrated to Turkey as an intelligence operative for the PRC Ministry of State Security.

Yusupjan detailed his life story in a series of hours-long, recorded interviews with the author. He stated that he intended to travel to Afghanistan in the early 2010s to

become a jihadist fighter, that he was instead imprisoned, and that the state coerced him into spying on fellow Uyghurs by torturing and threatening his mother.

In 2017, with the help of a former military officer in Pakistan, Yusupjan was flown to Afghanistan where he joined a local Taliban militia, while posing as a jihadist. The Ministry of State Security ordered him to report back on the activities and whereabouts of Chinese citizens, mainly Uyghurs, who had become jihadi combatants in Afghanistan. In 2017, the Ministry of State Security relocated Yusupjan to Turkey, where he was ordered to gather intelligence on the local Uyghur community in Istanbul, Turkey. In particular, PRC intelligence operatives wanted him to infiltrate local Uyghur-owned businesses posing as a young person seeking employment.

PRC intelligence officers told Yusupjan that the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP), a fundamentalist terror group, had infiltrated the Uyghur community in Turkey, and that his objective was to locate and document these supposedly widespread underground networks. Yusupjan, however, was disillusioned to find no evidence of a widespread infiltration. He found the PRC's claims to be little more than a conspiracy theory designed to justify the mass detention of his fellow Uyghurs back in China.

In 2018, Yusupjan defected from the Ministry of State Security and went into hiding. He relocated to Zonguldak, a small, industrial town in northern Turkey on the coast of the Black Sea. There, he kept a low profile, working as a gas station attendant. Two other Uyghur residents in Zonguldak told the author that while they heard, through local community talk, that Yusupjan was a resident, they knew little about him and his life story. He kept a low profile.

In November 2020, while visiting a friend in Istanbul, Yusupjan was preparing to offer an interview to the BBC. As he left his friend's apartment, a man wielding a gun, reportedly of Azeri (Azerbaijan) background, appeared on the street and shot him twice in the back of the shoulder. Yusupjan survived, but has been hospitalized, close to paralyzed and unable to walk for months.

III. Themes of the repression of the Uyghurs, taken from interviews and other evidence

Below, the author will break down key themes, findings and patterns from the three core interviews listed in the previous section, and also taken from the total scope of the 168 interviews conducted over three and a half years from 2017 to 2021.

a. Psychological torture designed to erase identity, heritage and language

In interviews, every Uyghur refugee who had escaped a camp recounted undergoing an arbitrary, unpredictable process of psychological torture, which appeared to be designed to force them to deny their own reality and internalize the thinking of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Refugees often described fellow detainees as lacking personality and expression, appearing to deny their own thoughts to avoid getting in trouble with camp authorities.

Camp authorities, all refugees said, used psychological torture to create a riddle in the minds of detainees: where is the line between what is acceptable and what will be punished? What will elevate your good standing with the CCP, and what will damage your good standing? Detainees knew from their experiences outside the camps that they should not pray or show any kind of religious, and particularly Muslim, belief. However, once inside the camps, the rules became ever-more confusing. As one former detainee from late 2016 explained to the author:

“All the other people in my cell told me that they would be punished for anything. If the guards found a hair on the floor, you were guilty and you would be punished. Your cellmates would be punished too. If you couldn’t sleep, or you moved around in your bed too much, or you woke up too early, you and your cellmates would be punished. But if you slept too well, the guards would wake you up and harass you. Everything could get you punished and get you free at the same time. It was impossible to figure out what to do.”

Former detainees overwhelmingly believed that the purpose of psychological torture was to force camp detainees to deny their own rational and critical thinking about their surroundings. In the process, this would erase the sense of community, culture, and heritage that separated Uyghur detainees from the PRC's dominant Han Chinese population.

If it's unclear what is right and what is wrong, the solution is to oppress whatever instincts and decision-making has been built over years from one's upbringing, culture and way of life. "Only the CCP may decide what is right and wrong, and that line is hazy and not clear," said one former detainee. "It's better to do nothing, repress yourself, don't show your emotion towards them, and wait until they tell you what is appropriate in your life."

