

# “Nets Cast from the Earth to the Sky”

China’s Hunt for Pakistan’s Uyghurs

**UHRP**

UYGHUR HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT

ئۇيغۇر كىشىلىك ھوقۇق قۇرۇلۇشى



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## About the Uyghur Human Rights Project

The Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) promotes the rights of the Uyghur people through research-based advocacy. We publish reports and analysis in English and Chinese to defend Uyghurs' civil, political, social, cultural, and economic rights according to international human rights standards.

## About the Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs

The Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs is a DC-based non-profit organization dedicated to fostering academic exchange between Central Asia and the rest of the world.

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# I. Executive Summary

“Nets Cast from the Earth to the Sky” explores how China has targeted Uyghurs in Pakistan and Afghanistan since the late 1990s in order to silence dissent. The report distinguishes different methods by which the Chinese government represses Uyghur communities in Pakistan and Afghanistan and determines how these methods violate international human rights and legal norms. The report also chronicles China’s engagement with its fiercest ally, Pakistan, over the past 40 years in order to demonstrate how increased engagement between the two countries correlates with a growing humanitarian crisis for Uyghurs living in the region. To this end, we gathered cases of China’s transnational repression of Uyghurs in Pakistan and Afghanistan from interviews with Uyghur activists and refugees in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Turkey, in addition to government documents and human rights reports, and Urdu and English media.

Our work draws from the China’s Transnational Repression of Uyghurs Dataset, a joint project by the Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs and the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP).<sup>1</sup> From our dataset, we have identified and analyzed 21 cases of detention and deportation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, with an upper estimate of 90 reported incidents lacking full biographical records.

The PRC is able to target Uyghurs outside its borders with the help of the neighboring host governments. For example, in Pakistan China entices the government with large development projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in order to secure its support against Uyghurs. This report demonstrates several instances in which China rewarded Pakistan for aiding its campaign against Uyghurs. In exchange for development assistance, Pakistan signed extradition treaties, arrested individuals at China’s request, and rebuked critics of China’s harsh policies, all of which made it easier for China to continue repressing Uyghurs.

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<sup>1</sup> “China’s Transnational Repression of Uyghurs” (database), Oxus Society and Uyghur Human Rights Project, last accessed August 10, 2021, <https://oxussociety.org/viz/transnational-repression/>.

The report also illustrates how China utilizes international organizations to shape perception of Uyghurs globally. China aims to frame its campaign against Uyghurs as “counterterrorism” and uses international mechanisms and organizations to legitimize its actions, particularly in the Muslim world. These tactics also deepen security ties with countries hosting Uyghurs, allowing China to more easily target Uyghurs outside its borders.

Through its strategy of offering extravagant development projects while deepening security ties, China has successfully gained influence over Pakistan’s government and thus its Uyghur community. China is now attempting to implement this strategy in other countries with sizable Uyghur populations. As the Taliban gains territory in Afghanistan, Pakistan is portraying itself and China as facilitators of peace and development. China will use the chaos in Afghanistan to further justify its crackdown on Uyghurs, who express fear about their future in the country.<sup>2</sup>

We make a number of policy recommendations to the government of Pakistan, the UN, and members of the international community, including the following:

- For governments to **impose targeted sanctions** on Chinese citizens responsible for acts of transnational repression through sanction mechanisms like the Global Magnitsky Act.
- For governments to **increase quotas for the resettlement of Uyghur refugees**, given that traditional safe havens for Uyghurs are increasingly insecure.
- For the government of Pakistan to **reform or abolish laws that give intelligence groups broad authority to investigate and imprison individuals**.
- For the United Nations to **investigate allegations against the UNHCR office in Pakistan**, given the alarming testimony that Uyghur refugees are being denied asylum services by the UNHCR office in Islamabad.

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<sup>2</sup> Reid Standish, “China Cautiously Eyes New Regional Leadership Role As Afghanistan Fighting Intensifies,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, July 14, 2021, <https://www.rferl.org/a/china-region-afghanistan-conflict/31358035.html>.

## II. Introduction

**C**haudhry Javed Atta, a Pakistani dried fruits trader with business in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), last saw his Uyghur wife in August 2017.<sup>3</sup> That year, when he had to return to Islamabad to renew his visa, she told him, “As soon as you leave, they will take me to a camp, and I will not come back.” He has not heard from her since.<sup>4</sup>

**Following Chinese President Xi Jinping’s 2014 call for “nets cast from the Earth to the sky,” signaling a harsher turn for security in the Uyghur homeland, police officials began operating secret blacklists on 26 primarily Muslim-majority countries, including Pakistan.**

For Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples living in the Uyghur Region, links to Pakistan can be dangerous. Following Chinese President Xi Jinping’s 2014 call for “nets cast from the Earth to the sky,” signaling a harsher turn for security in the Uyghur homeland, police officials began operating secret blacklists on 26 primarily Muslim-majority countries, including Pakistan. Chinese authorities label any communication, connections, or travel history from residents of the XUAR to these blacklisted countries as suspicious. Combined with a powerful system of algorithmic surveillance, these blacklists have resulted in the deportation of Uyghur students from around the world back to the XUAR, as well as their arrest, imprisonment, and even death.<sup>5</sup> Since early 2017, an estimated 1.8 million Turkic peoples have been arbitrarily rounded up in concentration camps, which China euphemistically refers to as “re-education” or “vocational training” centers, with possibly millions more incarcerated in the Chinese prison system or conscripted into forced labor in factories around the country.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In this report, we refer to the Uyghur homeland interchangeably as “the Uyghur Region” and “the XUAR” (short for “Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region”). Uyghurs around the world see “Xinjiang,” the shortened form of “Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region,” which Chinese authorities prefer, as a colonial term. In addition to “Uyghur Region,” many Uyghurs also refer to their homeland as “East Turkistan” (sometimes “East Turkestan”), a historical name by which the region was long known but the use of which is considered “separatist,” and thus one of the “three evils,” in the PRC.

<sup>4</sup> “Locked Away, Forgotten: Muslim Uyghur Wives of Pakistani Men,” *Dawn*, December 17, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1451965>.

<sup>5</sup> “Two Uyghurs Returned From Egypt, Dead in Chinese Police Custody,” *Middle East Monitor*, December 22, 2017, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20171222-2-uyghur-students-returned-from-egypt-dead-in-china-police-custody/>.

<sup>6</sup> For internment figures, including upper estimate of 1.8 million in concentration camps as of 2019, see Adrian Zenz, “‘Wash Brains, Cleanse Hearts’: Evidence from Chinese Government Documents about the Nature and Extent of Xinjiang’s Extrajudicial Internment Campaign,”

Pakistani men like Chaudhry Javed Atta and hundreds of others whose Uyghur wives have also been detained by Chinese authorities had hoped that Islamabad would speak up on their behalf. For decades, Pakistan has been at the forefront of advocacy on behalf of oppressed Muslim communities around the world, from Myanmar's persecuted Rohingya to India's harshly treated Muslim communities.<sup>7</sup> On the subject of China's industrial-scale repression of Turkic peoples in the XUAR, however, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan has either avoided questions on the matter or claimed to know nothing about the issue.<sup>8</sup>

Pakistan's response to China's XUAR policies, which combines denialism, rhetorical support, and complicity, has structural underpinnings. For decades, China has been Pakistan's largest patron, providing it with everything from infrastructure and military equipment to nuclear technology. Both sides speak fondly of this bond, calling it an all-weather friendship.<sup>9</sup> Still, in 2020, Khan put relations in much starker terms: "As far as the Uyghurs, look — China has helped us. China came to help our government when we were at rock bottom."<sup>10</sup> However, growing relations have posed an existential threat to Pakistan's small Uyghur community in the city of Rawalpindi. According to data we collected, Pakistan has been

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*Journal of Political Risk* 7, no. 11, (November 2019), <https://www.jpolorisk.com/wash-brains-cleanse-hearts/>. For a recent investigation showing that the XUAR government is capable of detaining a minimum of 1.01 million individuals at one time, see Megha Rajagopalan and Allison Killing, "China Can Lock Up a Million Muslims in Xinjian at Once," *Buzzfeed News*, July 21, 2021, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/meghara/china-camps-prisons-xinjiang-muslims-size>. For details on the scale and scope of the forced labor program, see Vicky Xiuzhong Xu, Danielle Cave, James Leibold, Kelsey Munro, and Nathan Ruser, "Uyghurs for Sale," Australian Strategic Policy Institute, March 1, 2020, <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/uyghurs-sale>.

<sup>7</sup> Human Rights Watch, "'Shoot the Traitors': Discrimination Against Muslims Under India's New Citizenship Policy," April 9, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/04/09/shoot-traitors/discrimination-against-muslims-under-indias-new-citizenship-policy#>.

<sup>8</sup> Ben Westcott, "Pakistan's Khan Dodges Question on Mass Chinese Detention of Muslims," *CNN*, March 28, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/03/28/asia/imran-khan-china-uyghur-intl/index.html>; Jonathan Swan, "Pakistan PM Imran Khan; Sec Marcia Fudge; Fmr Rep Katie Hill; United," *Axios*, June 20, 2021, <https://play.hbomax.com/page/urn:hbo:page:GYHdzdg0tl5HDZgEAAAAE:type:episode>.

<sup>9</sup> Nazir Naji, "عظیم مہمان کے لئے 'محبت کے چند پھول'" [For an amazing guest, a few flowers of love], *Dunya*, May 23, 2013, <https://dunya.com.pk/index.php/column-detail-print/2993>.

<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Tepperman, "Imran Khan on Trump, Modi, and why he Won't Criticize China," *Foreign Policy*, January 22, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/01/22/imran-khan-trump-modi-china/>.

actively collaborating with Chinese security services to arrest, detain, and extradite Uyghur citizens and asylum applicants to placate its powerful neighbor since 1997.

Meanwhile, the Chinese government is attempting to replicate this strategy in Afghanistan, Pakistan’s deeply interconnected neighbor, where there is also a sizeable Uyghur community and where China has been in regular talks with leadership from the Taliban, who are poised to take political control of the country. In Pakistan, a member of Imran Khan’s cabinet recently encouraged dialogue with a “civilized Taliban,” referring to China’s Belt and Road project as an incentive for the Taliban.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile the Pakistani National Security Advisor has suggested that militants might flee Afghanistan disguised as refugees.<sup>12</sup> These statements by key Pakistani officials clearly echo China’s rhetoric regarding Uyghurs in bordering countries, signaling that the Taliban appears to be responsive to entrees by China.<sup>13</sup> Uyghurs in Afghanistan and around the world are beginning to openly express fear at the growing relationship between China and the Taliban, and the implications that relationship might have

Drawing from original interviews conducted in Urdu and English, in addition to Urdu source materials, this report aims to provide a comprehensive account of Chinese transnational repression of Uyghurs in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

### III. Methodology

The following report, part of a series on China’s attempt to control Uyghur activism around the globe, makes use of the China’s Transnational Repression of Uyghurs Dataset, established by the Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs in partnership with

<sup>11</sup> Aamir Yasin, “New, civilised Afghan Taliban may prefer talks to guns: Rashid,” *Dawn*, July 12, 2021, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1634561/new-civilised-afghan-taliban-may-prefer-talks-to-guns-rashid>.

<sup>12</sup> “If Afghanistan descends into war, govt won’t let fallout affect Pakistan: Fawad,” *Dawn*, July 12, 2021, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1634656/if-afghanistan-descends-into-war-govt-wont-let-fallout-affect-pakistan-fawad>.

<sup>13</sup> Amy Chew, “China a ‘welcome friend’ for reconstruction in Afghanistan: Taliban spokesman,” *South China Morning Post*, July 9, 2021, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3140399/china-welcome-friend-reconstruction-afghanistan-taliban>.

**According to data we collected, Pakistan has been actively collaborating with Chinese security services to arrest, detain, and extradite Uyghur citizens and asylum applicants to placate its powerful neighbor since 1997.**

UHRP to monitor global cases of Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples intimidated or repressed beyond China's borders.<sup>14</sup> The China's Transnational Repression of Uyghurs Database includes 300 fully verified cases of detentions or renditions of Uyghurs living overseas, with an upper total of 1,546 cases. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, we have a total of 21 of these cases, with an upper estimate of 90 reported incidents lacking biographical details. We have based these figures on public reporting by investigative journalists in Pakistan; they likely represent just a small portion of the total renditions and detentions that have occurred in secret.

Additionally, this research references key informant interviews (KII) in Urdu and Uyghur, which we conducted online with prominent activists such as Umer Khan. These interviews helped us to build an understanding of the development of Uyghur civil-society activism in Pakistan and the forms of pressure, surveillance, and intimidation Uyghurs in the country are experiencing today. Complementing the KIIs are a number of interviews we conducted with Uyghur refugees, many of whom requested anonymity due to potential threats to their lives. The report also makes use of a large number of secondary sources in English, Chinese, and Urdu, including traditional print sources, digital sources, broadcast sources, social media, and reported personal accounts by Uyghurs undergoing forms of transnational repression.

## IV. Autocracy Beyond Borders

China's targeting of Uyghur minorities in Pakistan is nothing novel but rather is part of a broader strategy of what scholars such as Dana Moss have termed "transnational repression."<sup>15</sup> For

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<sup>14</sup> "China's Transnational Repression of the Uyghurs" [database], *Oxus Society*, June 24, 2021, <https://oxussociety.org/viz/transnational-repression/>. See also Bradley Jardine, Edward Lemon, and Natalie Hall, "No Space Left to Run," Oxus Society and Uyghur Human Rights Project, June 24, 2021, <https://uhrp.org/report/no-space-left-to-run-chinas-transnational-repression-of-uyghurs/> and [https://oxussociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/transnational-repression\\_final\\_2021-06-24-1.pdf](https://oxussociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/transnational-repression_final_2021-06-24-1.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Dana M. Moss, "Transnational Repression, Diaspora Mobilization, and the Case of The Arab Spring," *Social Problems* 63, no. 4 (November 2016): 480–98.

the purposes of this report, repression refers to any actions which raise the stakes for cultural or political activism, moderating or discouraging such behavior. Repression has traditionally taken place within a particular state’s jurisdiction and territory. However, autocratic regimes are now increasingly wielding their considerable resources to shape discourse and stifle dissent overseas. Throughout the twentieth century, states have utilized strategies of infiltration, spying, and even extra-judicial killings to silence opposition in exile.

In the 1980s, for example, Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi ordered his country’s security services to coordinate an international assassination program that reached into the United Kingdom. During this period, the Gaddafi regime targeted Libyan dissidents in the United Kingdom with attacks. Bombs went off outside apartments occupied by Libyans, and Libyan embassy staff even fired upon an anti-Gaddafi demonstration, infamously killing a British police officer.<sup>16</sup>

Evidence suggests that the scale of such activities has increased dramatically in recent years. In its recent report on transnational repression, “Out of Sight, Not Out of Reach,” Freedom House documented 608 incidents of transnational repression globally since 2018 and identified China as the most prolific perpetrator of the practice.<sup>17</sup> China’s engagement with overseas communities has attracted significant attention over the past four decades. At the time of its establishment in 1978, many countries viewed the “Overseas Chinese Affairs Office,” overseen by the powerful State Council, with suspicion, wary of the implicit assumption that members of their own populations are still considered “Chinese minorities” under jurisdiction of the PRC.<sup>18</sup> Since then, a dizzying array of associations have sprung up around the world, tasked with

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<sup>16</sup> Jon Nordheimer, “Libyan Exiles in Britain Live in Fear of Qaddafi Assassins,” *New York Times*, April 26, 1984, <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/04/26/world/libyan-exiles-in-britain-live-in-fear-of-qaddafi-assassins.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Nate Schenkkan and Isabel Linzer, “Out of Sight, Not Out of Reach,” Freedom House, January 2021, [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/FH\\_TransnationalRepressionReport2021\\_rev012521\\_web.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/FH_TransnationalRepressionReport2021_rev012521_web.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Alessandro Rippa, *Borderland Infrastructures: Trade, Development, and Control in Western China*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), p. 184.

expanding Beijing's ideological presence among diaspora communities.<sup>19</sup>

Today, the overseas Chinese community is estimated to number anywhere between 10 million and 50 million people.<sup>20</sup> Ethnic groups such as the Uyghurs also fit within the framework of "overseas Chinese," with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) advocating an official discourse on Uyghurs as part of the "unity of nationalities" (minzu tuanjie 民族团结), even when they live outside the PRC.<sup>21</sup>

The Ex Chinese Association in Pakistan offers an important case study regarding the methodologies China adopts to influence the Uyghur diaspora. The Chinese government makes use of such organizations to win the political loyalty of Uyghurs residing in Rawalpindi and other parts of Pakistan, similar to how it uses these organizations in engagement with Han Chinese communities around the world. The XUAR's local government is also active in transnational repression of Uyghurs, operating through an organization called the "Xinjiang Overseas Exchange Association," which was established in 1992 with the goal of fostering loyalty via the promotion of cultural exchange programs. In 2012, for example, Chinese authorities invited a small delegation of Pakistani Uyghurs to Beijing as part of the "Delegation of overseas Chinese minorities from Xinjiang."<sup>22</sup>

Since Xi Jinping's rise to power in 2013, the CCP has adopted a more severe approach toward overseas communities under the guise of a sweeping anti-corruption campaign, introducing "Operation Foxhunt" (猎狐行动) as the international side of Xi's domestic campaign of rooting out "tigers and flies," or corrupt officials within the CCP's ranks. The operation reportedly utilized up to 2,000 personnel to achieve its goals, with over 70 police teams sent overseas to seek out "economic fugitives." According to state

**In Pakistan, China is arguably more invasive with these tactics than in any other part of the world, using state security agencies, diaspora groups, international groups, and the Pakistani government to discourage any form of Uyghur activism or cultural expression.**

<sup>19</sup> Pal Nyiri, *New Chinese Immigrants in Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999).

<sup>20</sup> "The Chinese Diaspora: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Trends," *US Census Bureau*, August 2019, [https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2019/demo/Chinese\\_Diaspora.pdf](https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2019/demo/Chinese_Diaspora.pdf), p. 4; Huiyao Wang, "China's Competition for Global Talents: Strategy, Policy and Recommendations," *Asia Pacific* (May 2012): 2.

<sup>21</sup> James Jiann Hua To, "Qiaowu: Extra-Territorial Policies for the Overseas Chinese," *The China Quarterly* 221, (May 2014): 191–226.

<sup>22</sup> Rippa, *Borderland Infrastructures*, p. 184.

media, a similar campaign called “Operation Skynet” (天网行) was launched in April 2015, with both Operations “Skynet” and “Foxhunt” resulting in the capture of around 4,058 fugitives from over 70 countries.<sup>23</sup> During this time, China has doubled down on its strategies toward “ethnic minority” communities abroad, employing tactics such as espionage, cyberattacks, and threats of physical assault. In Pakistan, China is arguably more invasive with these tactics than in any other part of the world, using state security agencies, diaspora groups, international groups, and the Pakistani government to discourage any form of Uyghur activism or cultural expression.

