

Central and Regional Leadership for Xinjiang Policy in Xi's Second Term

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After the 19th Party Congress last fall and the recent “two meetings” in March, the party-state has now completed its quinquennial leadership turnover and announced a major restructuring of a number of party and state entities. This institutional restructuring will alter slightly the functional hierarchies involved in coordinating Xinjiang policy, but there is no indication that it—or the new leaders in place—will affect the content or tone of that policy. Whether regional Party Secretary Chen Quanguo himself is the progenitor of increasingly repressive measures now employed in Xinjiang, or whether he is simply the most ruthless tool by which to implement them, he is still the logical endpoint of the party's broader policy trajectory.

Central Leadership: Two Key Policymaking Constellations

There are two main constellations of bureaucratic agencies that have the most influence over policy and implementation in Xinjiang: those engaged in “United Front” work, and those in the “Politics and Law” ambit. These constellations comprise both party and state bodies, though now more than ever the party is clearly the center of gravity. In addition, there is the Central Committee Xinjiang Work Coordination Small Group (中央新疆工作协调小组), formed in 2000, that brings together leaders from both of these policy hierarchies—as well as from others—to provide guidance on Xinjiang policy. We know very little about the individuals in these agencies beyond what the party wants us to know, but nothing in their résumés—or in official policy guidance—suggests that we should expect any new leaders or new institutional arrangements to substantively alter the policy course in Xinjiang.

United Front Hierarchy

The United Front Work Department (UFWD), a party entity, falls under the leadership of Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) member and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Chairman Wang Yang. With provincial-level leadership experience in Anhui, Chongqing, and Guangdong, as well as several years under his belt as a vice premier in the State Council, Wang has no obvious experience managing issues particular to the United Front. Yet neither did his predecessor, Yu Zhengsheng, who worked his way up through Shandong, Hubei, and Shanghai, and who oversaw progressively more repressive policies applied in both Tibet and Xinjiang.¹

¹ The opinions and characterizations in this paper are those of the author, and do not necessarily represent official positions of the United States Government.

Two of the institutional changes outlined at the recent National People's Congress, in bringing government entities under the formal leadership of the UFWD, have possible implications for Xinjiang. The State Ethnic Affairs Commission (SEAC), though it will continue to exist as a department under the State Council, is now also explicitly under the authority of the UFWD. The State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) will be absorbed directly into the UFWD and will no longer exist as an independent entity.

Yet it is hard to imagine that either of these shifts portends a significant substantive change for the PRC's ethnic or religious policies in Xinjiang. It is not as if SEAC and SARA were previously rogue agencies formulating regulations that contravened the party's wishes. If anything, the move codifies the lines of authority that have long been obvious. Further, the UFWD had already established a Xinjiang Bureau in 2017, so as an institution it has already had specially designated staff to manage Xinjiang-related issues.²

Table 1*United Front Personnel During the Hu and Xi Administrations*

<i>United Front Position</i>	<i>2002–2007 (Hu 1st term)</i>	<i>2007–2012 (Hu 2nd term)</i>	<i>2012–2017 (Xi 1st term)</i>	<i>2017–2022 (Xi 2nd term)</i>
CPPCC chairman	Jia Qinglin 贾庆林 (2003–2013)	Jia Qinglin 贾庆林 (2003–2013)	Yu Zhengsheng 俞正声 (2013–2018)	Wang Yang 汪洋 (2018–)
UFWD Head	Liu Yandong 刘延东 (2002–2007)	Du Qinglin 杜青林 (2007–2012)	Ling Jihua 令计划 (2012–2014) Sun Chunlan 孙春兰 (2014–2017)	You Quan 尤权 (2017–)
UFWD executive deputy director	Zhu Weiqun 朱维群 (2002–2017)	Zhu Weiqun 朱维群 (2002–2017)	Zhu Weiqun 朱维群 (2002–2017)	
Head, CPPCC Committee for Ethnic & Religious Affairs		Tian Congming 田聪明 (2008–2013?)	Zhu Weiqun 朱维群 (2013?–2018)	Wang Weiguang 王伟光 (2018–)
SARA head	Ye Xiaowen 叶小文 (1995–2009)	Wang Zuo'an 王作安 (2009–)	Wang Zuo'an 王作安 (2009–)	Wang Zuo'an 王作安 (2009–)
SEAC director	Li Dezhu 李德洙 (1998–2007)	Yang Jing 杨晶 (2008–2013)	Wang Zhengwei 王正伟 (2013–2016) Bate'er 巴特尔 (2016–)	Bate'er 巴特尔 (2016–)

Politics and Law Hierarchy

The Central Committee Politics and Law Commission (PLC; see table 2) is a party body that oversees the country's security apparatus as well as its justice system, and as such has as its members the heads of all the relevant state agencies in charge of implementing its policies. The PLC secretary used to be a PBSC member, but after the spectacular fall from grace of PLC head Zhou Yongkang, the position was downgraded to the Politburo level. Some observers speculate that the absorption of several leading small groups into the PLC, announced as part of the larger party-state restructuring plan, has boosted the PLC's bureaucratic power, but notably the PLC secretary remains at the Politburo, and not the PBSC, level.