The CCP has accomplished this form of arbitrary psychological torture through a series of intensive exercises that appear designed to throw detainees off guard and make them deny their own realities.

Two interviewees described undergoing a test in which they were seated, in a camp, in front of two tables. One table had a miniature model of a house, a yard, trees and a street. The other table had a miniature model of an assault rifle, a grenade and a pistol. The detainees were asked to rearrange the house, trees and street until it looked like a normal yard. Then the detainees were asked to rearrange the assault rifle, hand grenade and pistol so they looked "correctly arranged" on the table.

The trick, the two detainees later learned, was that if they even touched the weapons, the state would interpret their eagerness as a sign that they were terrorists. They would be forced to undergo solitary confinement and retake the test until they figured out the correct answer, the detainees said. If detainees only touched the house and yard, but not the weapons, they were deemed normal people who do not harbor terrorist ambitions.

At the same camp, during morning classes, another arbitrary exercise consisted of "correctly" answering a teacher's questions about mundane objects around the

classroom. The correct answer was to simply agree with the teacher, even if the teacher was making a claim that was obviously inaccurate to the evidence presented before the detainees. According to about a dozen former detainees, one common game was for the teacher to hold up two glasses of water. One glass was empty, and one glass was full. The teacher, however, announced to the classroom that both glasses were full. The students were then required to affirm the teacher's declaration that both glasses were full.

b. Physical torture as an extension of psychological torture

Camp authorities routinely deployed physical torture as a method for reinforcement the goals of psychological torture. All detainees interviewed by the author described brutal physical punishments for “answering wrongly” in solving these arbitrary riddles put forth by the CCP.

The most common punishment, described by detainees, was for the camp guards to order detainees to stand still, in an uncomfortable and contorted position, for an hour or more. Detainees were required to raise their arms high, raise one leg and balance, or keep their head and chin tilted upwards, in stillness, for at least an hour. A guard would stand behind the detainees with a baton, typically a rubber-spiked baton, according to witness testimonies. If the detainee moved, hesitated, or released their position due to discomfort, the guard would strike them with great force, usually once and sometimes more. The detainee would be required to get back into an uncomfortable position, and hold it still starting over for an hour or more.

Another common form of physical punishment was constraint in the “tiger chair,” a contraption that cuffs and restrains the arms, body, legs and sometimes neck in an uncomfortable position for an hour or more. Detainees said they were required to sit in solitary confinement for hours, sometimes 24 hours at a time, as punishment for failing to respond correctly to a form of psychological torture.

c. Over-deployment of technology of questionable usefulness to enhance the effects of psychological torture

Compounding the effects of psychological torture were new developments in technology, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), facial recognition, voice recognition, biometric data gathering and surveillance cameras technology. The use of these technologies created what one Uyghur resident of Kashgar told the author was the “Panopticon” effect.

Uyghur residents and detainees in Kashgar knew that the lines between acceptable and unacceptable were hazy and unclear. With the rollout of new technologies under party chief Chen Quanguo, accelerating in September 2016, the consequences of failing to locate the line became even more perilous. Refugees and former detainees reported the feeling of constantly being watched, not by humans, but by software systems designed to predict future acts of terrorism. The software platform, known as the IJOP (Integrated Joint Operations Platform), gathered data from a myriad of sources, including police input, camera surveillance, and criminal and court histories.

The AI used the data to train an algorithm and find correlations, and then determined who was likely to commit a crime, and sent a “bump” to local police to investigate or detain an individual, for reasons often unclear to human users. These reasons, according to refugees, could be as far-flung as whether or not a resident began a physical exercise routine suddenly, entered their home through the front or the back door, or had the flu and was late for work one day.