## V. Pakistan, China, and International Violations of Human Rights Frameworks

Pakistan and China have both ratified a relatively small number of human rights treaties. Nevertheless, we have identified numerous violations of this small number of human rights treaties to which both countries are signatories. Though these treaties are non-binding and purposefully contain broad language, they nevertheless impose humanitarian norms on their signatories.

*United Nations: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)*

Article 3 states, “No state party shall expel, return (‘refouler’) or extradite a person to another state where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in in danger of being subjected to torture.”<sup>24</sup> Pakistan ratified this treaty in 2010, and China ratified it in 1988. According to our analysis, Ismail Samed (2003) and Osman Alihan (2007) reported torture after being

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<sup>23</sup> “China’s ‘Sky Net’ Campaign Nabs More Than 4,000 Fugitives Since 2015,” CGTN, April 24, 2018, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d414e3559444d77457a6333566d54/index.html>.

<sup>24</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*, 10 December 1984, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1465, p. 85.

returned to China prior to Pakistan ratifying the treaty. Generally, the international community views the Convention against Torture to be a peremptory norm of general international law due to its universal recognition. Therefore, Pakistan was in violation of international human rights norms even though it was not yet a signatory of the convention in the cases mentioned above. No direct cases of torture have been mentioned since ratification, according to the China's Transnational Repression of Uyghurs Dataset, but that is likely an issue of sparse information, not an actual absence of such cases. Torture remains widespread and well-documented in the Uyghur homeland today,<sup>25</sup> with high risk of detentions and even death for those who return.<sup>26</sup> It is therefore likely that at least some recent returnees from Pakistan have suffered a similar fate.

Meanwhile, Article 15 of the Convention states, "Each state party shall ensure that any statement which is established to have been made as a result of torture shall not be invoked as evidence in any proceedings, except against a person accused of torture as evidence that the statement was made." Ismail Semed, noted above, was placed on a 2003 wanted list issued by the Ministry of State Security. However, the charges that led to his inclusion on the list appear to have been based on testimony of two Uyghurs in the Uyghur Region who were tortured and executed, suggesting authorities likely obtained their confessions and incrimination of Mr. Ismail by force.<sup>27</sup>

### *United Nations: Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

Article 15, clause 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, "No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality," while Article 20, clause 2 states, "No one may be compelled to belong to an association." Interviews we conducted with Pakistani Uyghurs have identified an

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<sup>25</sup> Human Rights Watch, "China: Crimes Against Humanity in Xinjiang," April 19, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/19/china-crimes-against-humanity-xinjiang>.

<sup>26</sup> "Two Uyghur Students Die in China's Custody Following Voluntary Return from Egypt," *Radio Free Asia*, December 21, 2017, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/students-12212017141002.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Human Rights Watch, "China: Account for Uyghur Refugees Forcibly Repatriated to China," January 28, 2010, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4b6abe8d1e.html>.



Image 1: Form provided by Uyghur activist Umer Khan. This form directs parents to declare themselves as members of the Ex Chinese Association in order to receive tuition assistance at the Peak Montessori & High School.

alarming trend in both China and Pakistan in which their governments violate these laws en masse.

Since 2017, surveillance of Pakistan’s Uyghur community has also significantly increased, largely due to the efforts of the Ex Chinese Association, which in recent years was going door to door in Uyghur neighborhoods in Rawalpindi distributing “registration forms.” The forms are ostensibly produced to allow Uyghur children to attend Chinese Embassy-run school programs for free. “Many of the families are living below the poverty line and sign these forms in exchange for basic food items like bread and rice,” said Umer Khan, who added that the registration forms may be used by the Chinese government to monitor the population or extradite them to the XUAR to face internment. He went on: “A large number of people signing the list are illiterate and sign using their

fingerprints. After they sign, they are no longer viewed as simply Pakistani, but as Chinese subjects.”<sup>28</sup> This coercion shows how China perceives security within the XUAR and the question of Uyghurs living abroad. To China, the fact that the Uyghurs signing these documents could be Pakistani citizens is inconsequential; in the Chinese government mindset, their ethnicity and proximity to

<sup>28</sup> Muhammad Umer Khan (Uyghur activist), interview by Bradley Jardine and Robert Evans, April 14, 2021.

China's border region justifies this type of harsh transnational repression.



Image 2: Check written to Ex Chinese Association. Seal stamped on the check says “Chinese embassy in Pakistan,” 中华人民共和国驻巴基斯坦大使馆 (Translation by John Owen). Image provided by Uyghur activist Umer Khan.

These trends also appear to demonstrate the spread of Chinese domestic practices internationally, with intrusive data-gathering in the Uyghur homeland being a routine component of community surveillance and predictive policing (i.e., the practice of gathering and using data to determine would-be criminals). In 2015, for example, Human Rights Watch reported that Uyghurs were being forced to submit bio-data with their passport applications, including “a DNA sample, a voice sample, a 3D image of themselves, and their fingerprints.”<sup>29</sup> This type of personal data now feeds into massive Chinese state databases like the Integrated Joint Operating System (IJOP), which then sorts individuals on different levels of “trustworthiness.”<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Human Rights Watch, “China: Account for Uyghur Refugees.”

<sup>30</sup> Human Rights Watch, “China’s Algorithms of Repression,” May 1, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/05/01/chinas-algorithms-repression/reverse-engineering-xinjiang-police-mass>.



Image 3: Screenshot of March 19, 2021, post on the Ex Chinese Association Pakistan Facebook page with an Urdu caption in part stating that “lies about Xinjiang are born mainly out of fear of China’s progress.”<sup>31</sup>

So far, the Ex Chinese Association may have claimed as many as 400 names in Pakistan. The group’s Facebook page regularly posts political messages defending China’s repressive policies in the XUAR.

While the organization has a documented history of receiving funding from the Chinese Embassy, officials from the same embassy have nevertheless taken to distancing themselves from the organization. Zhao Lijian, former deputy chief of mission at the

<sup>31</sup> Ex Chinese Association Pakistan (@ExChinesePak1), “Lies about Xinjiang are born mainly out of fear of China’s progress,” Facebook, March 19, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/ExChinesePak1/posts/719831225323731>.

Chinese Embassy in Islamabad and current spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, went so far as to claim in a recent report that he was not even aware of the organization's existence.<sup>32</sup> However, Zhao was photographed with members of the Ex Chinese Association as recently as June 6, 2019.



Image 4: Photo of Chinese Ambassador Yao Jing and former Ambassador Zhao Lijian with members of the Ex Chinese Association on June 6, 2019. From Facebook: "His Excellency Yao Jing, Ambassador Chinese Embassy in Islamabad and H.E Zhao Lijian DCM Chinese Embassy in Islamabad along with Counselor Shen Zicheng, Director Yang Lianchun, Counsel Xu Chunman and Counsel Meng Bin paid a special Eid Greetings visit to Ex-CHINESE Uyghur Pakistani community at the house of Mr. Nasir Khan President Ex-Chinese Association in Islamabad."<sup>33</sup>

In an interview, Omar Uyghur Trust founder Umer Khan told us that he has helped at least 37 Uyghur families escape the XUAR into Pakistan, and from there to Turkey. "The UNHCR isn't helping these people, and whenever I take them to the main office in Islamabad, the staff are hostile and refuse to register Uyghur cases," he said. We also interviewed several of the refugees in Umer's care on the condition of anonymity. These refugees described their lives

<sup>32</sup> Zuha Siddiqui, "China Is Trying To Spy On Pakistan's Uighurs," *Buzzfeed News*, June 20, 2019, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/zuhasiddiqui/china-pakistan-uyghur-surveillance-ex-chinese-association>.

<sup>33</sup> Ex Chinese Association Pakistan (@ExChinesePak1), Facebook, June 6, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/ExChinesePak1/posts/335963140377210>.

in Pakistan as characterized by constant anxiety. One family told us that their father left their safehouse one day and never returned. Now the rest of the family refuses to leave the house out of fear of a similar fate.

One woman described her terrified state of mind: “If anyone even knocks on the door, I scream that it’s the Chinese government coming to take us back to China.” Abdulaziz Naseri, a Uyghur refugee living in Turkey, agreed to go on the record for this report. He belongs to a Uyghur family that moved from the XUAR to Kabul in 1976 to escape the “cruelty of the Communist Party and their killing of Muslims.” After seven years in Kabul, Abdulaziz’s family moved to Pakistan to escape the Soviet invasion. In June 2019, Abdulaziz came to Turkey to attend a conference called the “East Turkestan Brotherhood Meeting,” but during his trip his parents were detained in Pakistan in retaliation for his activism. Now Abdulaziz says that if he returns to Pakistan, he will be arrested or his parents will be further harassed. “I am afraid for my parents still living in Pakistan,” he told us.<sup>34</sup>

Abdulaziz echoes Umer Khan’s frustration with the UN, saying, “We have applied many times to the United Nations, but we are without hope. They will never help us.” Khan himself was arrested in 2017 when numerous cars came to his house to detain him.<sup>35</sup> Speaking about this arrest, he said he believes local authorities wanted to make a spectacle out of his arrest to make his neighbors think he was dangerous. He was held for several days, during which the authorities subjected him to torture, and he still suffers from torture-inflicted injuries.

Since the Taliban gained control of more than 50 percent of Afghan provinces at the end of July 2021, Uyghurs in Afghanistan have begun feeling an urgent danger.<sup>36</sup> In a series of voice messages sent to us in August 2021, Abdulaziz Naseri described the new anxiety Afghan Uyghurs feel as the Taliban are poised to take

**One woman described her terrified state of mind: “If anyone even knocks on the door, I scream that it’s the Chinese government coming to take us back to China.”**

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<sup>34</sup> Abdulaziz Naseri (Uyghur refugee), interview by Bradley Jardine and Robert Evans, April 15, 2021.

<sup>35</sup> Siddiqui, “China Is Trying To Spy On Pakistan’s Uighurs.”

<sup>36</sup> Bill Roggio, “Mapping Taliban Contested and Controlled Districts in Afghanistan,” *FDD’s Long War Journal*, August 4, 2021, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/mapping-taliban-control-in-afghanistan>.

control of the country. Abdulaziz explained that when he and his family fled the XUAR for Afghanistan many years ago, their Afghan identification forms listed each member of the family as “Chinese migrant.” Despite living in Afghanistan for several years and even having gained Afghan citizenship, his ID form still labels him as a “Chinese migrant” where the same forms simply list most Afghans as simply “Afghan.”

Abdulaziz now fears that China could be making a deal with the Taliban to access these ID forms. He told us that it would be fairly easy to investigate who is of Uyghur origin based on this “Chinese migrant” distinction listed on the form. He claims to know of approximately 20 families in Afghanistan who have similarly marked documents, and he fears that authorities in other countries will single them out as they flee the country and apply for residency or citizenship in other countries. The fact that their Afghan documents will still label them as “Chinese migrants” may be grounds to deny them entry visas, which Abdulaziz and others fear might turn Uyghurs into direct targets of transnational repression. Whether these Afghan Uyghurs choose to stay in regions now under Taliban control or attempt to flee for any neighboring countries, the label of “Chinese migrant” on their documents will expose them to incredible danger.<sup>37</sup>

Although Pakistan is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, it did vote in favor of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and thus has a moral obligation to uphold the norms in the Declaration. Therefore, the denial of asylum services by the UNHCR office and the harassment of Uyghur refugees that these activists describe represent violations by Pakistan of this foundational human rights document, specifically Article 14, which guarantees the right of individuals to seek asylum from persecution.

Additionally, Khan’s brutal account of being detained and beaten by Pakistani security forces is a violation of another human rights treaty that Pakistan signed: the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. No lawful Pakistani ordinance sanctioned Khan’s suffering; rather,

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<sup>37</sup> Abdulaziz Naseri, personal communication with Robert Evans, August 5, 2021. This and all other translations from Urdu into English by Robert Evans.

authorities intimidated and discriminated against him solely for his role as a prominent ethnic minority activist. Such actions on the part of the authorities are forbidden by Article 1 of the Convention Against Torture. Khan’s account is part of a larger trend in Pakistan of the harassment, torture, and forced disappearances of political, religious, and ethnic activists heightened by Islamabad’s deepening cooperation with Beijing as it seeks to target Uyghurs living in the country.<sup>38</sup>

Despite both China and Pakistan displaying patterns of human rights violations, both countries have been elected to leadership roles at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) as recently as October 2020.<sup>39</sup> The presence of the two countries on the UNHRC raises troubling questions about the UN’s credibility as an arbiter for human rights law, as well as about China’s attempts to control the narrative of its human rights violations against the Uyghurs. Leaked emails confirmed that the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights provided the names of Uyghur activists who actively attended panel discussions and conferences on human rights from 2012 to 2015, all at the request of the Chinese government.<sup>40</sup> In fact, the UNHRC office said they “regularly” complied with these requests from China for activists’ names. China carries significant weight in the UNHRC, stressing “win-win cooperation,” a framework that positions human rights standards as merely voluntary cooperation rather than a legal obligation.<sup>41</sup>

According to Human Right Watch, Chinese officials in the past three years have been threatening delegations critical of its conduct in the Uyghur homeland and have utilized UN meetings for propaganda purposes to depict Uyghurs as “happy.”<sup>42</sup> Although the UNHRC began requesting access to the Uyghur homeland in order

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<sup>38</sup> Amnesty International, “Pakistan: Crackdown on human rights intensifies,” January 30, 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/01/2019-pakistan-in-review/>.

<sup>39</sup> United Nations, “Election of the Human Rights Council,” October 13, 2020, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/75/meetings/elections/hrc.shtml>.

<sup>40</sup> Bayram Altug and Serife Cetin, “Leaked emails confirm UN passed info to China in name-sharing scandal,” *Anadolu Agency*, January 18, 2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/leaked-emails-confirm-un-passed-info-to-china-in-name-sharing-scandal/2114163>.

<sup>41</sup> Human Rights Watch, “China’s Global Threat to Human Rights,” 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/global#606fd8>.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

to conduct an investigation into human rights abuse allegations in March 2019, the Chinese government would not commit to allowing a UNHRC team full and unfettered access to the region to conduct the investigation.<sup>43</sup> As of August 2021, many international observers are demanding an independent investigation into possible human rights abuses in the region, but the Chinese government continues to deny unmitigated access to independent investigators.<sup>44</sup>

## VI. Mechanisms for Transnational Repression

In order to circumvent international law and conduct transnational surveillance, intimidation, and repression, the Chinese government employs a wide range of institutions and instruments, which we explore in detail below.

### *China's Security Apparatus*

The primary agencies involved in transnational repression in Pakistan are the powerful internal security services linked to the CCP, including the Ministry of State Security (MSS) and the Ministry of Public Security (MPS). In the Pakistani context, the MSS has issued local intelligence with lists of wanted Uyghurs in 2003,<sup>45</sup> 2007,<sup>46</sup> and 2012,<sup>47</sup> resulting in arrests and extraditions. The MPS meanwhile prioritizes the intimidation of families with relatives

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<sup>43</sup> Sophie Richardson, "China's Weak Excuse to Block Investigations in Xinjiang," Human Rights Watch, March 25, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/25/chinas-weak-excuse-block-investigations-xinjiang>.

<sup>44</sup> Louis Charbonneau, "UN Chief Should Support Remote Investigation in Xinjiang," Human Rights Watch, April 8, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/08/un-chief-should-support-remote-investigation-xinjiang>.

<sup>45</sup> "China Names Six Uighurs on Terror List," *BBC*, April 6, 2012, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-17636262>.

<sup>46</sup> Wajid Ali Wajid, "China Worried About Rising Extremism," *Gulf News*, June 25, 2007, <https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/china-worried-about-rising-extremism-1.185775>.

<sup>47</sup> Jamestown Foundation, "Uyghur Militants Respond to New Chinese List of 'Terrorists,'" *Terrorism Monitor*, May 4, 2012, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4fa7a3752.html>.

living or working in Pakistan due to the country’s “blacklisted” nature.

The MPS has been particularly active with regard to Pakistani nationals in recent years, dividing families to exert control. The Xinjiang Victims Database, a Kazakhstan-based data-collection project that documents Uyghur detentions in the XUAR, has a large amount of information on Uyghur wives separated from their Pakistani husbands due to internment, with evidence of the wives being used to intimidate their husbands in Pakistan to prevent them from speaking out.<sup>48</sup> In some cases, Chinese authorities stop Pakistani husbands trying to cross the border into the Uyghur Region and tell them they must be accompanied by their Uyghur wives to gain entry. After returning together to the XUAR, the Chinese authorities then order the Uyghur wives to report to the police daily, while the Pakistani husbands’ visas are usually canceled, after which the husbands are ordered to leave China.<sup>49</sup> Families still in Pakistan believe their communication with these detained wives are bugged, so they do not approach anyone for help, fearing backlash from Beijing.<sup>50</sup>

#### *United Front Work*

China also engages in transnational repression in Pakistan through the CCP’s United Front Work Department (UFWD), which coordinates the activities of everything from influencers to student organizations as a means of gaining intelligence and shaping pro-China discourse abroad. The UFWD is a high-level department that answers directly to the CCP’s Central Committee and is coordinated by a group led by a member of China’s Politburo Standing Committee. This organizational structure puts UFWD on approximately equal footing with other high-level CCP organizations, such as the International Liaison Department, the

**The primary agencies involved in transnational repression in Pakistan are the powerful internal security services linked to the CCP, including the Ministry of State Security (MSS) and the Ministry of Public Security (MPS).**

<sup>48</sup> “Entry: Melike Memet,” Xinjiang Victims Database, September 30, 2018, <https://shahit.biz/eng/viewentry.php?entryno=24>.

<sup>49</sup> “Pakistani Men Seek Release of Uyghur Wives Locked in China Camps,” *Dawn*, December 18, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1452064>.

<sup>50</sup> S. Khan, “Pakistani Husbands Distressed as Uyghur Wives Face Chinese Crackdown,” *Deutsche Welle*, February 15, 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/pakistani-husbands-distressed-as-uyghur-wives-face-chinese-crackdown/a-47540441>.