Since the 19th Party Congress last fall, Guo Shengkun, former minister of Public Security, heads the PLC. Guo is also the First Political Commissar of the People's Armed Police (PAP), a paramilitary organization that is a major component of Xinjiang's security strategy and that only recently shifted from joint civilian-military oversight to sole military oversight.

The impact and role of these agencies can be quite obvious—when talking about rounding people up or putting down ongoing unrest, the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) and the PAP have a clear role. But other agencies have a large impact as well. As discussed further below, the official policy document that appears to explicitly mandate the establishment of the “training centers” was issued by the Xinjiang Department of Justice. Whether or not the specific plan for the centers was formulated at the central or regional level, the Justice hierarchy is clearly intimately involved. Fu Zhenghua, now minister of justice, is a Politics and Law veteran. He was previously vice-minister of public security, head of the Beijing Public Security Bureau, head of the “610 Office” general office (the implementing arm of the party group devoted to “handling the problem of evil cults”), and has already served a brief stint on the PLC. He was also reportedly part of the effort to investigate the crimes of former PLC Secretary Zhou Yongkang—not a task for the faint of heart.

Central Committee Xinjiang Work Coordination Small Group

The Central Committee Xinjiang Work Coordination Small Group is one of a number of “leading small groups” (LSGs, which function as policy advisory bodies) in the PRC party-state.³ Prior to the Zhou Yongkang affair, the head of the PLC (and a PBSC member) also headed the Xinjiang LSG. However, even after leadership of the PLC was downgraded from the PBSC to the Politburo level in 2012, leadership of the Xinjiang LSG remained at the PBSC level—an indication of the importance the central leadership accords Xinjiang-related issues. CPPCC Chairman Yu Zhengsheng became head of the Xinjiang LSG, as will, presumably, new CPPCC Chairman Wang Yang. A similar shift happened with the Xinjiang LSG Office Director: the role used to be filled by a PLC member, but is now apparently the job of the SEAC Director (which is part of the United Front rather than the Politics and Law hierarchy). This shift in which hierarchy leads the Xinjiang LSG has not reduced central policy emphasis on security, however. This accords with the United Front's consistent oversight of Tibet work over time even as security apparatus' footprint has increased in Tibet.⁴

Table 2
PLC Members During the Hu and Xi Administrations

<i>PLC Position</i>	<i>Relevant Concurrent Position(s)</i>	<i>2002–2007 (Hu 1st term)</i>	<i>2007–2012 (Hu 2nd term)</i>	<i>2012–2017 (Xi 1st term)</i>	<i>2017–2022 (Xi 2nd term)</i>
Secretary	PSBC member	Luo Gan 罗干 (2002–2007)	Zhou Yongkang 周永康 (2007–2012)		
	Politburo member			Meng Jianzhu 孟建柱 (2012–2017)	Guo Shengkun 郭声琨 (2017–)
Deputy Secretary	Minister of Public Security	Zhou Yongkang 周永康 (2003–2007)	Meng Jianzhu 孟建柱 (2008–2012)	Guo Shengkun 郭声琨 (2013–2017)	Zhao Kezhi 赵克志 (2017–) (presumed deputy secretary)
Member	Chief justice and president of the Supreme People's Court of China	<i>(Unclear if Xiao Yang 肖扬 was on PLC)</i>	Wang Shengjun 王胜俊 (2008–2013) (secretary-general)	Zhou Qiang 周强 (2013–)	Zhou Qiang 周强 (2013–)
Member	Procurator-general of the Supreme People's Procuratorate	<i>(Unclear if Jia Chunwang 贾春旺 was on PLC)</i>	Cao Jianming 曹建明 (2008–2018)	Cao Jianming 曹建明 (2008–2018)	Zhang Jun 张军 (2018–)
Member	State Council deputy secretary-general			Wang Yongqing 汪永清 (2013–) (secretary-general)	Wang Yongqing 汪永清 (2013–) (secretary-general)
Member	Minister of State Security		Geng Huichang 耿惠昌 (2008–2013)	Geng Huichang 耿惠昌 (2013–2016), Chen Wenqing 陈文清 (2016–)	Chen Wenqing 陈文清 (2016–)
Member	Central Commission for the Comprehensive Management of Public Security/Central Commission for Comprehensive Social Management Member/deputy head	Zhou Benshun 周本顺 (2003–2008; deputy secretary-general)	Zhou Benshun 周本顺 (2008–2013) (secretary-general)		
Member	Central Commission for the Comprehensive Management of Public Security/Central Commission for Comprehensive Social Management Office Director		Chen Xunqiu 陈训秋 (2011–) (deputy secretary-general)	Chen Xunqiu 陈训秋 (2011–) (deputy secretary-general)	Chen Xunqiu 陈训秋 (2011–) (deputy secretary-general)