Under constant machine-based surveillance, sometimes without a human to oversee these decisions, refugees said they were terrified at the prospect of doing something off base or unusual compared to their daily schedules. The result was that they trained themselves to become like machines or robots, able to answer every police question in a pre-programmed way, repressing their own feelings, thoughts and desires. It was easier to discard their own heritage and culture and appease the CCP than to allow critical thoughts to flourish that might land them in trouble.

Conclusions

The CCP has engaged in a dragnet strategy, using novel technologies in AI, facial and voice recognition, and biometric data collection, to control and surveil the population in Xinjiang in ways rarely seen on this scale. The author's interviews and documentation, building on existing research, confirm that the PRC has engaged in a systemic strategy of psychological torture, using these technological innovations, in a campaign to erase Uyghur heritage, culture and identity.

Because of the forced erasure of Uyghur culture and heritage, the author supports to conclusion of the U.S. Department of State that the human rights abuses in Xinjiang are equivalent to a genocide.

1 **12th September 2021 (8:39:43 – 9:25:50)**

2 **Geoffrey Cain**

3

4 GEOFFREY CAIN – Thank you for having me. I do not have a formal PowerPoint
5 presentation, but I would like to summarise my work and my report briefly. I come from
6 a background in investigative journalism, I was at The Economist and the Wall Street
7 Journal many years ago. I covered a number of genocides and a genocide tribunal.
8 Cambodia, Myanmar, I have been to North Korea and covered authoritarian regimes,
9 been all over China... I decided to write this book and to begin this process of
10 interviews because in all the reporting and investigative journalism I had done, I felt
11 that something in Kashgar, something in the western region of China, was significantly
12 different than what I had experienced earlier, and that is the deployment of these novel
13 technologies that so many experts here have discussed. While these technologies
14 have been well-documented in the quantitative data, particularly in excellent reporting
15 by BuzzFeed, which won the Pulitzer price, and also by Dr Zenz, and excellent
16 historical research by Dr Millward who just testified. I was interested in qualitatively
17 gathering experience evidence in the form of experiences that would show what it is
18 like to both be the developer of these technologies and its victim. In many cases my
19 interviewees were both. So, from August 2017 until just about six or seven months
20 ago, I had interviewed a number of people who were as close to the inside, I think, as
21 I could get, of this system, and I had uncovered a number of key things, but in
22 particular, I had explored the long-term development of a number of technologies in
23 surveillance and espionage by the Chinese state. There is much that we can get into,
24 but long story short, my overarching conclusion in my book “The Perfect Police State”

25 is that what started out as a targeted campaign that the state claimed was one of
26 counterterrorism, antiterrorism and the impression of dissidence immersed or was a
27 snowball effect of sorts, in which the people who were developing the technology
28 began buying into the propaganda and the statements , and the policies of the
29 Communist Party of China. Before they realised what truly was happening, the
30 technology was targeting them too, these were Uyghur technology workers. So, it was
31 very much a slow-grind of a process, in which new novel digital camera technologies,
32 (we are talking ten/fifteen years ago), new deep neural net technologies, and AI were
33 being set up, and mass data gathered, and it wasn't until the years 2014-2015 that
34 many of the Uyghur technologists who I was interviewing had realised these systems
35 were simply a dragnet, and that the systems were actually not that sophisticated but
36 that they were designed to impress upon the victims that they were sophisticated,
37 which is just as good as being excellent in your algorithms and technological
38 developments. That is just a brief summary of the technological aspect of my own
39 research, and I will open it up to questions.

40 *COUNSEL – You mentioned how this policy towards the Uyghurs started out as a*
41 *policy to fight extremism. Just to clarify, in what did it evolve?*

42 GC – Just to clarify the question, into what did it evolve after the counterextremism
43 measures?

44 *COUNSEL – Yes, that is right. Did it remain simply a policy of fighting extremism?*

45 GC – On paper it did. In practice it did not. According to four former Uyghur technology
46 workers who were embedded in some of these offices that were involved in the
47 technology, despite the official policy of counterextremism, they say that within the
48 offices they worked in there was an informal policy, or a clear understanding and