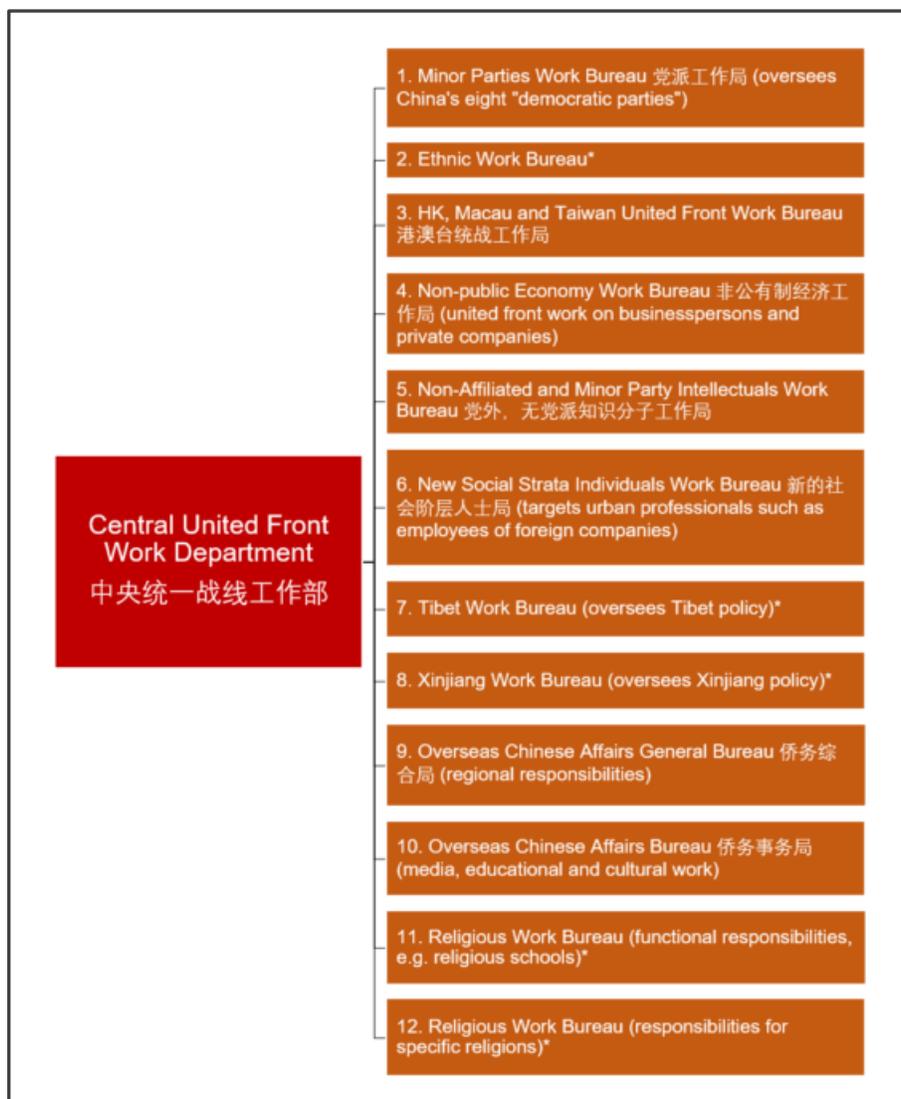


Image 5: Organizational structure of the United Front Work Department created by Alex Joske in "Reorganizing the United Front Work Department: New Structures for a New Era of Diaspora and Religious Affairs Work"<sup>51</sup>

Organization Department, and the Propaganda Department.<sup>52</sup> The UFWD has received newfound importance in the Xi Jinping era, with almost 40,000 new cadres recruited in their first year in office and almost all Chinese embassies now employing UFWD personnel.<sup>53</sup> The department is separated into nine bureaus, each

<sup>51</sup> Joske, "Reorganizing the United Front Work Department."

<sup>52</sup> Marcel Angliviel de la Beaumelle, "The United Front Work Department: 'Magic Weapon' at Home and Abroad," *China Brief*, Jamestown Foundation, July 6, 2017, <https://jamestown.org/program/united-front-work-department-magic-weapon-home-abroad/>.

<sup>53</sup> Graeme Smith, "China: magic weapons and 'plausible deniability,'" Lowy Institute, April 30, 2018, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/plausible-deniability-and-united-front->

responsible for a specific group that China targets for co-option and subversion. The UFWD includes a bureau responsible for China’s ethnic minorities, a bureau for China’s international diaspora, and a bureau for the XUAR, among others.

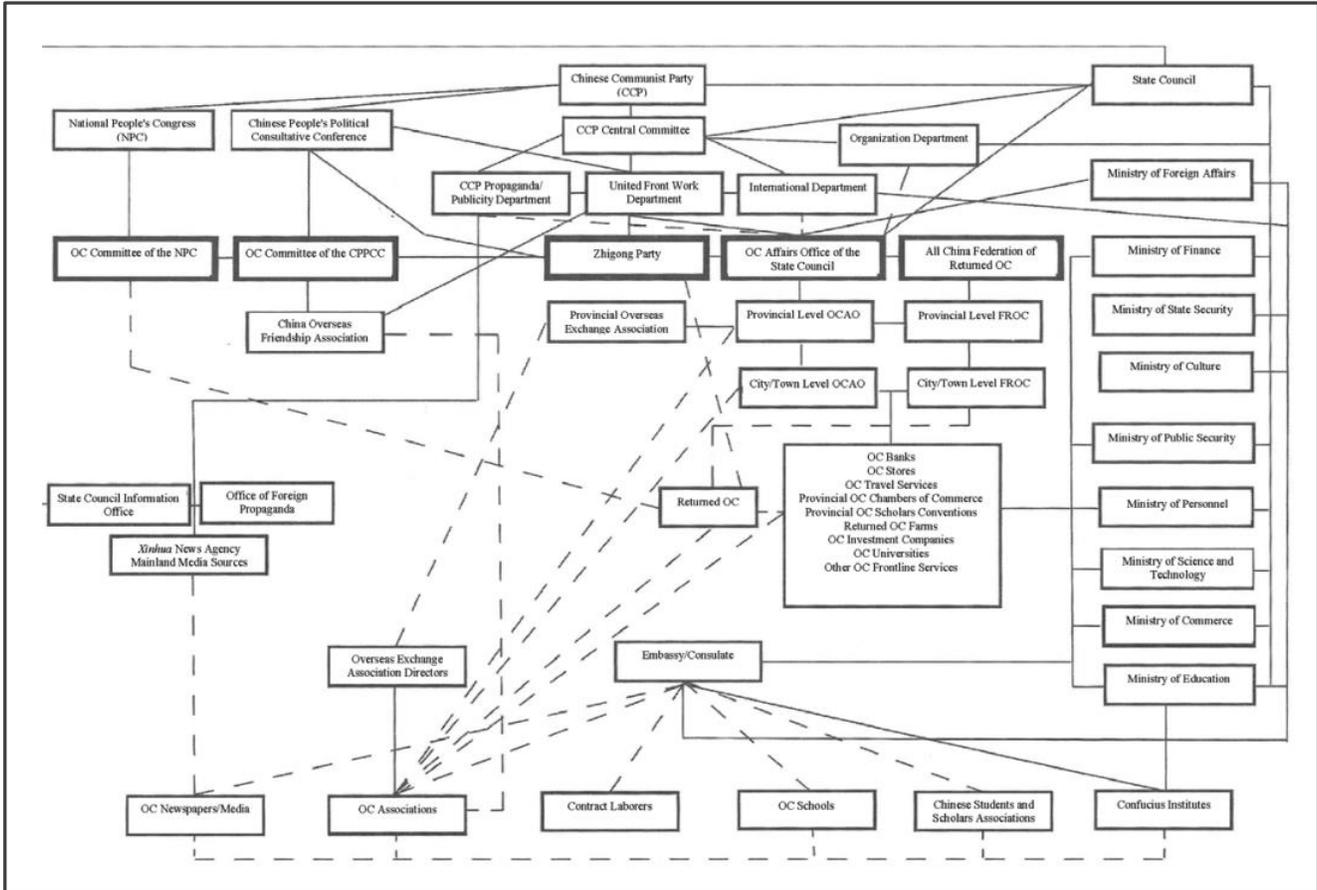


Image 6: Relationship between United Front Work Department and the overall CCP power structure created by Alexander Bowe for the United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission.

As we note above, the Ex Chinese Association, which conducts UFWD work, has taken an unusually prominent role in spearheading transnational repression of Uyghurs in Pakistan. Established in 2003, the Ex Chinese Association in Pakistan received 16 million rupees (\$150,000 USD) from the Chinese embassy, as well as additional grants issued in 2013 with the aim of educating the

[work-department](#). Alex Joske, “Reorganizing the United Front Work Department: New Structures for a New Era of Diaspora and Religious Affairs Work,” *China Brief*, Jamestown Foundation, May 9, 2019, <https://jamestown.org/program/reorganizing-the-united-front-work-department-new-structures-for-a-new-era-of-diaspora-and-religious-affairs-work/>.

sons and daughters of Pakistani Uyghurs.<sup>54</sup> Originally tasked with fostering ideological loyalty to the Chinese state, the association has expanded its tasks substantially since 2017, with evidence emerging of the association actively monitoring Rawalpindi's Uyghur community. According to our interviews, the Ex Chinese Association has been distributing registration forms ostensibly designed to allow Pakistani Uyghurs to attend schooling and other activities organized through the Chinese embassy. Activists in Pakistan, a country with 50 recorded cases of illegal detentions and renditions according to the China's Transnational Repression of Uyghurs Dataset, say the lists are a tool for enhanced Chinese coercion. On its official Facebook page, the organization frequently posts articles that defend China's policies in the XUAR.<sup>55</sup>

In addition, Chinese embassies and consulates, directed by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, have long taken an active role in intimidating Uyghurs in this part of the world. In 2006, the Chinese embassy reportedly placed pressure on the Saudi embassy in Islamabad to deny visas to thousands of Uyghurs seeking to embark on the *hajj* pilgrimage. According to a report, Chinese officials at the embassy threatened Uyghur protest leaders who opposed the move.<sup>56</sup> In 2015, the Chinese consulate in Pakistan was reported to be distributing money to local Uyghurs in Rawalpindi in exchange for information about protest leaders.<sup>57</sup> As part of a "charm offensive" in 2018, the Chinese embassy in Islamabad extended an invitation to about a dozen Uyghur community leaders from Pakistan to visit the XUAR and meet Chinese officials.<sup>58</sup>

**Chinese embassies and consulates, directed by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, have long taken an active role in intimidating Uyghurs in this part of the world.**

<sup>54</sup> Siddiqui, "China Is Trying To Spy On Pakistan's Uyghurs."

<sup>55</sup> For just one example, see "پاکستان میں یوریشین سنچری انسٹی ٹیوٹ کے بانی صدر نے کہا ہے کہ سنکیانگ کے حوالے سے" ["The founding president of the Eurasian Century Institute in Pakistan has said that lies about Xinjiang are being created mainly out of fear of China's progress."], 2020, *Ex Chinese Association Pakistan Facebook Group*, March 19, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/ExChinesePak1/>.

<sup>56</sup> "Refugee Review Tribunal: CHN31261," *Australian Refugee Review Tribunal*, February 9, 2007, <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4b6fe16f0.pdf>.

<sup>57</sup> "Chinese Consulate Pays off Uyghurs in Pakistan for Dirt on Activists," *Radio Free Asia*, July 23, 2015, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/55e59c73c.html>.

<sup>58</sup> Adnan Aamir, "Beijing Engages with Pakistan's Uyghurs in 'Charm Offensive,'" *Nikkei Asia*, October 31, 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Beijing-engages-with-Pakistan-s-Uyghurs-in-charm-offensive>.

### *Diaspora Spies and Informants*

China also tries to instill fear and suspicion among Uyghur communities using networks of spies and informants to sever social ties, such as the case of Yusupjan Ahmet, whom Chinese authorities pressed to spy on Uyghur communities in Turkey after threatening his mother.<sup>59</sup> The UFWD’s Xinjiang bureau coerces individuals in Uyghur exile communities into spying on their neighbors by making threats against their families still living in the Uyghur homeland. This strategy is meant to both gather details about Uyghurs abroad and also discourage Uyghurs from speaking out against the Chinese state.<sup>60</sup> In 2009, Pakistani citizen Kamirdin Abdurahman, a Uyghur born in Pakistan, visited the Uyghur homeland. During his visit, Chinese authorities confiscated his passport and demanded that he spy on Uyghur activist networks in Rawalpindi. After sharing his story with the press back in Pakistan, Kamirdin received a series of threatening phone calls, which eventually caused him to flee into Afghanistan for fear of his life.<sup>61</sup>

Afghanistan has reportedly seen some novel approaches to this method of spy recruitment. For example, in December 2020 in Kabul, Indian media reported that Afghanistan’s intelligence agency,<sup>62</sup> the National Directorate of Security, had arrested ten Chinese nationals for allegedly trying to build an artificial Uyghur cell to attract supposed militant Uyghurs in Afghanistan that were of concern to China.<sup>63</sup>

**China also tries to instill fear and suspicion among Uyghur communities using networks of spies and informants to sever social ties [...]**

<sup>59</sup> “Man ‘forced’ to inform on fellow Uighurs for China is shot in Turkey,” *The Telegraph*, November 4, 2020, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/11/04/man-forced-inform-fellow-uighurs-china-shot-turkey/>.

<sup>60</sup> Alexander Bowe, “China’s Overseas United Front Work: Background and Implications for the United States,” *U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission*, August 24, 2018, [https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China's%20Overseas%20United%20Front%20Work%20-%20Background%20and%20Implications%20for%20US\\_final\\_0.pdf](https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China's%20Overseas%20United%20Front%20Work%20-%20Background%20and%20Implications%20for%20US_final_0.pdf).

<sup>61</sup> Siddiqui, “China Is Trying To Spy On Pakistan’s Uighurs.”

<sup>62</sup> “Afghanistan Arrests 10 Chinese Citizens on Charges of Espionage, asks China to Apologise,” *Opindia*, December 25, 2020, <https://www.opindia.com/2020/12/afghanistan-arrests-10-chinese-citizens-charges-of-espionage-apologise/>.

<sup>63</sup> Aakriti Sharma, “‘China-Pakistan Spy Ring’ Busted in Afghanistan; 10 Chinese Nationals Held on Espionage Charges,” *EurAsian Times*, December 25, 2020, <https://eurasianimes.com/china-pakistan-spy-ring-busted-in-afghanistan-10-chinese-nationals-held-on-espionage-charge/>.

### *Digital Surveillance*

In Pakistan, Uyghurs face intense digital threats. China has used powerful spyware programs against Uyghurs there, creating malware to infect iPhones via WhatsApp messages. A recent study by digital security firm Lookout discovered that China had been installing spyware on Pakistani phones. The study showed how spyware made its way onto Uyghur smartphones through third-party apps found on local sites and advertisements (i.e., sites referencing country-specific services and news outlets).<sup>64</sup> Phishing sites containing the spyware were found in ten different languages, including Urdu, Persian, Turkish, and Uyghur. Once downloaded, the spyware can collect a variety of personal data from smartphones, including text message history, contact information, location data, and even audio from phone conversations.<sup>65</sup>

### *Coercion-by-Proxy*

In order to effectively coerce Uyghurs beyond its borders, China relies on a variety of surrogate methods. When authoritarian states face resistance to their rule from opponents living abroad, they often resort to more indirect tactics, preying on these opponents' relatives who live inside the authoritarian state.<sup>66</sup> The costs of targeting these individuals living in the home state are lower than targeting the opponents living abroad and can achieve the same result. The targeting of home-state relatives involves a range of more overt tactics, including imprisonment, violent attacks, and torture, along with less overt tactics, such as harassment, surveillance, and intimidation.<sup>67</sup> Due to the strength of the police state in the XUAR, many Uyghurs living abroad have been pressured to return home

**Due to the strength of the police state in the XUAR, many Uyghurs living abroad have been pressured to return home or cease their political activities abroad through their relatives.**

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<sup>64</sup> Simon Chandler, "China Uses Android Malware to Spy on Ethnic Minorities Worldwide, New Reports Says," *Forbes*, July 6, 2020,

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/simonchandler/2020/07/06/china-uses-android-malware-to-spy-on-ethnic-minorities-worldwide-new-research-says/>.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Fiona Adamson, "At Home and Abroad: Coercion-by-Proxy as a Tool of Transnational Repression," Freedom House, 2020, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2020/home-and-abroad-coercion-proxy-tool-transnational-repression>.

<sup>67</sup> Edward Lemon, Saipira Furstenburg, and John Heathershaw, "Tajikistan: Placing Pressure on Political Exiles by Targeting Families," *Foreign Policy Center*, December 4, 2017, <https://fpc.org.uk/tajikistan-placing-pressure-political-exiles-targeting-relatives/>.

or cease their political activities abroad through their relatives. One Pakistani gemstone trader from Gilgit-Baltistan, who was married to a Uyghur woman, was denied entry into the XUAR unless he brought his wife with him. After the trader complied and returned to the border with his wife, XUAR authorities detained and later incarcerated her back in the Uyghur Region.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, a clothing merchant from Pakistan told a journalist from *Deutsche Welle* that his Uyghur wife was also detained, and even after she was released, Chinese authorities installed a monitoring device on her phone to track her calls to her family in Rawalpindi.<sup>69</sup>

### *Extradition Treaties and Legal Agreements*

China’s motivation to sign extradition treaties with countries like Pakistan has formed another vital tranche of its campaign of transnational repression. International extradition is defined as a practice of one country formally surrendering an individual alleged of a crime to another country with jurisdiction over the crime charged. The first such treaty between Pakistan and China was signed in 2003 after China accused Pakistan of secretly arresting Uyghur militants.<sup>70</sup> On December 15, 2003, the Chinese Ministry of Public Security shared its first list of “East Turkestan terrorists” and “terrorist organizations” abroad.<sup>71</sup> The list named 11 individuals and four organizations, calling for international partners such as Pakistan to cooperate in arresting and deporting these individuals to China. China provided little to no evidence to corroborate the accusations it made against these individuals, according to Amnesty International.<sup>72</sup> Much of the “evidence” appeared to have been problematically extracted from individuals in the XUAR under torture or interrogation, a widespread practice in China that undermines the credibility of its accusations.<sup>73</sup> Neighboring

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<sup>68</sup> Khan, “Pakistani Husbands Distressed.”

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> “Compendium of Bilateral and Regional Instruments for South Asia,” UNODC, 2015, [https://www.unodc.org/documents/terrorism/Publications/SAARC%20compendium/SA\\_Compendium\\_Volume-2.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/terrorism/Publications/SAARC%20compendium/SA_Compendium_Volume-2.pdf).

<sup>71</sup> “China Names Six Uyghurs on Terror List,” *BBC*, April 6, 2012, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-17636262>.

<sup>72</sup> Amnesty International, “People’s Republic of China Uyghurs fleeing persecution.”

<sup>73</sup> “Refugee Review Tribunal: CHN31261,” *Australian Refugee Review Tribunal*, February 9, 2007.