49 certainly internal discussions that the goal would be to essentially to target everyone
50 in a massive dragnet campaign. One Uyghur technology worker who I interviewed was
51 directly involved in efforts to scan and surveil early on (in around 2011 to 2013) text
52 message data and messages that had been going through WeChat and various
53 Chinese chat apps, to scan them for key words, like “bomb,” “terrorist,” “gun,” words
54 that were declared by the state to be evidence of extremism. In the process of doing
55 these mass scanning of text messages, the artificial intelligence systems simply,
56 according to them, identified anyone who might have had any kind of statement that
57 was irrelevant to extremism but maybe contained one of these words that were flagged
58 for follow-up or investigation. So, in practice there was certainly, in their own internal
59 discussions an effort to surveil anyone that could be surveilled.

60 *COUNSEL – In your field research, you also interviewed government officials and*
61 *diplomats. By any chance, through these interviews, did you manage to glean at what*
62 *level of governance this policy was set?*

63 GC – Some of the former officials that I interviewed had left China and they actually
64 did not have much information, or at least did not want to reveal much about the levels
65 of policy. I can say the most revealing interviews that I did were with the technology
66 workers, because they were actually in the room where these surveillance systems
67 were being used, and they were involved in setting them up. They said that, at the
68 beginning, many of these policies were more at the local level, this would be around
69 2005 to 2007, that was their understanding of events. I have also gone through various
70 old Chinese press releases and statements that had been published historically and
71 had verified some of this information in writing. So, they do have a good memory of
72 what happened. My interviewees draw diagrams, and I wish I had included them in the
73 report, but I was a little bit concerned that these diagrams might reveal their exact

74 position in this bureaucracy. But, in the diagrams they suggested, and I verified this
75 with actual technological experts and software experts who understand artificial
76 intelligence deeply (one of them was a former Google developer), much of the data
77 goes straight to Beijing. This goes to the Ministry of Public Security, and in certain
78 cases the Ministry of State Security, which I suppose would be considered a step-up
79 in terms of the extremity of surveillance.

80 *COUNSEL – The implication here is that the policy would have been set, or at least*
81 *known of by these ministries that you mentioned. In your book, you refer to the “three*
82 *inter-locking patterns” that you have identified, one of which is surveillance, and the*
83 *other two being psychological, and physical torture. Are you saying therefore, that all*
84 *of these three limbs, including psychological and physical torture are part of official*
85 *policy towards the Uyghurs?*

86 GC – Yes, I believe so. I do believe that this is an official policy, but that the authorities,
87 both at the local and national level, have their own understanding of what they are
88 often doing. Professor Millward just talked about some of the language that is deployed
89 in these “transformation through re-education” camps. Based on my 168 interviews, I
90 did find an overwhelming pattern, and I could trace specific interviews to specific
91 camps, specific vocational training centres. Many of these people had come out of the
92 same camps, and they had expressed overwhelming patterns of particular practices
93 in each camp, or in each region of Xinjiang. In particular in and around Kashgar and
94 in the southern part of Xinjiang, the people I interviewed had reported drastically higher
95 levels of psychological and physical torture. There was still a lot in northern Xinjiang
96 too. It would be difficult to parse through every single interview and put them all into a
97 special category of their own, but yes, the people who had been through concentration
98 camps overwhelmingly processes of psychological torture in which they would be

99 forced to play strange games. There was one example in the report, from one camp
100 in Kashgar, where one of the detainees would be seated in front of two tables and one
101 table, for example, would have a home, a road, and a car... and they are supposed to
102 re-arrange this “neighbourhood” to make it look like it is correctly placed; the other
103 table would have models of an AK-47 assault rifle, a grenade and such, and they would
104 be asked to move around these models to arrange them properly so that they looked
105 correctly placed on a table. The trick to this question, and this is where the
106 psychological torture comes in, is that if the detainees actually touch the models of the
107 weapons, they would be put in solitary confinement, sometimes they would be hit with
108 rubber sticks with spikes on them, they would be forced to stand still for thirty minutes
109 or more, and if they moved they would be hit again, often in very painful positions like
110 the sole of their feet, the buttocks, sometimes on the head... [interruption]

111 *PANEL – You spoke of Cambodia, which were the other genocidal sites you have*
112 *considered?*

113 GC – So I was a journalist originally covering, about twelve years ago now, the Khmer
114 Rouge Tribunal in Cambodia; I have covered Myanmar and the Rohingya situation
115 there; and though it is not genocide I have covered many authoritarian regimes: I have
116 been inside North Korea, which runs its own network of concentration camps; Russia;
117 Turkey... My specialty as a journalist is attempting to get as far as humanly possible
118 into some of these regimes and describing and showing their workings.

119 *PANEL – Comparisons can be interesting for journalists, but they can be very valued*
120 *for academic disciplines, for example the discipline of genocidal studies. Comparisons*
121 *can even be valuable for lawyers. So, am I right in thinking that you found a lack of*
122 *similarity between what you were encountering in the PRC and what you had seen or*

123 *knew of elsewhere? Or were you seeing some similarities and some differences that*
124 *you wanted to understand and explain?*

125 GC – While covering North Korea’s concentration camps and human rights abuses,
126 there is one key difference: I felt as if I was stepping into the past, the height of the
127 Cold War, when it comes to the Khmer Rouge or the North Korean gulag system.
128 There really is a strong sense, in these places, of outright massacre, there are mass
129 graves and death camps that I think came to mark the genocides and the atrocities of
130 the 20th century and the early 21st century. But when going to Xinjiang and when
131 investigating and interviewing people from this region, I get the overwhelming feeling
132 of stepping into the future. This is a new kind of mass atrocity that has not been
133 documented before on this scale, with the use of these novel technologies I often felt
134 like I was entering a science-fiction novel, like 1984, or Minority Report by Philip K.
135 Dick. I think that is the key difference: China, I do believe, is carrying out mass
136 atrocities against the Uyghur people, but it is being done in a way that is extremely
137 sinister because it rests upon the slow erasure of a people, its culture and identity, in
138 part through the forced use of contraception, but also through these tactics of
139 psychological torture.

140 *PANEL – Vast differences... What, if any, were the similarities?*

141 GC – There is an overwhelming similarity that I have documented in all these places,
142 and I believe Doctor Millward touched on this too, it is the belief in a kind of “master
143 race,” or an overarching race that stands above all else, and that wants to erase the
144 minorities or bring them to some kind of supposed higher level of development. This
145 is a pattern that has been well-documented in the Cambodian genocide, this idea of
146 this master Cambodian ethnic utopia, solely for the people of Cambodia. There were

147 massacres of minorities, Cham Muslims in particular, and Vietnamese ethnic
148 minorities. The entire North Korean regime, I and many scholars believe, is actually
149 built on this stance of national unity and pride. Many people point to this regime and
150 say it is communist but there is, increasingly, a line of scholarship and journalism that
151 documents North Korea as fascistic as opposed to a communist regime. Coming from
152 these countries and going to China, a multi-ethnic state with many localities,
153 languages and cultures, what alarms me is I see a lot of the same broad forces taking
154 hold, this belief in being a “master of the domain,” that the Han Chinese must dominate
155 the nation, and must erase or supposedly develop the Uyghur people into something
156 more than they are. That is a dangerous line of thought.

157 *PANEL – Before I come to the next topic, we ought to touch on your methodology. It*
158 *is in your paper but not in the oral record. You tell your narrative through three*
159 *particular witnesses, two anonymised and one not. You have checked the account*
160 *through them with a great deal of other material and you then had a double check*
161 *through somebody speaking local languages who is a professional fact-checker, is*
162 *that right?*

163 GC – Yes, that is correct. I wanted this book, and any book that is of an investigative
164 nature of a mass atrocity anywhere in the world must be rigorously and thoroughly
165 fact-checked through multiple stages. So, I did 168 interviews because I wanted to be
166 able to corroborate as furthest as I could what is happening, and I chose three
167 particular people for my book who I thought were the closest to the inside of the
168 system, who could best shed a light on what was going on. Me and my fact-checker
169 did check carefully the recording interviews for any kind of discrepancy... [*interruption*]