Afghanistan has never signed any formal extradition agreements with China, but in 2014, Afghan security forces detained and deported Uyghur activist Israel Ahmet under questionable circumstances.<sup>74</sup>

### *Multilateral Organizations*

Finally, China has invested in the creation of its own web of international structures in order to pursue Uyghurs around the world. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which Pakistan joined in 2017 after being an observer since 2005,<sup>75</sup> has been a particularly important vehicle for pursuing its goals of limiting Uyghur political activism abroad. The organization's primary mandate is to fight the "three evils" of terrorism, extremism and separatism.<sup>76</sup> According to provisions agreed upon in 2005, the SCO requires all members to recognize terrorist, extremist, and separatists acts, regardless of whether the members' own laws classified them as such.<sup>77</sup> Due to many member states having loose definitions of these terms, as well as Article 2 of the SCO's 2009 Convention on Counter-terrorism simply defining terrorism as an "ideology of violence," SCO member states are able to take advantage of these loose definitions to pursue political opponents abroad.

The SCO operates mainly through two administrative bodies: a Secretariat based in Beijing and the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS). Established in January 2006, RATS is a consolidated list of extremist, terrorist, and separatist individuals and groups that would balloon to include 2,500 individuals and 769 groups by September 2016. According to Thomas Ambrosio, "the RATS serves as the central locus of the process of 'sharing worst

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<sup>74</sup> Bethany Matta, "China to Neighbors: Send Us Your Uyghurs," *Al Jazeera*, February 18, 2015, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2015/2/18/china-to-neighbours-send-us-your-uighurs>.

<sup>75</sup> "Pakistan Joins the Security Bloc Led by China, Russia," *Dawn*, June 10, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1338647>; "Pakistan Joins SCO as Observer," *Dawn*, July 6, 2005, <https://www.dawn.com/news/146634/pakistan-joins-sco-as-observer>.

<sup>76</sup> Aris, S. "The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: 'Tackling the Three Evils.' A Regional Response to Non-Traditional Security Challenges or an Anti-Western Bloc?" *Europe-Asia Studies* 61, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27752254>, p. 457-482.

<sup>77</sup> "Concept of Cooperation of State Members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Fight Against Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism," *Shanghai Cooperation Organization*, July 5, 2005, <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=8218>.

practices’ amongst the SCO member states.”<sup>78</sup> The European Court of Human Rights has described these norms as “an absolute negation of the rule of law.”<sup>79</sup> Several counterterrorism drills under a series of “Peace Missions” have been staged under the RATS framework in Pakistan since 2018, strengthening Islamabad’s security cooperation with China.<sup>80</sup>

Outside the SCO, China established a new security mechanism in 2016 called the Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism (QCCM), which is made up of Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The organization is tasked with jointly combating terrorism and further advancing security cooperation between these states.<sup>81</sup> The chiefs of general staffs of the four military forces met in Ürümchi to announce QCCM in 2016, stating it would coordinate efforts on the “study and judgement of the counter-terrorism situation, confirmation of clues, intelligence sharing, anti-terrorist capability building, joint anti-terrorist training, and personnel training.”<sup>82</sup> China combines its security coordination with these countries by pledging large development projects as part of the BRI, and vice-versa.

In a 2020 report to the U.S. Congress, the Pentagon highlighted how China’s security and development interests are complementary and described how China was seeking new ways to increase its power projection in Central and South Asia. The Pentagon report also detailed how the Chinese military was planning to build “military logistics facilities” in several countries including Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan in order to better protect

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<sup>78</sup> Thomas Ambrosio, “The legal framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: An architecture of authoritarianism,” *The Foreign Policy Centre*, May 24, 2016, <https://fpc.org.uk/sco-architecture-of-authoritarianism/>.

<sup>79</sup> Amnesty International, “Return to Torture: Extradition, Forcible Returns and Removals to Central Asia,” July 3, 2013, 9, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR04/001/2013/en/>.

<sup>80</sup> “SCO Member States Including India to Participate in Anti Terror Drills in Pakistan,” *The Express Tribune*, March 22, 2021, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2290778/sco-member-states-including-india-to-participate-in-anti-terror-drills-in-pakistan>.

<sup>81</sup> Joshua Kucera, “Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, Tajikistan Deepen ‘Anti-Terror’ Ties,” *Eurasianet*, August 4, 2016, <https://eurasianet.org/afghanistan-china-pakistan-tajikistan-deepen-anti-terror-ties>.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

China's economic and security interests.<sup>83</sup> These developments have dire consequences for Uyghurs living in these border regions. In June 2021, lawyers submitting evidence to the International Criminal Court (ICC) on behalf of a Uyghur organization alleging that the Chinese government has committed various forms of transnational repression of Uyghurs in Tajikistan said that "the number of Uyghurs living in Tajikistan has been reduced from 3,000 to 100 in the past 15 years, with most of the reduction happening in 2016–2018."<sup>84</sup> In 2019, observers alleged that Tajikistan rendered three Uyghurs to China on behalf of the Turkish government.<sup>85</sup>

Leaked internal CCP documents obtained by the *New York Times* in 2019 provide further evidence of how China's leadership has increasingly fixated on securitizing the Uyghur homeland. Set against a backdrop of the 2009 unrest in Ürümchi and the looming specter of a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, the leaked documents reveal how Xi Jinping pushed for a new strategy of expanding China's security apparatus in the XUAR and Central and South Asia. In closed-door speeches included in these documents, Xi states that economic development "does not automatically bring lasting order and security" and that China would have to wage a "People's War" in the region by emulating the U.S.-led Global War on Terror.<sup>86</sup> Xi's speeches signaled that moving forward, Chinese strategy in Central and South Asia would have to integrate traditional economic development projects with new military and security systems.

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<sup>83</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China," September 1, 2020, <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>.

<sup>84</sup> Stephanie van den Berg, "Lawyers urge ICC to probe alleged forced deportations of Uyghurs from Tajikistan," *Associated Press*, June 10, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/lawyers-urge-icc-probe-alleged-forced-deportations-uyghurs-tajikistan-2021-06-10/>.

<sup>85</sup> "Uyghur Mother, Daughter, Deported to China From Russia," *Radio Free Asia*, August 9, 2019, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/deportation-08092019171834.html>.

<sup>86</sup> Austin Ramzy and Chris Buckley, "'Absolutely no Mercy': Leaked Files Expose How China Manages Mass Detention of Muslims," *New York Times*, November 16, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/11/16/world/asia/china-xinjiang-documents.html>.

## VII. China’s Historical Engagement with Pakistan

Often dubbed the “eighth wonder of the world,” the Karakoram Highway is a powerful symbol of Pakistan’s troubled relationship with China, a dynamic so complex that CCP officials have often joked that Pakistan is to China as Israel is to the United States.<sup>87</sup> Despite the highway’s glowing promises of regional connectivity, commercial activity on the highway remains low even to this day.<sup>88</sup> The highway does, however, fulfill an important strategic function. Following its completion, the highway allowed Pakistan and China to establish a military foothold in mountainous landscapes claimed by India. In 1966, the same year the highway was announced, China and Pakistan signed their first military agreement, which was worth \$120 million USD, and soon after came a flurry of trade agreements to stimulate trade between Pakistan and the XUAR.<sup>89</sup> Rapidly shifting geopolitics brought the two countries closer, with Moscow’s 1979 decision to invade Afghanistan raising fears in China of a military buildup by its Cold War rival on its sensitive western borders. Faced with a shared interest in driving the Soviet Union out of South Asia, an unlikely alliance between Pakistan, China, Saudi Arabia, and the United States emerged to funnel money, weapons, and logistical support to the Islamist *mujahideen* fighters defying the Soviet military. Some 30,000 fighters assembled from across the Muslim world to pass through Pakistan and onward into the conflict across the border.<sup>90</sup>

**In 1983, China gave Pakistan completed designs for nuclear weapons and assisted Islamabad’s scientists to enrich weapons-grade uranium and conduct missile tests in the XUAR’s Lop Nor nuclear facilities.**

<sup>87</sup> Thalif Deen, “China: ‘Pakistan is our Israel,’” *Al Jazeera*, October 28, 2010, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2010/10/28/china-pakistan-is-our-israel>.

<sup>88</sup> Syed Irfan Raza, “Karakoram Highway Inadequate for CPEC Traffic, Says Senate Panel,” *Dawn*, November 7, 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1294813>.

<sup>89</sup> “Today’s Karakoram Highway Follows the Ancient Silk Route From China,” *Pakistan Affairs*, United States: Information Division, Embassy of Pakistan., 1977.

<sup>90</sup> G. Parthasarathy, “Challenges in Afghanistan,” *The Tribune*, October 15, 2020, <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/challenges-in-afghanistan-155896>.

Relations throughout the Soviet-Afghan War brought China and Pakistan only closer. In 1983, China gave Pakistan completed designs for nuclear weapons and assisted Islamabad's scientists to enrich weapons-grade uranium and conduct missile tests in the XUAR's Lop Nor nuclear facilities.<sup>91</sup> By 1986, the two signed an official nuclear cooperation deal, promising a series of technology transfers and financial commitments. This cooperation continued throughout the 1990s with China building a new 300-megawatt nuclear power plant in Pakistan in 1991.<sup>92</sup>

### *China: A Source of Stability?*

Over the last two decades, both sides have framed the Sino-Pakistan relationship as being of mutual benefit and a source of stability, security, and economic development for Pakistan. In 2013, former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Xi Jinping marked their simultaneous ascension to leadership with a large display of ceremony and friendship in Islamabad. Sharif noted "critical changes" and "major developments" within China and the region as a whole and proclaimed that Xi Jinping would usher in a new era of development for Pakistan.<sup>93</sup> Once Imran Khan was elected to leadership in 2018, he generally continued to heap praise on China's development efforts. Winning the election on a promise of a Naya Pakistan (New Pakistan), Khan gave specific praise to China's anti-corruption efforts, hoping to put 500 corrupt people in jail as Xi Jinping had done in China.<sup>94</sup>

Much of China's rhetoric and strategy for expanding its presence in Pakistan focuses on the Gwadar Port, which former Pakistani President Musharraf hailed as the "economic funnel of (Central and South Asia)" in 2002, anticipating the BRI, which Xi Jinping would go on to announce in Kazakhstan over a decade

**Once Imran Khan was elected to leadership in 2018, he generally continued to heap praise on China's development efforts.**

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<sup>91</sup> Andrew Small, *The China-Pakistan axis: Asia's new geopolitics*, (London: Hurst, 2015), p. 42.

<sup>92</sup> Raza, "Karakoram Highway Inadequate for CPEC Traffic."

<sup>93</sup> Mateen Haider, "Economic corridor in focus as Pakistan, China sign 51 MoUs," *Dawn*, April 20, 2015, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1177109>.

<sup>94</sup> Tariq Butt, "Imran all praise for China's efforts against corruption," *Gulf Today*, October 8, 2019, <https://www.gulftoday.ae/news/2019/10/08/imran-all-praise-for-chinas--efforts-against-corruption>.

later.<sup>95</sup> Signed into existence by newly elected Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in 2013, the CPEC deal outlined an ambitious \$46 billion USD Gwadar Port development project over a 15-year timeframe.<sup>96</sup> Envisioned as a Pakistani Dubai, the Gwadar Port and CPEC would serve two ideal functions for Pakistan: they would bring more commerce to Pakistan, and they would help Islamabad gain more control over the resource-rich but restive Balochistan province. For China, the projects would demonstrate to the world Beijing’s ability to bring stability to a region rife with turmoil, while extending its reach into the Arabian Sea. For both countries, however, the projects have fallen far short of expectations. Opened for commercial shipments in 2008, the Gwadar Port has seen only a meager amount of traffic, receiving its first container ship only in 2018.<sup>97</sup> The port’s local benefits are also questionable. If the port becomes profitable, China will receive the lion’s share of revenue at 91%, and Pakistan’s federal government will receive just 9%, leaving nothing for Balochistan’s provincial government.

In his book *The Emperor’s New Road*, political analyst John Hillman notes that much like the United States before it, China largely overestimates its capacity to induce reform within Pakistani politics.<sup>98</sup> With low regulatory standards and a distinct lack of conditionality when compared with Western loans, Chinese money has often been privy to the demands of local corruption. Chinese state-owned enterprises often bypass local bureaucratic approval and traditional bidding processes to secure project approval, lining the pockets of Chinese actors and local elites.<sup>99</sup> Though CPEC was

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<sup>95</sup> “President Xi Jinping Delivers Important Speech and Proposes to Build a Silk Road Economic Belt with Central Asian Countries,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China*, September 7, 2013,

[https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/topics\\_665678/xjpfwzysiesgjtffhshzzfh\\_665686/t1076334.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpfwzysiesgjtffhshzzfh_665686/t1076334.shtml).

<sup>96</sup> “Common Vision for Deepening China-Pakistan Strategic Cooperative Partnership in the New Era,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China*, July 5, 2013,

[https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/2649\\_665393/t1056958.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t1056958.shtml).

<sup>97</sup> “Under CPEC: First container vessel anchors at Gwadar,” *The Express Tribune*, March 8, 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1653969/cpec-first-container-vessel-anchors-gwadar>.

<sup>98</sup> Jonathan E. Hillman, *The Emperor’s New Road: China and the Project of the Century*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), p. 149.

<sup>99</sup> Audrye Wong, “How Not to Win Allies and Influence Geopolitics,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 4, 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-04-20/how-not-win-allies-and-influence-geopolitics>.

cause for celebration for Pakistan's domestic industries, private and even state entities have had a hard time securing contracts for the various connected infrastructure projects, owing to competition with Pakistan's large military industry conglomerates. For example, in 2018, a civilian affiliated company received a \$280 million USD CPEC contract to build an oil pipeline, but a year later the contract transferred to the military-run Frontier Works Organization. The conglomerate received the contract, and the price tag also shot up to \$370 million USD for the same output.<sup>100</sup> Local politics have also caused considerable issues for Beijing. In 2017, China agreed to help finance the Diamer Bhasha Dam in Gilgit-Baltistan—a project that cost \$14 billion USD to construct and faced numerous delays in the process. Additionally, land disputes with local residents persist, and delayed payments to those displaced by the project have sparked protests.<sup>101</sup>

Leaders in Pakistan have consistently spoken about CPEC in messianic terms, claiming that it will solve all of Pakistan's economic problems, fix its energy shortages, and boost the country's manufacturing and export industries. But Pakistani politicians have also used CPEC negotiations for short-term political gains, often at the cost of long-term benefits for the country. Facing reelection in 2018, Sharif pushed for more Chinese-backed power plants to help with chronic energy shortages across the country. To entice Chinese investment, Sharif guaranteed large yearly returns by Pakistan's government, with some reports putting the figure as high as 34% guaranteed returns for 30 years.<sup>102</sup> As a result of these negotiations, Beijing played a larger role in Pakistan's energy-production sector. Since the approval of new energy facilities in Pakistan under CPEC, Chinese energy projects and Chinese power companies have contributed to hundreds of millions of dollars in contract violations and financial transgressions. Instances of graft among these energy production groups included inflated set-up costs, annual profits that

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<sup>100</sup> Hoo Tiang Boon and Glenn K. H. Ong, "Military Dominance in Pakistan and China-Pakistan Relations," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 75 (2021): 88.

<sup>101</sup> Jamil Nagri, "GB Government Demands Action on Court Orders for its Rights," *Dawn*, October 19, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1439851>.

<sup>102</sup> Jeremy Page and Saeed Shah, "China's Global Building Spree Runs into Trouble in Pakistan," *Wall Street Journal*, July 22, 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-global-building-spree-runs-into-trouble-in-pakistan-1532280460>.

quadruple the limit set by Pakistani regulations, and Chinese firms that over-quote tariff charges, all of which have directly led to spikes in energy bills for Pakistanis and massive debt for the government.<sup>103</sup> Khan’s government has been unable to make any significant policy changes to CPEC, while allowing Pakistan’s debt crisis to grow. By the end of the 2019–20 fiscal year, debt reached over 87% of Pakistan’s GDP, up from 72% of GDP the previous year. Pakistan’s total debt and liabilities rose 7% from \$106.3 billion USD in 2019 to \$113.8 billion USD in 2020.<sup>104</sup> Though Pakistan has taken on increasing debt from China under CPEC, everyday costs like fuel and electricity continue to rise, meaning that Pakistanis have seen very little benefit from this debt.

In addition to inflating its rhetoric on the economic advantages of the partnership, China has also proven itself to be a potentially destabilizing security partner for Islamabad. The 2007 Siege of Lal Masjid, the Red Mosque, in Islamabad demonstrates this risk. The mosque had long been a hub of radical Islamic activity, but in 2007, conservative vigilantes from Lal Masjid entered a massage parlor in sector F-8, one of the city’s wealthiest neighborhoods, and dragged six Chinese women kicking and screaming from the building, accusing them of prostitution.<sup>105</sup> From June 25 to 28 of that year, Federal Interior Minister Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao traveled to Beijing for discussions on bilateral cooperation against terrorism.<sup>106</sup> When he returned to Islamabad, Sherpao reported that his Chinese counterparts were falsely attributing the raid on the Chinese massage parlor to Uyghur students studying at the Lal Masjid madrassa and expressed concern that Uyghur terrorists associated with the East Turkestan Islamic Movement/Turkestan Islamic Party (ETIM/TIP) in Pakistan may pose a threat to the 2008 Olympic Games. China accused Islamabad not only of negligence over the

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<sup>103</sup> Waishali Basu Sharma, “As Pakistan’s Energy Crisis Worsens, Have Chinese Investments Failed Islamabad?” *The Wire*, June 2, 2020, <https://thewire.in/south-asia/pakistan-energy-crisis-cpec>.

<sup>104</sup> Waishali Basu Sharma, “Pakistan Debt Intensifies as Economic Mismanagement Continues Unabated,” *The Wire*, February 27, 2021, <https://thewire.in/south-asia/pakistan-debt-crisis-intensifies-as-economic-mismanagement-continues-unabated>.

<sup>105</sup> Farhan Bokhari, “Women Kidnapped From Alleged Brothel,” *CBS News*, June 23, 2007, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/women-kidnapped-from-alleged-brothel/>.