170 *PANEL – Has there been any published criticisms of the methodology of your book,*
171 *of which this is but an extract?*

172 GC – I am not aware of any published criticism. My publisher and I go through every
173 review, we have not seen anything yet in Mandarin language, and the book does
174 appear to be deleted from search engines in China, they can find my other book which
175 is about Korea but not this particular book about the Uyghurs. So, I am not aware of a
176 direct criticism levelled at the methods.

177 *PANEL – The Tribunal may find itself concerned with two issues at least, one: the*
178 *intention of the decision-makers in doing what they are doing; and two: is the Uyghur*
179 *population being in some way destroyed? So far as intent is concerned, when we look*
180 *at brainwashing, what do you say to the question: does brainwashing work to change*
181 *the person or is it effective because it terrorises the person?*

182 GC – Based on my interviews, I believe it is effective, and I do think that the authorities
183 in Xinjiang have been improving and perfecting systems of re-educating, or we could
184 say brainwashing people. One of the main characters in my book, a young woman
185 named Maysem counted in terrifying and gut-wrenching detail the intensity, in only a
186 period of one week, the overwhelming force with which she was psychologically
187 bombarded with messages and psychological torture and physical torture, and only
188 after one week she did manage to get out through some bureaucratic bungling on the
189 part of the state and also with the help of her family. She recounted for one year after
190 that, not being able to do anything, she would lie on her bed all day with her curtains
191 closed and sleep. She was traumatised and she would have terrible dreams, and at
192 one point she had somatic symptoms, her heart started hurting unbearably and that
193 was the point at which she decided to go seek counselling and speak to a psychologist.

194 It was through this process of recovery that she started to understand by talking to her
195 therapist what exactly had happened to her, because it was not clear, it was as if she
196 had had her memory wiped, she had kind of internalised the demands of the
197 Communist Party to the point where she had been simply unable to talk to someone
198 in authority, there was this never-ending fear that someone was coming for her, that
199 she had to stay at home, not go to class (she was a graduate student)... This is what
200 it does.

201 *PANEL – If brainwashing, accompanied or otherwise by torture, is genuinely*
202 *successful, and the person so treated emerges at the end changed, then she or he*
203 *will need little in the way of supervision, control or further violence, because the*
204 *changed person will follow, in this case literally, the Party line. But that does not*
205 *happen, does it?*

206 GC – I did not find evidence that people in Xinjiang simply start following the Party
207 line. From my interviews, the tendency or the pattern was more about an abundance
208 of fear that makes them avoid standing out in a way that would attract the attention of
209 the authorities, of the Party. I suppose, in a sense, that would be one method of
210 nudging people to follow the Party line.

211 *PANEL – One element of intention on the part of the authorities that the Tribunal may*
212 *want to consider is the intention genuinely to change the way people are, as opposed*
213 *to changing what people do. Is your evidence that changing what people are does not*
214 *really work?*

215 GC – Yes, that is a good question. My interviewees, the witness Maysem and
216 numerous other interviewees who I spoke with over the years, felt that they had been
217 changed inside in the sense that there was this weight, this darkness that followed

218 them wherever they were, even if they had left China and hopefully living safely. I think
219 it is a very hard question to answer, because the way the interviewees describe it is
220 that they were behaving differently but it was as if whatever inner self they had had
221 been suffocated and bludgeoned, and there was something in their personality that
222 was no longer getting through and coming out, they had been changed in that way.

223 *PANEL – In your report you describe how they became frightened of what to do*
224 *because of the uncertainty of consequence and they became like robots. In short, if*
225 *the intention is to change how people are, it fails as a system. If it has any effect, this*
226 *might be encouraging for those who think there is real humanity that is inherent, it*
227 *changes how they behave, but perhaps to echo what Professor Millward implied, there*
228 *is every prospect that they or their progeny might eventually return to who they are,*
229 *yes?*

230 GC – Yes, I agree with that.

231 *PANEL – You have told us about one of the games they had to play. In one of the bits*
232 *of footage from the camps, if my memory is correct, the inmates are literally singing*
233 *the English children’s ditty, “if you’re happy and you know it clap your hands!”, an*
234 *almost unbelievable sight when screened on a British television. Why would that be*
235 *done?*

236 GC – I have seen similar videos. Based on my own research, I would conclude that
237 that is a propaganda ploy for the international community. We do know that the PRC
238 has invited various UN and government officials, even a top-UN counterterrorism
239 official (to suggest this is merely a counterterrorism effort and not a mass atrocity of
240 some kind). I have seen many of these videos and it is the only reasonable
241 explanation.

242 *PANEL – If they were seriously advancing, for publicity purposes aimed at the West,*
243 *a video showing grown people whose native language is Chinese or Uyghur singing*
244 *an English song, they are pretty naïve aren't they?*

245 GC – I think it strongly suggests that they have been changed in some way, or they
246 are operating under the weight of the Party demands. I would not see a reason for a
247 group of grown men and women to sing a children's song in unison for outside
248 consumption on their own free will, it seems incredibly unlikely.

249 *PANEL – I want to clarify: when you use the term “psychological torture,” is your*
250 *understanding of that term the same as “mental harm”?*

251 GC – That is a good question. I would say yes. Obviously, I am not a psychologist, I
252 do not approach this from the actual field of psychiatry, I come more from a
253 background in genocide studies and investigative journalism. I chose that term after
254 speaking to actual experts on torture and psychiatrists. Many people prefer this term
255 because “torture” has the foreboding sense that there is an end effort to change how
256 you will behave, whereas “mental harm” is a much broader term, to my understanding,
257 that could operate on a spectrum. People can harm each other in many ways, but
258 torture is done with a clear end and a clear purpose, often by a state actor or some
259 kind of institution that is doing it for political purposes.

260 *PANEL – Following that, if we have a cyber-dimension to this both inside the detention*
261 *centres or prisons and outside of those buildings as well, you could argue that mental*
262 *harm is being exacted on people who are removed from such confining places, and*
263 *direct figures of punishment or authority.*

264 GC – Yes, I would agree with that.

265 *PANEL – The objective and the outcome, potentially, of the brainwashing,*
266 *psychological torture or however you want to describe it, could inevitably change a*
267 *person, but it does not necessarily mean that they are changed as a cheerleader for*
268 *the regime for instance, it may render them a “shell” of a person, at least temporarily,*
269 *and possibly permanently. Is that what you meant?*

270 GC – Yes, that was my finding in my interviews. Keeping in mind that I was interviewing
271 refugees and Uyghurs who were overseas, I did not interview anyone actually in
272 China. It is hard to say right now, in China, what exactly is happening with respect to
273 psychological torture. My interviewees had left the region between typically 2014 and
274 2017. I could not locate anyone who had left after early 2018. Bearing in mind that I
275 am reporting on psychological torture that is well documented from about two to three
276 years ago. When they had escaped overseas, they were never “cheerleaders” for the
277 regime. I guess you could make that distinction between reframing the human into a
278 positive cheerleader, versus a more negative approach where you are stripping them
279 of their identity. One of the most common descriptions that I heard from refugees was
280 that their family, or other detainees or themselves had felt like a patient who had woken
281 up from a car crash and had amnesia. They had been stripped of their identity and it
282 was a process of re-building after being able to get out of the region.