<sup>106</sup> “China Urges Pakistan to Ensure Security of Chinese After Hostage Issue,” *Xinhua News Agency*, June 27, 2007, [http://en.people.cn/200706/27/eng20070627\\_387969.html](http://en.people.cn/200706/27/eng20070627_387969.html).

security of Chinese nationals but also of harboring so-called enemies of the Chinese state. Fearing Chinese retaliation, Musharraf chose to demonstrate a strong hand, launching “Operation Silence,” a violent eight-day siege on the mosque. In the end, at least 103 people were killed, including women and children, with some accounts putting the massacre at some several hundred.<sup>107</sup> Of the 15 non-Afghan foreigners killed, 12 were reportedly Uyghurs.<sup>108</sup> In 2008, Amnesty International labeled the killings by Pakistani security forces as an “excessive use of force.”<sup>109</sup>

As Andrew Small highlights, the siege unleashed an array of new political forces across the country, bringing Pakistan to the brink of chaos and making highly visible development projects a new target for attack.<sup>110</sup> A large number of militant groups in the country’s tribal areas annulled their peace agreement with the Pakistani government and consolidated themselves under a new umbrella organization: the Tehrik-i-Taliban-Pakistan (TTP), also known as the Pakistani Taliban. In less than two years, they went on to occupy territory within 60 miles of Islamabad. Their influence spread so rapidly that the Pakistani military deployed soldiers to protect the Karakoram Highway, which the authorities feared was under threat.<sup>111</sup>

As China has grown more active in the internal politics of neighboring states like Pakistan, it has disrupted internal balances of power, creating the very conditions in which anti-Chinese sentiments can grow and thrive. As China’s policies in the XUAR and elsewhere have grown harsher, the country’s treatment of Uyghurs has produced growing animosity toward China from disparate Islamic militant groups.<sup>112</sup> In November 2014, for example,

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<sup>107</sup> “The aftershocks,” *Jang*, July 7, 2010,

<https://jang.com.pk/thenews/jul2010-weekly/nos-04-07-2010/spr.htm>.

<sup>108</sup> “Pakistan Bombings Raise Fears of Taliban, al Qaeda Resurgence,” *CNN*, July 16, 2007,

<https://edition.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/asiapcf/07/16/pakistan.alqaeda/index.html>; Ravi Shekhar

Narain Singh, “The Military Factor in Pakistan,” (Frankfort, 2008), p. 426.

<sup>109</sup> Amnesty International, “Amnesty International Report 2008: Pakistan,” May 28, 2008,

<https://www.refworld.org/docid/483e27a656.html>.

<sup>110</sup> Small, *The China-Pakistan Axis*, p. 88–89

<sup>111</sup> “Troops Deployed Along Karakoram Highway,” *Dawn*, April 28, 2009,

<https://www.dawn.com/news/889019/troops-deployed-along-karakoram-highway>.

<sup>112</sup> Matta, “China to Neighbors: Send Us Your Uyghurs.”

the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan Jamaat-ul Ahrar—a branch of the Pakistani Taliban—printed an article in its official magazine that said, “We’re warning Beijing to stop killing Uyghurs. If you don’t change your anti-Muslim policies, soon the mujahideen will target you.”<sup>113</sup> Pakistan’s minority groups, most prominently the Balochi, deeply mistrust Chinese development projects. Locals fear that they will not reap any rewards from these development projects and that the projects are designed by the Pakistani state, in collaboration with China, to fundamentally shift the demographics of given regions.<sup>114</sup>

### *Pakistan’s Uyghur Community*

For most of the long history of Sino-Pakistani relations, authorities left the Uyghur community in Pakistan relatively undisturbed. That would all change after 1990, with an uprising in the XUAR town of Baren that year and the emergence of the independent republics in Central Asia following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.<sup>115</sup> Although there is no official estimate, anthropological research suggests that there are roughly 300 Uyghur families currently residing in Pakistan, two-thirds of whom live in Rawalpindi, with additional clusters in Gilgit-Baltistan, Lahore, Karachi, and Peshawar.<sup>116</sup> From his interviews with Uyghur communities in the country, anthropologist Alessandro Rippa has argued that most of these families arrived from the XUAR beginning in 1948 to flee the invading People’s Liberation Army (PLA), with additional refugees flowing into Pakistan in the wake of political unrest in the XUAR towns of Baren (1990); Ghulja (1997); and Ürümchi (2009). Many others over the decades simply left the XUAR to go on *hajj*, settled in Pakistan, and never returned to their homeland.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Muhammad Akbar Notezai, “Why Balochs Are Targeting China,” *The Diplomat*, November 26, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/11/why-balochs-are-targeting-china/>.

<sup>115</sup> Gardner Bovington, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land*, 2010, p.125

<sup>116</sup> Alessandro Rippa, “From Uyghurs to Kashgaris (and Back?): Migration and Cross-border Interactions Between Xinjiang and Pakistan,” *Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series*, no. 23 (2014): 7.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

Though officially completed in 1978, the Karakoram Highway was not open for civilian use until 1982.<sup>118</sup> The opening of the highway to civilians coincided with Deng Xiaoping's Reform and Opening program, allowing a shift in China to more tolerant policies, which led to a turning point in Uyghur cultural and religious life. As more mosques and madrassas opened, many Uyghurs took advantage of the policy shift to go on *hajj*, which was allowed to resume in 1979 after a 15-year suspension.<sup>119</sup> Pakistan would serve as the key transit country for these Muslims conducting *hajj*, with around 1,200 pilgrims crossing into Pakistan on their way to Mecca in 1985. To help fund the new pilgrims from their homeland, Uyghur traders emerged to sell goods and materials, particularly in Islamabad's twin city of Rawalpindi.<sup>120</sup> Wealthy Uyghurs from Saudi Arabia even donated two houses in Rawalpindi—named Khotan House and Kashgar House—which served as free temporary housing for Uyghur pilgrims on their way to Mecca.<sup>121</sup> According to fieldwork by Alessandro Rippa, Kashgar House and Khotan House shuttered after 20 years and presently serve as warehouses for Uyghur traders.<sup>122</sup>

Leading up to the completion of the Karakoram Highway, there was also an invigorated exchange of people and culture from Pakistan into the XUAR. Using their language skills and family connections, Pakistani Uyghurs established themselves as important business mediators and launched successful import-export businesses. The CCP even encouraged this exchange, believing it would help develop China's western provinces and lift people out of poverty, much like what was happening along China's eastern coastline.<sup>123</sup> However, by 1988, China was growing

**Leading up to the completion of the Karakoram Highway, there was also an invigorated exchange of people and culture from Pakistan into the XUAR.**

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<sup>118</sup> Kreutzmann, Hermann, "The Karakoram Highway: The Impact of Road Construction on Mountain Societies," *Modern Asian Studies* 25 (1991): 725.

<sup>119</sup> Shichor, Yitzhak, "Blow Up: Internal and External Challenges of Uyghur Separatism and Islamic Radicalism to Chinese Rule in Xinjiang," *Asian Affairs: An American Review* Vol. 32 (2005): 122; Edmund Waite, "The impact of the State on Islam Amongst the Uyghurs: Religious Knowledge and Authority in the Kashgar Oasis," *Central Asian Survey* 25 no. 3 (2006): 254-5.

<sup>120</sup> Rippa, "From Uyghurs to Kashgaris (and Back?), 7.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ziad Haider, "Sino-Pakistan Relations and Xinjiang's Uyghurs: Politics, Trade, and Islam Along the Karakoram Highway," *Asia Survey* 45, no. 4 (2005): 522-45.

suspicious of the movement of people between Pakistan and the Uyghur Region.

Many Uyghurs who lived through the 1980s in their homeland characterize the time as a “golden era” for modern Uyghur identity, culture, and community life. Against a backdrop of increased Uyghur-language publishing and cultural production, several student organizations emerged in the XUAR to advocate for Uyghur rights and culture, such as the Tengritagh Association and the Students’ Cultural and Scientific Association, among others.<sup>124</sup> These student groups also played a critical role in the XUAR protest movements in December 1985 and June 1986, stoking CCP anxiety and desire for control.<sup>125</sup> Amid fears that ethnic nationalism and Islamic revivalism abroad might inspire young Uyghurs in the XUAR, China reverted back to more restrictive policies. These fears were seemingly reinforced when on April 5, 1990, demonstrations reportedly led by an “Islamic nationalist group” resulted in violence in Baren, near Kashgar.<sup>126</sup> Violence broke out as government security forces tried to forcibly disperse Uyghur protestors. Official sources called the events a “counter-revolutionary rebellion” and claimed 22 died from the violence, including seven security force members. Unofficial sources estimated up to 50 protestors died, with several shot by security forces as they were fleeing the demonstration. Amnesty International called for China to investigate claims of unnecessary lethal force, but no such investigation has ever occurred.<sup>127</sup>

As China moved to tighten its grip on the Uyghur homeland in the 1990s, China also increased pressure on Pakistan to force the country to help in China’s crusade against Uyghurs. China even closed the Karakoram Highway for several months in 1992 as a strong message to Pakistan. The country would need to help in

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<sup>124</sup> Rémi Castets, “The Uyghurs in Xinjiang: The Malaise Grows,” *China Perspectives* (September–October 2003), <https://journals.openedition.org/chinaperspectives/648>.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Amnesty International, “People’s Republic of China: Gross Violations of Human Rights in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region,” April 21, 1999, <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/3ae6a9eb0.pdf>.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

China's crackdown on Uyghurs, or China would not hesitate to freeze ties between the two countries.<sup>128</sup>

## VIII. China's Transnational Repression in Pakistan and Afghanistan

China's transnational repression of Uyghurs has been steadily evolving since the collapse of the Soviet Union and has rapidly expanded in severity in Pakistan and Afghanistan with the onset of the "People's War on Terror" in 2014. According to our upper estimate based on findings from the China's Transnational Repression of Uyghurs Dataset, if we were to include bulk cases with limited details of particular individuals, or where individuals were reported with pseudonyms or anonymously, there may be as many as 50 cases of detentions or renditions involving Uyghur and other Turkic peoples from the XUAR in Pakistan and Afghanistan since 1997, with 20 individual cases fully verified. In Afghanistan, journalists and human rights organizations have reported 40 cases, one of which we have fully verified.

These figures rely on reported data from families and public records, representing just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the number of renditions that are likely occurring. According to our upper estimate, Pakistan and Afghanistan have extradited a total of 27 Uyghurs in the early phases of China's transnational repression (1991–2001); 17 over the course of the second phase (2002–2008); 30 during the third stage (2009–2014); and 16 during the fourth stage (2015–April 2021).<sup>129</sup> Below we explore the evolution of China's

**China's transnational repression of Uyghurs has been steadily evolving since the collapse of the Soviet Union and has rapidly expanded in severity in Pakistan and Afghanistan with the onset of the "People's War on Terror" in 2014.**

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<sup>128</sup> Yale Global, "Clearing Clouds Over Karakoram Pass," March 29, 2004, <https://archive-yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/clearing-clouds-over-karakoram-pass>.

<sup>129</sup> Discerning readers might note that this periodization differs from that outlined in "Nowhere Left to Run," the first in a joint UHRP and Oxus Society series exploring China's use of transnational repression against the Uyghur diaspora. The main reason for this is that the onset of the U.S.-led Global War on Terror had distinct policy implications in Pakistan and Afghanistan that we feel require a more detailed periodization that differs slightly from that we used to describe and analyze China's transnational repression of Uyghurs globally.

methods of transnational repression in Pakistan and Afghanistan over the course of these four distinct phases.

## **Phase 1: The Emergence of China’s Transnational Repression (1991–2001)**

The combined events of the Baren Uprising in 1990 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 fundamentally altered China’s security calculations in the Uyghur homeland. Fearing growing religiosity from Pakistan and the potential rise of nationalist sentiments with the emergence of post-Soviet ethnic kin states across the border, China’s authorities embarked on a dramatic reversal of the relaxed political atmosphere of the XUAR in the Deng Xiaoping era. In 1996, the leaked “Document No.7” provided insights into the CCP’s early efforts to counter Uyghur dissent. The directive ordered XUAR officials to use “all means available” to thwart Uyghur organizations’ attempts to gain international attention, revealing early strategies to control discourse beyond China’s borders.<sup>130</sup>

Though the Chinese government made Central Asia the primary focus of its early efforts to repress Uyghurs living outside the PRC, the CCP increasingly turned its attention to South Asia after the rise of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan during the late 1990s. Fearing that radical Islam might spread further into the region, China chose to engage with the Taliban regime, and a secret meeting took place in Kandahar in 1998 between Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Lu Shulin and Taliban leader Mullah Omar. The Chinese ambassador discussed “rumors that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan was allegedly assisting the Muslims in Xinjiang,” but Mullah Omar dismissed these concerns, stating that “Afghanistan never had any interest or wish to interfere in China’s domestic issues, nor would Afghanistan allow any group to use its territory to conduct any such operation or support to that end.”<sup>131</sup> In 2000, the Taliban sought to further ease Chinese concerns by handing over 13 Uyghurs previously residing in Afghanistan under

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<sup>130</sup> Kunal Mukherjee, “The Uyghur Question in Contemporary China,” *Strategic Analysis* 34 (2010): 426.

<sup>131</sup> Abd al-Salam Zaif, *My Life with the Taliban*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 135.

political asylum.<sup>132</sup> Nevertheless, a small group of fighters would remain in the country and form the nucleus of the ETIM, which would soon be a frequently recurring name in official Chinese reports following the start of the U.S.-led Global War on Terror. Anthropologist Sean Roberts posits the caveat that the Uyghurs in northern Afghanistan under the leadership of ETIM's founder, Hassan Makhsum, were likely politically isolated and functionally ineffective, with no outside resources or funding.<sup>133</sup>

Omer Kanat, current executive director of the UHRP and then foreign correspondent for *Radio Free Asia* during the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, had covered the developments within Makhsum's community.<sup>134</sup> Kanat reported on one such development when representatives of the Taliban brought villagers from Makhsum's political network back to Kabul, where authorities would keep them under close watch to prevent them from upsetting China. If any ETIM fighting force had ever truly existed from 1998 to 1999, visits from Chinese officials to Taliban representatives had effectively neutralized it. Following the United States' invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, remnants of this small group gathered again near the Pakistani border, crossing paths with Uyghurs who would come to be known as the "Guantanamo 22" after U.S. forces captured and detained them.<sup>135</sup>

Pakistan also staked out a more interventionist course in its dealings with Uyghurs over this period. While there is no evidence of an official agreement to monitor Uyghur activities, Pakistan's actions in the late 1990s appear to indicate that the country had made some form of agreement with China. As early as 1997, for example, Pakistan deported 14 Uyghurs who were studying at local madrassas after Beijing accused the students, without concrete evidence, of being "terrorists intent on splitting Xinjiang from

**As early as 1997 [...] Pakistan deported 14 Uyghurs who were studying at local madrassas after Beijing accused the students, without concrete evidence, of being "terrorists intent on splitting Xinjiang from China" in the wake of the Ghulja unrest.**

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<sup>132</sup> Yitzhak Shichor, *The Great Wall of Steel: Military and Strategy in Xinjiang*, ed. S. Frederick Starr, (Taylor & Francis, 2015), p. 158.

<sup>133</sup> Sean R. Roberts, *The War on the Uyghurs: China's Internal Campaign Against a Muslim Minority*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), p. 105.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>135</sup> Richard Bernstein, "When China Convinced the U.S. That Uyghurs Were Waging Jihad," *The Atlantic*, March 19, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/03/us-uyghurs-guantanamo-china-terror/584107/>.

China” in the wake of the Ghulja unrest.<sup>136</sup> The students were summarily executed after crossing the border.<sup>137</sup> According to our database, these extraditions mark the first instances of another country extraditing Uyghurs at China’s request, making it a watershed moment in the evolution of Chinese transnational repression.

Consequently, officials closed Uyghur community hostels and reportedly evicted hundreds of their Uyghur residents. Human rights activists emphasized that while some individual Uyghurs who stayed at these guesthouses may have gone on to join the Taliban, there was no evidence that Islamic terrorist groups were supporting Uyghur separatism or that terrorist networks were seeking to recruit Uyghur separatists. Activists speculated that Pakistani concerns of safeguarding relations with China primarily led to the guesthouse closings in Islamabad.<sup>138</sup> By October 31, 1998, China and Pakistan had signed an agreement curbing cross-border smuggling of drugs, arms, and ammunition through the Khunjerab Pass. Pakistan would grow even more repressive toward Uyghurs as such repression became a vital component in the Global War on Terror.

## Phase 2: The Global War on Terror and the Beijing Olympics (2001–2008)

Following the United States’ declaration of its Global War on Terror in 2001, China began to capitalize on the heightened security environment to pursue Uyghur refugees by falsely labelling them as “terrorists,” sometimes even with the help of the United States. This was the case in October 2001 when U.S. forces took as prisoners 22 Uyghurs who had individually fled into Afghanistan in the years prior, where they gathered in a Uyghur village near Afghanistan’s

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<sup>136</sup> Mahesh Ranjan Debata, “Xinjiang in Central Asia’s Regional Security Structure,” *International Studies* 52 (2015): 53–65.

<sup>137</sup> Amnesty International, “Pakistan: Transfers to U.S. Custody Without Human Rights Guarantees,” July 2, 2002, <https://web.archive.org/web/20060430122421/http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA330142002?open&of=ENG-325>.

<sup>138</sup> Human Rights Watch, “China: Human Rights Concerns in Xinjiang,” October 2001, <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/background/asia/china-bck1017.htm>.

border with Pakistan. The men then fled into Pakistan shortly after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and the bombing of their village. In Afghanistan, local bounty hunters captured them and sold them to the United States, which brought them to the notorious detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. Over the course of their ordeal, as the 22 men fought to prove their innocence, Chinese officials sat in on their interrogations, accusing them of having links to ETIM.<sup>139</sup>

As part of a diplomatic tit-for-tat to gain Chinese backing for its plans to invade Iraq, the U.S. government went on to recognize ETIM as an international terror organization in 2002, despite the group's lack of credible links to groups such as Al Qaeda.<sup>140</sup> Prior to the U.S. recognition of ETIM as a "terrorist organization," in September 2002, the United States, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, and China jointly petitioned the UN to place sanctions on ETIM as a "terrorist organization" under UN Security Council Resolutions 1267 and 1390.<sup>141</sup> These designations have long been a source of controversy, with human rights activists saying they have bolstered China's claims to be facing a terrorist threat at home and abroad, essentially allowing the country to expand the scope of its transnational repression. The United States eventually corrected this error in 2020 when the Department of State removed ETIM from its list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations designation and Terrorist Exclusion List.<sup>142</sup>

Still, this ultimate move was too little, too late considering the wave of repression the Chinese government had already unleashed.

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<sup>139</sup> Bernstein, "When China Convinced the US That Uighurs Were Waging Jihad."

<sup>140</sup> For more on the delisting, see "US removes group condemned by China from 'terror' list," *Al Jazeera*, November 7, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/11/7/us-removes-group-condemned-by-china-from-terror-list>. Many published sources erroneously list the year of the listing as 2004. The correct year is 2002.

<sup>141</sup> U.S. Department of State Archive, "Designation of the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement Under UNSC Resolutions 1267 and 1390," September 11, 2002, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2002/13403.htm>.