283 *PANEL – So, the net effect of the psychological torture could be to render that person*
284 *or those people or the entire population potentially, supine, repressed, unable to react,*
285 *completely dominated. Is that correct?*

286 GC – Yes, I believe that is the word: they are dominated. They are unable to react to
287 normal human situations.

288 *PANEL – One of your three people, called Irfan in your paper, who was an intelligence*
289 *officer within the PRC State security, and in that position he went to Afghanistan to*
290 *look at, among other things, connections between the Uyghurs and terrorism based*
291 *out of Afghanistan, something which I think the PRC government has alleged over*
292 *some time. You said he did a similar job in Turkey and found no evidence that this was*
293 *the case. Did he find any evidence in Afghanistan that there were any or significant*
294 *groups of Uyghurs there training as terrorists?*

295 GC – He did find some evidence. He found evidence of some Chinese citizens who
296 were primarily Uyghurs among these Taliban-connected militias, but he said that the
297 number was extremely small and that the operations they were involved in were quite
298 distant from you could say the “core” Taliban. So, these were a small contingent of
299 Uyghurs who had hoped to go overseas and to train in armed conflict and warfare and
300 to return to Western China and supposedly create a califate over Central Asia. The
301 thing is we have to keep this material in perspective: it was a very short time that he
302 was in Afghanistan because the evidence he was finding was so far and few between.
303 There were some Uyghurs there, but it was not some kind of major threatening force.
304 He was later relocated to Turkey as a Chinese intelligence operative, where he spied
305 on various community and business leaders from the Uyghur community. He admitted
306 that he could find no evidence of a terrorist network. When I was investigating this
307 book, I was personally in touch with contacts in the various Kurdish regions of Syria
308 and Iraq who were connected to the Uyghurs, and I was in touch with fighters in the
309 Syrian Civil War. Obviously, I could not go to Syria and verify this first-hand, but they
310 told me that the Uyghur units that were fighting with various terrorist groups there were
311 small in numbers and were suffering heavy casualties. They were not particularly

312 impactful; they were not a particular threat. So, the idea that they would be able to
313 return to China and wage some kind of jihadi struggle is very far-fetched.

314 *PANEL – Forgive me for over-labouring this point: if we accept, as you have posited,*
315 *that this psychological torture would render these individuals dominated, is it*
316 *reasonable to say that they have lost their identity as a group?*

317 GC – Yes, I think that is reasonable. At least, when I was reporting on the story, they
318 were rapidly losing their identity, and it was only by going overseas that they could
319 regain their identity. But it was a long and difficult process.

320 *PANEL – In your experience of all your travel and reporting, would it be understood*
321 *and intended by the authorities that that would be the result and the outcome?*

322 GC – Yes, and I think they have made clear in their own policy statements and public
323 statements that they want to turn this region into a Han Chinese region. The goal is
324 ultimately a form of cultural eradication.

325 *PANEL – In your experience, could such a policy be devised at a local level by local*
326 *authorities, or would it have to be done at some higher policy level?*

327 GC – I don't think it would be possible to orchestrate it merely at the local level, and
328 my evidence for that statement is that in my own historical interviews, and in historical
329 documentation from fifteen or twenty years ago, there were many local initiatives, but
330 it was simply not enough to release this level of surveillance and suppression on such
331 a vast scale. I think "scale" is the key word. The man appointed to be Party chief in
332 Xinjiang, Chen Quanguo, who is sanctioned by the U.S. Commerce Ministry, is
333 someone who had done similar tactics in Tibet, and I cannot personally prove this but
334 I do not believe that someone like him could be appointed to head Xinjiang region

335 without the approval and the careful consideration of people at the very top of the
336 Chinese government system.

337 *PANEL – This loss of identity, do you think this will then be propagated on to the next*
338 *generation?*

339 GC – I think it already is being propagated on to next generations. We have seen much
340 documentation and evidence of children being taught Mandarin Chinese language and
341 being skipped over for the Uyghur language. I think that language is a big component
342 of that, but the more sinister element, to me, is the allegations of forced sterilisations
343 and the dropping birth rate. I think that a combination of this shrinking of the population
344 alongside the fact that the children of the region, the Uyghur and Kazakh children, are
345 growing up under this system would suggest that within one generation, the region will
346 look vastly different than what it looks like now.

347 *PANEL – Thank you Mr Cain.*