<sup>142</sup> U.S. Department of State, "In the Matter of the Designation of the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement Also Known as ETIM as a 'Terrorist Organization' Pursuant to Section 212(a)(3)(B)(vi)(II) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as Amended," October 20, 2020, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2020-11-05/pdf/2020-24620.pdf>. See also U.S. Department of State Bureau of Counterterrorism, "Foreign Terrorist Organizations," last accessed August 10, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/> and U.S. Department of State Bureau of Counterterrorism, "Terrorist Exclusion List," last accessed August 10, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/terrorist-exclusion-list/>.

The labeling of ETIM as a “terrorist organization” had long allowed the Chinese government to arbitrarily brand nearly any Uyghur group or individual as members or associates of ETIM, which effectively placed all Uyghurs under suspicion of perhaps being members or sympathizers. When the Chinese government announced its first official “terrorist” list in December 2003, for example, it included two Uyghur advocacy groups in Germany, as well as their leadership, intimating that these groups were allied with ETIM. Internally and externally, the suggestion that ETIM was active in the XUAR would go on to justify decades of violent repression in the name of counterterrorism.<sup>143</sup>

Within days of 9/11, former Chinese President Jiang Zemin dispatched a special envoy to Pakistan to discuss the new security situation with Musharraf. In December 2001, Musharraf visited China, where he strongly supported Beijing’s efforts to combat alleged separatism in the Uyghur Region. At the request of the Chinese government, Musharraf held a meeting with the cleric of the Grand Mosque of Xi’an and other Muslim leaders, urging them to be patriotic and work for the improvement of China.<sup>144</sup> “Islam is a religion of peace, and we don’t believe in any violence, and therefore you, being a part of China, have to be very patriotic and all Muslims in China should work for the good of China,” he said. This was the first time that a Pakistani leader publicly supported Beijing’s policies in the XUAR. Musharraf also asserted on Chinese state media that “Pakistan will make full efforts to support China in its fight against East Turkistan terrorist forces.” In January 2002, Musharraf announced a major crackdown on religious extremists in Pakistan, resulting in hundreds of arrests throughout the year.<sup>145</sup> Given the massive scale of detainments occurring in Pakistan at this time and the applause Western diplomats were giving Musharraf, the international community paid relatively little attention to the

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<sup>143</sup> Roberts, “The War on the Uyghurs,” p. 81.

<sup>144</sup> “CE urges Chinese Muslims to be Patriotic,” *Dawn*, December 23, 2001, <https://www.dawn.com/news/11727/ce-urges-chinese-muslims-to-be-patriotic>.

<sup>145</sup> “Over 1,900 activists held, 600 offices sealed: Crackdown on banned religious groups,” *Dawn*, January 16, 2002, <https://www.dawn.com/news/15249/over-1-900-activists-held-600-offices-sealed-crackdown-on-banned-religious-groups>.

numerous arrests of Uyghur refugees living in Pakistan that would soon follow.

By February 2002, Pakistani police arrested at least two Uyghurs who had been living in Rawalpindi, accusing them of being members of a separatist organization. According to reporting at the time, local police were in the company of Chinese officials when they arrested the two men on February 2. The arrested men included Ismayil Abdusemed Haji (alias Ilham), who had lived in Pakistan since 1997 following the Ghulja uprising, and Abdulhakim (no family name given). According to Amnesty International, police gave the two men over to Chinese officials without due process.<sup>146</sup>

On April 22, 2002, police arrested Abtilip Abdul Kadir, Elham Tohtam, and four other Uyghurs in Rawalpindi. Police took Elham Tohtam from his home at 6:30 a.m. and reportedly led him blindfolded to an unknown destination in Pakistan. Mr. Elham was originally from Ghulja, where he was detained and tortured in 1996 and 1999 for suspected political activities. Fearing more persecution, he first fled to Kyrgyzstan and then onward into Kazakhstan, before arriving in Pakistan in 2000 to live with his wife and four children.<sup>147</sup> Elham Tohtam had approached the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Islamabad and the Australian government for asylum status in Australia, where he had extended family. Abtilip Abdul Kadir, who was also arrested during this raid, had also arrived in Pakistan following the violence in Ghulja. Four other Uyghurs were arrested during these raids in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, including Enver Tohti (alias Enver Davut), Golamjan Yasin, Ablikim Turahun, and Tilivaldi (no family name given). Enver Tohti's wife, Aynuz (no family name given), and their son Ihsan (presumably Ihsan Enver) were also arrested but later released on May 1, 2002. One Uyghur from Kazakhstan,

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<sup>146</sup> Amnesty International, "People's Republic of China: Uighurs Fleeing Persecution as China Wages its 'War on Terror,'" 2004,

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/92000/asa170212004en.pdf>.

<sup>147</sup> Amnesty International, "Fear of torture/ill-treatment," 2002,

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/116000/asa330112002en.pdf>.

identified as *Ezizhan Zahir*, and one Kyrgyz from Ghulja, identified as *Zayir*, were also reportedly arrested at this time.<sup>148</sup>

China’s weaponization of Global War on Terror rhetoric became even starker in 2003, when Beijing chose to target *Ismail Semed*. An activist in Pakistan championing Uyghur rights, *Semed* was deported to China in 2003 and executed in February 2007, after authorities charged him with possession of firearms and “attempting to divide the motherland.” Chinese authorities claimed he had been a founding member of ETIM. However, *Semed*’s sentencing document, reviewed by UHRP at the time, showed that the evidence relating to the charges of “possession of explosives” was based on the testimony of several other Uyghurs in the XUAR who had never been to Pakistan.<sup>149</sup> The Chinese government executed two of these witnesses in 1999. UHRP believes the testimonies were obtained from these witnesses under threat of torture and death.<sup>150</sup> Given these circumstances, it is very likely authorities in China obtained this evidence, which appears to be in the form of a forced confession, by torture.

In July 2003, *Muhammed Tohti Metrozi* received a call from an individual claiming to work in the Pakistani Intelligence Office. Unconfirmed sources report that *Metrozi* went to meet this individual and three days later was deported to China. A month later, in August 2003, Chinese police detained *Metrozi* in Ürümchi.<sup>151</sup> According to an entry in the Xinjiang Victims Database, which draws from diverse sources including Amnesty International, *Dui Hua*, and the now-defunct *Beijing Times*, in 2005 a UN Special Rapporteur on Torture named *Manfred Nowak* met *Metrozi* in prison as part of an inspection of the region. After seeing *Metrozi*’s appalling condition in the Ürümchi prison, *Nowak* sought

**An activist in Pakistan championing Uyghur rights, *Semed* was deported to China in 2003 and executed in February 2007, after authorities charged him with possession of firearms and “attempting to divide the motherland.”**

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<sup>148</sup> Amnesty International, “People’s Republic of China: Uighurs Fleeing Persecution as China Wages its ‘War on Terror,’” 2004,

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/92000/asa170212004en.pdf>.

<sup>149</sup> Uyghur Human Rights Project, “Uyghur Political Prisoner Executed in Urumchi,” February 9, 2007, <https://uhrp.org/statement/uyghur-political-prisoner-executed-in-urumchi/>.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> Amnesty International, “Китайская Народная Республика Уйгуры спасаются от преследования, в то время как Китай объявляет «войну терроризму” [People’s Republic of China Uyghurs flee persecution while China declares ‘war on terrorism’], January 17, 2004, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/92000/asa170212004ru.pdf>.

assurances from the Chinese authorities that Metrozi would suffer no more torture. Soon after Nowak's departure, however, Metrozi was beaten and tortured in prison to the point of not being able to move for months as punishment for communicating with the UN Special Rapporteur.<sup>152</sup>

The United States fundamentally altered the security narrative of South Asia as it began its Global War on Terror in the early 2000s. China seized on this new rhetoric and pushed to recast Uyghur separatists as international terrorists. Nine days before the 9/11 attacks, Chinese authorities stressed that Xinjiang was "better than ever" in its history and that any violence in the region was carried out by a "handful of separatists."<sup>153</sup> Two short months after 9/11, however, China claimed to be a victim of Islamic terrorism, singling out one particular group as the main culprit, the "Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement."<sup>154</sup>

In 2001, following the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, ETIM remnants immediately fled into Pakistan, creating an opportunity for China to work with Pakistani intelligence to target them directly rather than rely on informal Afghan Taliban networks. In September 2003, Wang Lequan, CCP secretary for the XUAR and member of the Party's high-level Politburo, said that the Islamist separatists in China were trained and receiving assistance from international terrorists, including instruction in "several training camps in Pakistan."<sup>155</sup> In response to this alleged scattering of Uyghur activity, Pakistan and China signed their first extradition treaty.<sup>156</sup> By October 2003, the Pakistani press listed Hassan Makhsum as having been killed during a military raid in South Waziristan, where he had last been seen.

Soon after, Musharraf reportedly told Hu Jintao during a state visit to China in November 2003 that Pakistan would never permit

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<sup>152</sup> Xinjiang Victims Database, "Muhemmedtohti Metrozi," April 27, 2019, <https://shahit.biz/eng/viewentry.php?entryno=3873>.

<sup>153</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Devastating Blows: Religious Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang," April 2005, [https://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/china0405/4.htm#\\_ftn10](https://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/china0405/4.htm#_ftn10).

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ely Karmon, "Pakistan, the Radicalization of the Jihadist Movement and the Challenge to China," *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies* 3, no. 3 (2009): 14–28.

<sup>156</sup> "Compendium of Bilateral and Regional Instruments for South Asia," International Cooperation in Criminal Matters, 2015, New Delhi, *UNDOC*, II: 1238.

**Reportedly Saudi authorities had been pressured by the Chinese embassy in Islamabad to refuse entry visas to an estimated 6,000 Uyghur pilgrims traveling through Pakistan for *hajj*.**

anyone, including the “terrorist forces of East Turkestan [sic],” to use Pakistani territory to carry out anti-China operations.<sup>157</sup> Both leaders signed the China-Pakistan Joint Declaration, which sought bilateral cooperation in several areas, including combating “the ‘three evils’ of separatism, extremism, and terrorism,” as well as law enforcement efforts against weapons, drugs, and human trafficking. In 2005, China and Pakistan ratified the “Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good-Neighborly Relations,” which stipulated that neither party would allow the establishment of “any organizations or institutions” that could threaten the “sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity of the other.”<sup>158</sup> Despite Islamabad’s military activities against groups like ETIM, a new Uyghur group emerged in 2006 with the name Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP).<sup>159</sup> This group rose to prominence in the international press in the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The group also inadvertently helped China’s security establishment justify its harsh suppression of Uyghurs and Uyghur culture to the outside world under the guise of counterterrorism.

In 2007, China’s Ministry of State Security released a second “terrorist list” with 20 names. Osman Alihan, a Uyghur activist and businessman, was on the list, which led to his extradition from Pakistan in July 2007.<sup>160</sup> China shared the list with Pakistan not long before Alihan’s detention by Pakistani security forces, preceding a China-Pakistan Joint Working Group on Terrorism in Beijing.<sup>161</sup> Ailhan had helped organize a peaceful demonstration in front of the Saudi Arabian embassy in Pakistan in August and September 2006, protesting the denial of Saudi entry visas to Uyghurs. Reportedly

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<sup>157</sup> “China, Pakistan highlight cooperation in Beijing,” *People’s Daily*, November 4, 2003, [http://en.people.cn/200311/04/eng20031104\\_127511.shtml](http://en.people.cn/200311/04/eng20031104_127511.shtml).

<sup>158</sup> Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United States of America, “China, Pakistan sign historic document,” Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United States of America, April 6, 2005, <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/xw/t190407.htm>.

<sup>159</sup> Haiyun Ma and I-wen Jennifer Chang, “For Them, Afghanistan is Safer Than China,” *Foreign Policy*, November 1, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/11/01/for-them-afghanistan-is-safer-than-china/>.

<sup>160</sup> Amnesty International, “Fear of Torture or Ill-Treatment/Incommunicado Detention,” August 1, 2007, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/64000/asa170252007en.pdf>.

<sup>161</sup> Wajid Ali Wajid, “China Worried About Rising Extremism,” *Gulf News*, June 25, 2007, <https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/china-worried-about-rising-extremism-1.185775>.

Saudi authorities had been pressured by the Chinese embassy in Islamabad to refuse entry visas to an estimated 6,000 Uyghur pilgrims traveling through Pakistan for *hajj*.<sup>162</sup> During the protests against these developments, Pakistani police reportedly ordered Uyghurs staying in Rawalpindi guest houses to prevent anyone traveling to Islamabad to participate in the protests.<sup>163</sup> After the demonstrations and international pressure, the Saudi government again issued visas to Uyghur pilgrims on humanitarian grounds, frustrating China.<sup>164</sup>

In the lead-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the TIP began publishing an Arabic-language magazine through a press associated with Al-Qaeda, as well as several videos threatening the Olympic Games.<sup>165</sup> However, scholars like Sean Roberts have questioned the viability of the TIP carrying out an organized attack on Chinese territory due to its lack of organizational capacity. Pakistan, which had already been coordinating closely with China on security for the Games, made an additional public show of assistance in countering the group. After the TIP dubiously claimed responsibility for an attack in the XUAR, Pakistani President Musharraf included a stopover in Ürümchi at Beijing's request to show support for China's new security policies in the XUAR. Meanwhile, almost 1,300 Uyghurs were arrested in China for "state security crimes" in 2008, including charges of terrorism, significantly more than years prior and all without substantive claim.

In addition, thousands of Uyghurs were evicted from major cities such as Beijing, accused of being potential terrorists.<sup>166</sup> During this period, policy grew increasingly discriminatory and hostile toward Turkic peoples. Internationally, China made use of the

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<sup>162</sup> "Refugee Review Tribunal: CHN31261," *Australian Refugee Review Tribunal*, February 9, 2007, <https://www.refworld.org/pd/4b6fe16f0.pdf>.

<sup>163</sup> "East Turkestan: Pilgrims Denied Saudi Visas in Pakistan," *Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization*, September 21, 2006, <https://unpo.org/article/5486>.

<sup>164</sup> Uyghur Human Rights Project, "Sacred Right Defiled: China's Iron-Fisted Repression of Uyghur Religious Freedom," March 8, 2013, <https://docs.uhrp.org/Sacred-Right-Defiled-Chinas-Iron-Fisted-Repression-of-Uyghur-Religious-Freedom.pdf>.

<sup>165</sup> Jacob Zenn, "Jihad in China? Marketing the Turkistan Islamic Party," *Terrorism Monitor*, Jamestown Foundation, March 17, 2011, <https://jamestown.org/program/jihad-in-china-marketing-the-turkistan-islamic-party/>.

<sup>166</sup> Sean R. Roberts, "The Biopolitics of China's "War on Terror" and the Exclusion of the Uyghurs," *Critical Asian Studies* 50 (2018): 241.

Games to expand its security dragnet overseas. On July 17, 2008, officials from Turkey’s General Security Directorate met with representatives from the Chinese embassy in Ankara to decide security measures in the run-up to the Olympics. Chinese agents informed Turkish authorities that they had identified 50 members of ETIM/TIP who were living abroad and claimed that they had escaped to Turkey through Saudi Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. In June 2009, Pakistani Interior Minister Rehman Malik claimed that Pakistan was carrying out operations against ETIM in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions and that Pakistan was handing over any ETIM militant arrested to China “without reservation.” Malik went on to say that China was providing Pakistani police with intelligence and supplies as well.<sup>167</sup> Pakistan was evidently all too eager to cooperate with China to target Uyghurs, despite the fact that China’s definition of “Uyghur terrorism” was still ill-defined.

### Phase 3: From Ürümchi to Kunming (2009–2014)

Beginning on July 5, 2009, Ürümchi erupted in violence that would last several days. During the conflict, which grew after security forces provoked peaceful demonstrators who were demanding justice for Uyghur factory workers who had been beaten to death in an attack at the factory where they worked in Shaoguan, groups of Han and Uyghur youth confronted each other with knives and makeshift weapons, resulting in at least hundreds of casualties.<sup>168</sup> Through beatings and shootings, state security forces also attacked

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<sup>167</sup> “Pakistan, China Fighting Militancy Together: Malik,” *Dawn*, June 13, 2009, <https://www.dawn.com/news/913439/pakistan-china-fighting-militancy-together-malik>.

<sup>168</sup> The Chinese government reports the “official” number of deaths as 197 and claims most of the deceased were Han. Journalists, analysts, and others have cited this number and claim, often uncritically, in reporting on the Ürümchi incidents from 2009 into the present. The ad nauseum repetition of these claims obscures the reality that many more than 197 people appear to have died on July 5, 2009 and following days, and that many of those who died were Uyghur as well. Additionally, no state figures are available to account for the reported thousands of Uyghurs, mostly young men, who disappeared in the weeks and months following July 5. UHRP has written extensively about the events on and surrounding July 5, 2009. For example, see Uyghur Human Rights Project, “Can Anyone Hear Us?: Voices from the 2009 Unrest in Ürümchi,” July 1, 2010, <https://uhrp.org/report/can-anyone-hear-us-voices-2009-unrest-urumchi/>.

peaceful Uyghur protesters to forcibly disperse demonstrations.<sup>169</sup> As news and images of the violence spread, the CCP aggrandized the perception that the “7/5” Ürümqi events were a turning point for China’s Xinjiang policy and that a new approach was necessary. Rather than a “pre-meditated and organized” terrorist attack that state-run media was claiming, we clearly understand these events as the combustion of a tinderbox, stemming from mounting local grievances over social discrimination, growing poverty among Turkic peoples, and heavy-handed policing against activists protesting injustice.<sup>170</sup>

The number of people who were arrested and jailed due to the unrest is unclear, but the *Financial Times* reported that at least 4,000 Uyghurs were already detained within two weeks of the violence.<sup>171</sup> Security forces continued to make sweeps into Ürümqi neighborhoods until mid-August, rounding up at least dozens of men who would never be seen again.<sup>172</sup> The government moved to shut down all local internet access for several months after the unrest began, and censors removed many of online posts about the events. By the time internet access was restored to the XUAR ten months after the Ürümqi events, up to 80% of Uyghur-run websites had been deleted from the web. Ironically, no religious websites were deleted in this sweep; instead, sites dedicated to Uyghur culture, literature, and entertainment were gone.<sup>173</sup> The state response was unprecedented and became a template for future autocratic states in the midst of unrest, such as the Democratic

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<sup>169</sup> Amnesty International, “Justice, Justice: The July 2009 Protests in Xinjiang, China,” 2010, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/36000/asa170272010en.pdf>.

<sup>170</sup> Amnesty International, “Urumqi Riots Three Years On: Crackdown on Uighurs Grows Bolder,” July 4, 2012, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2012/07/urumqi-riots-three-years-crackdown-uighurs-grows-bolder/>.

<sup>171</sup> “Xinjiang Widens Crackdown on Uyghurs,” *Financial Times*, July 19, 2009, <https://www.ft.com/content/5aa932ee-747c-11de-8ad5-00144feabd0>.

<sup>172</sup> Human Rights Watch, “‘We Are Afraid to Even Look for Them’: Enforced Disappearances in the Wake of Xinjiang’s Protests,” October 4, 2009, <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/xinjiang1009webwcover.pdf>.

<sup>173</sup> Henryk Szadziewski and Greg Fay, “How China Dismantled the Uyghur Internet,” *The Diplomat*, July 22, 2014, <https://thediplomat.com/2014/07/how-china-dismantled-the-uyghur-internet/>.

Republic of Congo in 2019.<sup>174</sup> One of the most significant outcomes of the 2009 unrest was the large migration of Uyghur refugees from the XUAR to Turkey, often via dangerous routes through southeast Asia.<sup>175</sup>

Crucially, Islamabad firmly supported China’s crackdown in Ürümchi, becoming the first country to issue a statement to that effect.<sup>176</sup> Further, Islamabad used its influence in the Islamic world to prevent certain countries from advancing the topic of China’s political crackdown in the XUAR to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). This, according to Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Luo Zhaohui, “saved Beijing from embarrassment.”<sup>177</sup> Indeed, China scrambled to manage anti-Chinese reactions from the Muslim world after the 2009 violence in the Uyghur homeland. At China’s direction, Pakistan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia successfully cancelled a scheduled debate on the Uyghur homeland at the 2009 OIC meeting, killing any potential declaration on the subject. China eventually allowed the OIC’s Secretary-General to visit the Uyghur Region—but only after blocking his visit with successive delays.<sup>178</sup> An official OIC visit to the region would not occur for another ten years.<sup>179</sup>

To help manage its image among Pakistani Muslims, the CCP also invited two heads of major Pakistani religious parties to China: Jamaat-e-Islami leader Qazi Hussain Ahmed in 2009 and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam leader Fazal-ur-Rehman in 2010.<sup>180</sup> In the immediate

**Islamabad used its influence in the Islamic world to prevent certain countries from advancing the topic of China’s political crackdown in the XUAR to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).**

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<sup>174</sup> James Griffiths. “Democratic Republic of Congo Internet Shutdown Shows How Chinese Censorship Tactics are Spreading,” *CNN*, January 2, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/02/africa/congo-internet-shutdown-china-intl/index.html>.

<sup>175</sup> Roberts, “The War on the Uyghurs,” p. 182.

<sup>176</sup> “Pakistani President Praises China for Handling the Xinjiang Situation with Wisdom,” *CCTV*, July 23, 2009, <http://english.cctv.com/20090723/100911.shtml>.

<sup>177</sup> “Pakistan Saved China from Embarrassment on Xinjiang Violence,” *Daily Times*, September 5, 2009, <https://lubpak.net/archives/1397>.

<sup>178</sup> “Xinjiang: China Reportedly Defeated OIC Statement on Uyghurs, Seeking Observership,” *From the Beijing Embassy to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency*, July 31, 2009, [https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BEIJING2185\\_a.html](https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BEIJING2185_a.html).

<sup>179</sup> “US Muslim groups accuse OIC of abetting China’s Uighur ‘genocide,’” *Al Jazeera*, December 18, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/18/us-muslims-press-organization-of-islamic-cooperation-on-china>.

<sup>180</sup> “China’s Deepening Engagement with Pakistan on Counterterrorism,” *CACI*, May 26, 2010, <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12061-analytical-articles-caci-analyst-2010-5-26-art-12061.html>.

aftermath of the violence, China also began deepening its ties with Pakistan through the provision of counterterrorism assistance. In June 2009, Beijing provided \$290 million USD in aid to Islamabad for the purpose of counterterrorism, just as it was about to launch its internal campaign against the Pakistani Taliban. In December 2009, China supplied explosives and weapons detectors to Pakistan, trained the police force in how to use these new tools, and installed new security equipment in major cities around the country. By May 2010, China's aid for counterterrorism activities in Pakistan exceeded \$470 million USD.

Uyghurs continued to be swept up in the murky politics of Sino-Pakistani relations during this period. Pakistani Interior Minister Rehman Malik revealed on April 27, 2009, that the government had arrested and extradited nine Uyghurs to China, allegedly from Pakistan's northwest areas.<sup>181</sup> Pakistani security forces said the men seemed to belong to ETIM/TIP. Pakistani media reported that Malik was meant to visit China on directions from President Asif Ali Zardari for "vital talks" with security officials after the men were returned to China.<sup>182</sup> The extradition of these Uyghurs came after President Hu Jintao made a direct appeal to President Zardari, citing concerns that the ETIM presence in Pakistan might threaten the estimated 5,000 Chinese nationals working on development projects in Pakistan.<sup>183</sup> This was an unusual claim considering the fact that no attacks on Chinese workers in Pakistan have ever been attributed to ETIM, with the majority attributed to unrelated Balochistan separatist groups. Furthermore, the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) later released a video denying that the nine Uyghurs in question had any connection to them.<sup>184</sup> In a statement quoted by *Radio Free Asia*, Freedom House condemned the extradition, calling it "a disturbing sign of China's growing influence in the region [that] illustrates how

**Uyghurs continued to be swept up in the murky politics of Sino-Pakistani relations during this period.**

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<sup>181</sup> "Uyghur Group Denies Links," *Radio Free Asia*, May 7, 2009, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/pakistani-05072009124317.html>.

<sup>182</sup> "Pakistan hands over nine Uyghur militants to China," *The Indian Express*, April 27, 2009, <https://indianexpress.com/article/news-archive/print/pakistan-hands-over-nine-uyghur-militants-to-china/>.

<sup>183</sup> "10 Terror Suspects Extradited to China," *The News*, June 6, 2009, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/archive/print/664892-10-terror-suspects-extradited-to-china>.

<sup>184</sup> "Uyghur Group Denies Links," *Radio Free Asia*.

vulnerable Uyghurs . . . are to persecution both inside and outside China.”<sup>185</sup>

Political pressure on Uyghur civil society in Pakistan continued to tighten in the aftermath of the Ürümchi Events. Pakistani Uyghur activist Umer Khan had founded a Uyghur language school in Rawalpindi several months before the 2009 bloodshed in Ürümchi. Soon after the unrest, Pakistani and Chinese embassy officials began making the rounds at Khan’s school, requiring information on its curriculum. Another strange incident would occur during these months involving Kamirdin Abdurahman, a Uyghur accountant hired by Khan.<sup>186</sup> In October 2009, Abdurahman crossed the border into China en route to Ürümchi to meet with relatives when he was reportedly arrested, stripped naked, and beaten. After the ordeal, Chinese police informed him that the pain would stop only if he agreed to spy on Pakistan’s Uyghur community on their behalf. He chose not to spy; instead, Abdurahman shared his story with the press and began receiving threatening messages from both Pakistani and Chinese state officials.<sup>187</sup>

Within a month, fearing for his life, Abdurahman fled Pakistan for Afghanistan, where he has been living in exile for the past 11 years. By 2010, a group of Pakistani men had destroyed the school property. Khan and his brother were on the Exit Control List, which prevented them from leaving the country, and reportedly had their bank accounts frozen (their names were eventually removed from the list in 2014 after a lengthy court battle). These harsh measures were likely due to an accusation by the Chinese embassy that Khan was associated with Rebiya Kadeer, an exiled Uyghur activist and then the president of the World Uyghur Congress whom the Chinese government had accused of orchestrating the 2009 Ürümchi events. A year after the authorities forced Khan to close his school, a new school called the Peak Montessori and High School opened in the same neighborhood with funding from the Ex Chinese Association. The school started with pre-school and primary classes

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> “Uyghur Pressed to Spy,” *Radio Free Asia*, December 2, 2009, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/spy-for-china-12022009093045.html>.

<sup>187</sup> Siddiqui, “China Is Trying To Spy On Pakistan’s Uighurs.”

and eventually expanded to high school classes as well.<sup>188</sup> The school's curriculum includes typical subjects such as social studies and mathematics, as well as Mandarin classes.<sup>189</sup> The Chinese ambassador to Pakistan paid a visit to the building, donating 16 computers and a number of books to the library.

One of the most significant events following the Ürümchi events was the flight of some 30,000 Uyghurs from the Uyghur homeland, making it the largest single migration of XUAR residents since the 1962 famine resulting from Mao's Great Leap Forward. Due to Ayub Khan's generous policies toward migrants during the 1960s, Pakistan became an important transit country for Uyghur migrants, alongside Afghanistan. Though several hundred Uyghur families remained in Pakistan to establish communities, many continued to Turkey, their ultimate destination. As thousands of Uyghurs made their way to Turkey again after 2009, Pakistan once again played an important transitory role for at least some refugees.<sup>190</sup> Scholars such as Sean Roberts have speculated that a small number of these Uyghur migrants remained in Pakistan to fight for the TIP, elevating its status and capabilities.

In late August 2011, the TIP released a video of its members who had been in a training camp in Pakistan.<sup>191</sup> The video shows a man named Memtieli Tiliwaldi, who was killed by Xinjiang police a few days after a series of attacks in Kashgar and Hotan in late July 2011.<sup>192</sup> According to the CCP, this video was the first proof of Uyghur militant groups in Pakistan having a connection to an attack inside China: Beijing alleged that Uyghur terrorists responsible for the violence had trained in Pakistan and returned to China to carry out this attack. This explicit allegation against a long-term ally

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<sup>188</sup> Peak Montessori and High School, "About Our School," last accessed August 2, 2021, <https://peak.edu.pk/about-us/>. As of August 5, 2021, the school website account appears to have been suspended. A cached text-only version of the page is available at <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:iszIn94xY0II:https://peak.edu.pk/&hl=en&gl=us&strip=1&vwsr=0>.

<sup>189</sup> Peak Montessori and High School, "Elementary School," last accessed August 2, 2021, <https://peak.edu.pk/learning/elementary-school/>.

<sup>190</sup> Rippa, "From Uyghurs to Kashgaris (and Back?)," p. 7–10.

<sup>191</sup> Roberts, "The War on the Uyghurs," p. 124.

<sup>192</sup> Jacob Zenn, "Catch-22 of Xinjiang as a Gateway," *Asia Times*, September 22, 2011, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110925021228/http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/MI22Ad02.html>.

stands out: previously China had rarely criticized its critical strategic partner in the region on such explicit terms, which suggested that the CCP was growing impatient with its ally. When reached for comment about the allegation, a senior Pakistani official effusively stated that Pakistan had always cooperated with China against ETIM and already handed over numerous militant leaders to Chinese authorities.<sup>193</sup>

Nine days after China’s allegations that Uyghur terrorists were operating in Pakistan, authorities in Pakistan arrested five Uyghurs and subsequently deported them to China, likely in an attempt to ease tensions with their neighbor and ally. These five Uyghurs had no connection to international terror organizations but were arrested in Balochistan in 2010 as part of a larger group attempting to immigrate to Turkey, where they intended to claim asylum, via Iran. A 33-year-old trader named Omer Muhter was possibly part of this group. Umer Khan told Radio Free Asia that Omer Muhter disappeared in detention in Islamabad and might have been deported to China in 2011.<sup>194</sup> Reports from the time claim that five members of the group, including Menzire Memet (alias Manzokra Mamad) and her two children, were brought to an Islamabad airport where they took flight CZ6008 to Ürümchi, serviced by China Southern Airlines. Pakistani news outlet *Dawn* quoted an anonymous source who said a “Chinese national,” Abdushukhur Ablimit, was to go with “his compatriots,” but was ejected after the pilot refused his entry on the plane for “unspecified reasons.”<sup>195</sup> Abdushukhur was “blindfolded and handcuffed like the other five, (and) had been allotted a seat on the flight,” according to reports.<sup>196</sup> An employee at the Turkish embassy in Islamabad named Ali Beg corroborated that Pakistani authorities had detained a group of

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<sup>193</sup> Jason Dean and Jeremy Page, “Beijing Points to Pakistan After Ethnic Violence,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 1, 2011,

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424053111903341404576481312937363114>.

<sup>194</sup> “Pakistan Deports Uyghurs,” *Radio Free Asia*, August 10, 2011,

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/pakistan-08102011175506.html>.

<sup>195</sup> “Five Chinese nationals deported,” *Dawn*, August 9, 2011,

<https://www.dawn.com/news/650545/five-chinese-nationals-deported>.

<sup>196</sup> “Pakistan Deports Uyghurs,” *Radio Free Asia*, August 10, 2011,

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/pakistan-08102011175506.html>.

Uyghurs, but since they were not Turkish citizens, the Turkish government was unable to help them.<sup>197</sup>

We also spoke with a Uyghur woman living in Islamabad named Mariya Yasin who described a similar experience when her family attempted to travel to Turkey in 2013. She said that Pakistani security forces stopped her family from boarding a plane when they arrived at the Lahore airport. The security forces confiscated her family's passports and detained her husband, Memet Niyaz, for an additional day where Memet was questioned about his scholarship at an Islamic university in Islamabad. Since 2013, Mareya said that the Pakistani intelligence officials have not returned their passports and they continue to receive monthly calls from ISI agents regarding her family's activity.<sup>198</sup>

Meanwhile, across the border, China sought to deepen its relations with both the Afghan government and the Taliban insurgency. In June 2012, Afghanistan was formally admitted as an observer of the SCO. Afghanistan and China signed a bilateral "strategic and cooperative partnership" during Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai's visit to Beijing for the SCO summit. In September, China sent Zhou Yongkang, the security chief to Afghanistan, as the first Politburo-level visitor in 40 years. For many years China's exchanges with the Taliban had essentially been covert. The fact that China was, as one former Chinese official claimed, "the only country other than Pakistan that has maintained a continuous relationship with the very top leadership of the Taliban" was a potential asset now that the United States was seeking a political solution rather than a military one. Beijing's own meetings with the Taliban, which took place with Pakistan's encouragement, focused on allaying Chinese concerns about whether they would allow Afghanistan to become a base for Uyghur separatists, in addition to getting a sense of China's intentions.<sup>199</sup>

**Since 2013, Mareya [Yasin] said that the Pakistani intelligence officials have not returned their passports and they continue to receive monthly calls from ISI agents regarding her family's activity.**

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Mariya Yasin (Pakistani Uyghur community member), interview by Robert Evans, June 3, 2021.

<sup>199</sup> "Afghan Taliban Delegation Visits China to Discuss Unrest: Sources," *Reuters*, July 30, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-taliban-china/afghan-taliban-delegation-visits-china-to-discuss-unrest-sources-idUSKCN10A09H>.

## Phase 4: China’s Path to Genocide (2015–present)

In a 2014 leaked internal speech in the XUAR, President and Party General Secretary Xi Jinping rallied for the state to use “the organs of dictatorship” to show “absolutely no mercy” in the “struggle against terrorism, infiltration and separatism.” By December 2014, NATO was poised to hand over final security responsibilities to local Afghan forces, and China feared that militants in Afghanistan would soon carry out attacks on China. Indeed, by 2014, leaders of both Al-Qaeda and ISIS had singled out China for its oppression of Muslims, which was further evidence that China’s harsh policies were creating sympathy for Uyghurs.<sup>200</sup> Analysts in China argued that Uyghur militant groups would use this sympathy to attract other terrorist groups to their cause and use Afghanistan as a base.<sup>201</sup> Xi Jinping himself voiced fears that a U.S. withdrawal from the region could intensify risks for China, stating that “after the United States pulls troops out of Afghanistan, terrorist organizations positioned on the frontiers of Afghanistan and Pakistan may quickly infiltrate into Central Asia.”<sup>202</sup>

Since 2014, however, there is little evidence that any Uyghur militants have been successful at rallying other militants to their cause; there have been virtually no cases of Uyghur militant groups or terrorist groups sympathetic to Uyghurs claiming responsibility for attacks directed at Chinese nationals in either Pakistan or Afghanistan. Instead, Chinese nationals residing in Pakistan have overwhelmingly been targeted by groups associated with Balochistan’s separatist movement, which have no discernible connection to Uyghur groups.<sup>203</sup> Although China’s perception of the threat that Uyghur militants pose fell short of the reality on the

**[China’s Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Extremism] has resulted in extrajudicial mass internment, political indoctrination, forced renunciation of faith, torture, forced labor camps, mass incarceration, and the construction of a repressive surveillance state.**

<sup>200</sup> “Al Qaeda leader urges restraint in first ‘guidelines for jihad,’” *Reuters*, September 16, 2013, <https://www.reuters.com/article/security-al-qaeda-jihad/al-qaeda-leader-urges-restraint-in-first-guidelines-for-jihad-idINDEE98F0CI20130916>; Uran Botobekov, “Al-Qaeda and Islamic State Take Aim at China,” *The Diplomat*, March 8, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/03/al-qaeda-and-islamic-state-take-aim-at-china/>.

<sup>201</sup> “China’s Foreign Policy in Afghanistan,” Lowy Institute, October 2014, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/china%E2%80%99s-foreign-policy-afghanistan>.

<sup>202</sup> Ramzy and Buckley, “‘Absolutely No Mercy.’”

<sup>203</sup> Muhammad Akbar Notezai, “Will Balochistan Blow Up China’s Belt and Road?” *Foreign Policy*, May 30, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/05/30/will-balochistan-blow-up-chinas-belt-and-road/>.

ground, the country has nevertheless embarked on a People's War on Terror and Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Extremism since 2014, a campaign of total cultural and religious destruction, including of mosques and cemeteries, community life, language, faith, and familial relations.<sup>204</sup> Since its launch, this campaign has resulted in extrajudicial mass internment, political indoctrination, forced renunciation of faith, torture, forced labor camps, mass incarceration, and the construction of a repressive surveillance state.

From 2015 to the present, the transnational dimension of China's repressive agenda has largely shifted in scale and orientation due to the introduction of a vast system of algorithmic surveillance that makes some foreign ties a punishable offense. In the XUAR, police officers—whose ranks swelled rapidly over this period following a mass recruitment drive in 2016<sup>205</sup>—feed data into a powerful database known as the Integrated Joint Operating System (IJOP). Through the IJOP, vast information flows are automatically fed into an algorithm meant to evaluate a person's supposed exposure to "extremist" influences, sorting citizens into groups of those deemed "trustworthy" or "suspicious." Those in the former category can go about their business relatively unhindered, albeit under strict surveillance, while those in the latter are subject to interrogation, detention, imprisonment, and/or extensive political re-education. The IJOP also categorizes people as suspicious for any contact with 26 blacklisted countries, including Pakistan and Afghanistan. Individuals who have been to these countries, have family in these countries, or communicate with people there have been detained, interrogated, and even convicted and imprisoned—usually on charges of "extremism."<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Chris Buckley, "China Is Erasing Mosques and Precious Shrines in Xinjiang," *New York Times*, September 25, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/09/25/world/asia/xinjiang-china-religious-site.html>.

<sup>205</sup> Adrian Zenz and James Leibold, "Chen Quanguo: The Strongman Behind Beijing's Securitization Strategy in Tibet and Xinjiang," *China Brief*, Jamestown Foundation, September 21, 2017, <https://jamestown.org/program/chen-quanguo-the-strongman-behind-beijings-securitization-strategy-in-tibet-and-xinjiang/>.

<sup>206</sup> Human Rights Watch, "China's Algorithms of Repression," May 1, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/05/01/chinas-algorithms-repression/reverse-engineering-xinjiang-police-mass>.

During the People’s War on Terror and Strike Hard Campaign, there has been an extraordinary rise in the number of Uyghurs convicted on offenses related to “terrorism.” In March 2021, hackers leaked 1.1 million surveillance records from the Shanghai Public Security Bureau (PSB). Among those records, the hackers found an unprotected database codenamed “Uyghur Terrorist,” which was an open-source database used by security agencies across the world. The exposure of this platform provides a small glimpse into the scope of China’s ongoing global repression of Uyghurs.<sup>207</sup> The database contains records of thousands of Uyghur “suspected terrorists” who have been detained, questioned, and monitored by the PSB. The accusations against these “suspected terrorists” often bordered on the absurd; for example, more than 400 individuals flagged by PSB in the database for in-person examination were minors, some as young as five years old.<sup>208</sup> Many others were citizens of countries other than the PRC. Around 8,000 Uyghurs were in the database for a combination of crimes. For instance, “suspected terrorism” was often added to charges such as “assembling a crowd to disturb social order.” These cases highlight that even within the internal logic of the CCP security apparatus, applying the label of “terrorist” to these individuals can stretch the limits of the imagination.

Afghanistan and Pakistan feature prominently in China’s perception of national security, which has profound implications for ordinary Uyghurs living outside of China’s borders. Israel Ahmet, an ethnic Uyghur who fled to Afghanistan from western China, had lived and worked in Kabul for more than ten years, until 2015, when he was arrested and deported by Afghanistan’s National Directorate of Security (NDS). Ahmet had lived very meagerly since he moved to Kabul and was known as an honest businessman,<sup>209</sup> but after being flagged as a spy, he was quickly rushed to the Kabul

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<sup>207</sup> Sean Rubinsztein-Dunlop and Echo Hui, “Australians Flagged in Shanghai Security Files Which Shed Light on China’s Surveillance State and Monitoring of Uyghurs,” *ABC*, April 1, 2021, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-04-01/shanghai-files-shed-light-on-china-surveillance-state/100040896>.

<sup>208</sup> Rubinsztein-Dunlop and Echo Hui, “Australians Flagged in Shanghai Security Files.” See also “Thousands of ‘Terrorism Suspects’ on ‘Shanghai List’ Include Uyghur Children, Elderly,” *Radio Free Asia*, May 11, 2021, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/special/shanghai-list/>.

<sup>209</sup> Matta, “China to Neighbors: Send Us Your Uyghurs.”

International Airport, where PRC officials were waiting. He subsequently got on a plane and has not been heard from since.

In October 2014, President Xi Jinping and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani met to agree on a deal. In exchange for a pledge of hundreds of millions of Chinese dollars in assistance, training, and scholarships for Afghan students to study in China, Ghani assured Xi that Afghanistan would support China's fight against ETIM. Currently, an estimated 200 ETIM fighters are believed to be in Afghanistan's Taliban-controlled Kunar province and Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (i.e., the "Tribal Belt"). These groups are largely isolated, small-scale, and lack either the resources, networks, or fighting prowess to warrant such disproportionate attention from China.<sup>210</sup>

Pakistan's inclusion on the XUAR government's list of 26 blacklisted countries has also caused a great deal of strife for Pakistani families who have ties to Uyghurs in the XUAR. For decades, Pakistanis and Uyghurs from the XUAR have forged marriage and business ties, but since 2017, hundreds of Pakistani men have seen their Uyghur wives interned in the XUAR's camps for simply being married to Pakistani men.<sup>211</sup> A stream of Pakistani men traveled to Beijing in January 2020 to advocate for their wives, but with no success. Some news outlets report that Pakistan's ambassador to China, Masood Khalid, has told these men that their issues were being raised privately with the Chinese. China's MFA has said that it is "not aware" of the situation involving Pakistani husbands and repeated that China aims to foster "stability and lasting peace" in the Uyghur homeland.<sup>212</sup> In 2020, Chinese ambassador to Pakistan Yao Jing undermined the pleas made by separated couples by suggesting that their marriages were all "forced" and informing them that forced marriage is illegal in China

**Afghanistan and Pakistan feature prominently in China's perception of national security, which has profound implications for ordinary Uyghurs living outside of China's borders.**

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<sup>210</sup> Vanda Felbab-Brown, "A BRI(dge) Too Far: The Unfulfilled Promise and Limitations of China's Involvement in Afghanistan," *Brookings*, June 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/a-bridge-too-far-the-unfulfilled-promise-and-limitations-of-chinas-involvement-in-afghanistan/>.

<sup>211</sup> Dake Kang and Yanan Wang, "Pakistanis in China Seek Answers About Detained Uyghur Wives," *AP*, September 26, 2018, <https://apnews.com/article/def18b6ee7c34083a2204e1f8ce75d88>.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

and that any marriage documents would need to be carefully examined.<sup>213</sup>

Pakistani families who travel directly to the Uyghur homeland to seek out their loved ones often face more forced separations at the hands of Chinese authorities. This was the case for Pakistani native Sakandar Hayat, who was forcefully separated from his son for two years after returning to China to advocate for his already detained wife.<sup>214</sup> A Pakistani man named Ghulam Durrani reported other details about how his wife was arrested when she returned to China in 2017 and has not been released yet; he says Pakistan has offered no diplomatic assistance.<sup>215</sup>

In addition to renditions and arrests, Chinese surveillance technology in Pakistan will be a critical trend to follow in the near future, as evidenced by leaked documents obtained by *Dawn* in a June 2017 article. The documents discussed China’s long-term goals associated with CPEC and Pakistan, including a plan to implement electronic monitoring systems along the China-Pakistan border and a plan to install 24-hour video monitoring in most major cities in Pakistan. The document also showed how China aims to use broadcast media in Pakistan to better disseminate Chinese culture and control content.<sup>216</sup> Since Chinese officials already request that Pakistani media verify any negative coverage of China with its embassy in Islamabad, this plan is likely a strategy to help streamline this process.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> “پاکستان میں چین کے سفیر یاؤ جنگ کا میڈیا ٹھنک ٹینک سے خطاب” [Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Yao Jing Addresses Media Think Tank], *Associated Press of Pakistan*, January 15, 2020, <https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:9DfkB47jwhYI:https://urdu.app.com.pk/urdu/184023+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us>.

<sup>214</sup> Alice Su, Shashank Bengali, and Shah Meer Baloch, “A Pakistani Father’s Ordeal: China Seized his Uyghur Son and Sent his Daughters to an Orphanage,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 25, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-09-25/china-pakistan-uighurs-xinjiang-silence>.

<sup>215</sup> “چین میں درجنوں پاکستانیوں کی بیویاں گرفتار” [In China wives of dozens of Pakistanis Arrested], *Daily Aghaz*, May 23, 2017, <https://dailyaghaz.com/story/114879>.

<sup>216</sup> Khurram Husain, “Exclusive: CPEC Masterplan Revealed,” *Dawn*, June 21, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1333101>.

<sup>217</sup> “پاکستان میں چین کے سفیر یاؤ جنگ کا میڈیا ٹھنک ٹینک سے خطاب” [Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Yao Jing Addresses Media Think Tank], *Associated Press of Pakistan*, January 15, 2020, <https://urdu.app.com.pk/urdu/184023>.

Dubbed as part of a “safe cities” program, the document contains plans for an electronic monitoring system at the Khunjerab border and explosive detectors to “cover major roads, case-prone areas and crowded places.” The document says this data will be transmitted to a command center but contains no details about who will staff the center, what metrics the staff will be looking for, or what kind of response the staff will deploy. The type of surveillance described in the article poses a significant risk to Uyghurs in particular, as similar systems in Central Asia have shown. Smart city systems have been tested in Kazakhstan since 2017, and Hikvision — a Chinese company under U.S. sanctions that has developed racial-profiling technology to identify the faces of Uyghurs in crowds — is a key supplier.<sup>218</sup> The companies that help build these systems become deeply integrated into China’s repression of Uyghurs. The China National Electronics Import and Export Corporation, a defense company also under U.S. sanctions, provided facial recognition technology to Kyrgyzstan’s police force for free as part of a growing smart city project in the capital, Bishkek in 2019.<sup>219</sup> Activities by such companies in Pakistan could pose new risks for Uyghurs living in Pakistani urban centers such as Rawalpindi and further bolster China’s toolkit of cross-border Uyghur repression.

As the security situation in Afghanistan worsens, China is deepening its role in South Asia. On July 5, 2021, Taliban insurgents controlled major checkpoints and crossings along two-thirds of Tajikistan’s 1,357-kilometer border with Afghanistan. As the militants have gained ground, they have sparked a major refugee flux into Tajikistan, where China cautiously cooperates to strengthen border checkpoints.<sup>220</sup> With the United States leaving the region, China is planning for Afghanistan to formally join CPEC after years of stalled efforts.<sup>221</sup> China is also discussing several major

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<sup>218</sup> Bradley Jardine, “China’s Surveillance State Has Eyes on Central Asia,” *Foreign Policy*, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/11/15/huawei-xinjiang-kazakhstan-uzbekistan-china-surveillance-state-eyes-central-asia/>.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> “600 Afghan Soldiers Repatriated After Fleeing to Tajikistan,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, July 7, 2021, <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/afghan-soldiers-repatriated-tajikistan/31345532.html>.

<sup>221</sup> Syed Fazl-E-Haider “China Has a BIG Plan for Post-U.S. Afghanistan — and It’s Worth Billions,” *The Daily Beast*, July 4, 2021, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/china-has-a-big-plan-for-post-us-afghanistan-and-its-worth-billions>.

infrastructure projects to better link Afghanistan to China's economic corridor, such as a motorway between Kabul and Peshawar.<sup>222</sup>

China’s overtures appear to be bearing some fruit, with Taliban representatives giving statements to Chinese media and to the foreign press that China is a “welcome friend” in Afghanistan. Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen told reporters on July 8 that Afghan territory under the group’s control would not be used against other countries and that the Taliban would not interfere in China’s internal affairs.<sup>223</sup> Like its dealings with Pakistan, China is engaging with the Taliban in Afghanistan as part of its calculation to offset the flow of Uyghurs that might cross into China.<sup>224</sup> By securing a relationship with the Taliban, China can continue its campaign against Uyghurs within China’s borders and tighten its grip around Uyghurs in Afghanistan. “We care about the oppression of Muslims, be it in Palestine, in Myanmar, or in China, and we care about the oppression of non-Muslims anywhere in the world,” Shaheen told reporters in Qatar. “But what we are not going to do is interfere in China’s internal affairs.”<sup>225</sup>

## IX. Conclusion

China’s economic rise and its growing presence in Pakistan with CPEC have given it unprecedented scope to embark on transnational repression in that country’s borders. As Islamabad falls deeper into China’s orbit as an economic and security dependent, Beijing’s capacity for targeting Pakistani Uyghurs will only grow.

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ben Farmer and Louise Watt, “Taliban Outlaws Uyghur Fighters in Bid to Befriend China,” *The Telegraph*, July 12, 2021, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2021/07/12/taliban-outlaws-uyghur-muslim-fighters-bid-befriend-china/>.

<sup>224</sup> Reid Standish, “Explainer: Why Is China Talking To The Taliban?” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, July 20, 2021, <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/explainer-china-taliban-afghanistan/31368531.html>.

<sup>225</sup> Yaroslav Trofimov and Chao Deng, “Afghanistan’s Taliban, Now on China’s Border, Seeks to Reassure Beijing,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 8, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghanistans-taliban-now-on-chinas-border-seek-to-reassure-beijing-11625750130>.

According to our analysis, transnational repression of Uyghurs in Pakistan has been consistently on the rise since 1997. In the first stage of China’s evolving system of transnational repression in Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan (1990–2001), a total of 27 Uyghurs had been deported to China or detained by Pakistani security services. Following the U.S. Global War on Terror, China began to intensify its crackdown on Uyghurs in Pakistan, issuing a series of lists demanding extradition of Pakistani citizens. Throughout this second phase (2001–2008), Pakistan detained or rendered a total of 17 Uyghurs. Following the violence in Ürümchi, thousands of Uyghur refugees fled China—many of whom would cross through Pakistan on their way to Turkey. The result was a third stage for China’s campaign of intimidation within Pakistan’s borders (2009–2014) in which a total of 16 Uyghurs were arrested or deported.

Finally, China’s 2014 People’s War on Terror marks the fourth and final shift in China’s transnational repression in Pakistan and Afghanistan, with some 16 Uyghurs deported or detained from 2015 into the present. This latest stage has also seen a significant increase in the scope of Chinese activities, including hacking, malware, coercion-by-proxy, and the growing use of the Ex Chinese Association to monitor Uyghurs living in Rawalpindi.

## X. Policy Recommendations

**B**ased on the findings of this report, we recommend that democratic states and international organizations take the following steps to counter China’s use of transnational repression in Pakistan:

### To the International Community

- **Impose targeted sanctions on Chinese citizens responsible for acts of transnational repression.** International sanction mechanisms like the Global Magnitsky Act should be triggered in response to the grave human rights violations carried out by China against the Uyghur diaspora. Should members of the international community trigger these

**As Islamabad falls deeper into China’s orbit as an economic and security dependent, Beijing’s capacity for targeting Pakistani Uyghurs will only grow.**

provisions, key groups and security personnel perpetuating these crimes can have their assets frozen and travel restricted.

- **Increase resettlement of Uyghur refugees.** As traditional safe havens for Uyghurs become increasingly insecure,<sup>226</sup> more countries should increase quotas for the resettlement of Uyghur refugees. As the new Biden administration aims to resettle 125,000 refugees next year,<sup>227</sup> the U.S. Department of State should consider setting ambitious quotas for Uyghur refugees. The European Union should also increase its intake.
- **Appoint a UN Special Rapporteur on Transnational Repression.** The UNHRC should appoint an individual to “examine, monitor, advise, and publicly report” on issues of transnational repression globally. A UN-sanctioned report on these topics will shed more light on China’s actions and give countries the necessary rhetorical and legal justifications to more forcefully criticize China.
- **Investigate allegations against the UNHCR office in Pakistan.** A full investigation should be conducted into the alarming testimony that Uyghur refugees are being denied asylum services by the UNHCR office in Islamabad. The Pakistani government and local UNHCR officials should be held accountable to the rights they pledged to protect.
- **Include human rights advocacy during Pakistan’s IMF negotiations.** Pakistan is currently negotiating with the IMF for a series of large bailout funds. Though the IMF does not traditionally condition their loans based on human rights progress, they do suggest that human rights advocates can be present during loan negotiations.<sup>228</sup> Orienting these

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<sup>226</sup> Kuzzat Altay, “Why Erdogan has Abandoned the Uyghurs,” *Foreign Policy*, March 2, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/03/02/why-erdogan-has-abandoned-the-uyghurs/>.

<sup>227</sup> Ted Hesson and Mimi Dwyer, “Biden to Raise Current U.S. Refugee Cap From Historic Lows,” *Reuters*, February 6, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-biden-refugees/biden-to-raise-current-u-s-refugee-cap-from-historic-lows-idUSKBN2A60BC>.

<sup>228</sup> Sérgio Pereira Leite, “The International Monetary Fund and Human Rights,” *International Monetary Fund*, September 4, 2001, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2015/09/28/04/54/vc090401>.

discussions around human rights can make the Pakistani government more accountable to international norms.

- **Increase international outreach to Uyghur communities in Pakistan.** Outreach initiatives could include teaching Uyghurs about their legal and political rights, and about basic digital hygiene to counteract the growing threat of Chinese malware and hacks. Unfortunately, the Pakistani government makes any international NGO work related to cyber or digital security extremely difficult through the use of complicated approval procedures and arbitrary performance audits.<sup>229</sup> The international community should make efforts to pressure the Pakistani government to ease restrictions on international NGOs. Alternatively, they should employ local groups to circumvent these barriers.

## To the Government of Pakistan

- **Restrict the export of surveillance technology.** As Chinese companies further ingratiate themselves into Pakistan through development contracts, there is a genuine risk of China improving its repression capabilities through the transfer of surveillance technology. Given that Chinese smartphones make up nearly half of the market share in Pakistan, this will also be a concerning form of surveillance that demands scrutiny.<sup>230, 231</sup>
- **Reform or abolish Pakistani laws that empower security groups.** Several notorious laws give Pakistani intelligence groups broad authority to investigate and imprison individuals. Laws such as the Official Secret Act, the Security of Pakistan Act, the Pakistan Army Act, the Defense of Pakistan Act, and the Prevention of Anti-National Activities Act continue to fuel the intimidation and forced

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<sup>229</sup> Nadia Naviwala, "Pakistan Uses Regulations to Tighten Grip on INGOs," *Devex*, October 18, 2017, <https://www.devex.com/news/pakistan-uses-regulations-to-tighten-grip-on-ingos-91003>.

<sup>230</sup> "Mobile Vendor Market Share Pakistan," *Global Stats*, March 2021, <https://gs.statcounter.com/vendor-market-share/mobile/pakistan>.

<sup>231</sup> Ina Tucker, "Why You Should Worry if You Have a Chinese Smartphone," *The Guardian*, October 26, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/oct/26/china-technology-social-management-internet-social-credit-system>.

disappearances of human rights activists in Pakistan. Pressure should be applied to restrict their usage and make their enforcement more transparent.<sup>232</sup> Activists associated with opposition parties like the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement and the Awami Workers Party are frequent critics of these laws, and the government should support their efforts to amend them.<sup>233</sup>

- **Reform Pakistan’s Prevention of Electronic Crimes law.** This 2016 law gives Pakistani telecommunication authorities extensive power to target Pakistani internet users. It also doles out significant penalties, allows Pakistani officials to access user online traffic data, and punishes users for simply “intentionally spreading disinformation.” As Chinese companies become more integrated into Pakistan’s cyber infrastructure, the risk grows that authorities might abuse this law to target Uyghur communities or to limit the spread of information critical of the CCP.

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<sup>232</sup> “Herald Exclusive: Revealing the Secret,” *Dawn*, January 24, 2011, <https://www.dawn.com/news/601181/revealing-the-secret>.

<sup>233</sup> Farhatullah Babar, “Who launched the crackdown on Islamabad activists?” *The Friday Times*, February 7, 2020, <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/who-launched-the-crackdown-on-islamabad-activists/>.



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