<i>PLC Position</i>	<i>Relevant Concurrent Position(s)</i>	<i>2002–2007 (Hu 1st term)</i>	<i>2007–2012 (Hu 2nd term)</i>	<i>2012–2017 (Xi 1st term)</i>	<i>2017–2022 (Xi 2nd term)</i>
Member	Commander of the People's Armed Police		<i>(Unclear if Wu Shuangzhan 吴双战 was on PLC)</i>	Wang Jianping 王建平 (2012–2014), Wang Ning 王宁 (2014–)	Wang Ning 王宁 (2014–)
Member	Minister of Justice	Wu Aiying 吴爱英 (2005–2017)	Wu Aiying 吴爱英 (2005–2017)	Wu Aiying 吴爱英 (2005–2017), Zhang Jun 张军 (2017–2018)	Fu Zhenghua 傅政华 (2018–)
Member	<i>Unknown</i>	Wang Shengjun 王胜俊 (1998–2008) (secretary-general)		Song Dan 宋丹 (2016?–2018)	
Member	Vice minister of Public Security		Li Dongsheng 李东生 (2011?–2013)	Li Dongsheng 李东生 (2011?–2013), Liu Jinguo 刘金国 (2014), Fu Zhenghua 傅政华 (2015–2016), Huang Ming 黄明 (2016–2018)	
Member	PLA General Political Department deputy head, CMC Discipline Inspection head			Du Jincai 杜金才 (2013–2016?)	

NOTE: Wang Qijiang 王其江, Jiang Wei 姜伟, Jing Hanchao 景汉朝, Bai Shaokang 白少康, and Lei Dongsheng 雷东生 are also listed as deputy secretaries-general during the time span covered above, but are not listed as PLC members.

The Xinjiang LSG does not as yet appear to be affected by the recently announced institutional restructuring, but it is possible that changes to SEAC's status, for example, may end up altering the LSG's institutional composition. Though the party has never published a formal, full list of Xinjiang LSG members for public consumption, the names and positions of several former members have been reported in official media, on government websites, and in state-affiliated media. Using this information, and using the individuals' concurrent positions as a guide, we can guess who might sit on the latest incarnation of the Xinjiang LSG. See table 3 (next page).

The table only includes concurrent job titles of confirmed LSG members. The entire LSG membership is undoubtedly larger, and tidbits occasionally appearing in the media suggest that representatives from a range of other ministries are part of the LSG. The Ministry of Agriculture for example, apparently has a seat at the Xinjiang LSG table.⁵

One report from 2012 states that Zhou Yongkang led 15 members of the Xinjiang LSG to the region.⁶ The number of officials listed as going on the trip is larger than 15, so it is difficult to know which of these individuals were definitively on the LSG at the time, but it is an instructive list nonetheless (individuals' concurrent job titles in 2012 are shown in parentheses):

- Zhu Weiqun 朱维群 (UFWD executive deputy director)
- Zhou Benshun 周本顺 (PLC secretary-general)*
- Yang Huanning 杨焕宁 (MPS executive vice minister and Central Committee Stability Preservation Work Leading Small Group office director)*
- Jiang Weixin 姜伟新 (minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development)
- Wang Yong 王勇 (head of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration)
- Wang Qinfeng 王秦丰 (deputy head of the Central Committee Organization Department)
- Cai Mingzhao 蔡名照 (deputy head of the Propaganda Department)
- Bao Shaokun 鲍绍坤 (PLC deputy secretary-general?)
- Du Ying 杜鹰 (National Development and Reform Commission Deputy head)*
- Li Weihong 李卫红 (vice minister of Education)⁷
- Su Bo 苏波 (vice minister of Industry and Information Technology)
- Wang Zuo'an 王宝安 (head of SARA)
- Xin Changxing 信长星 (vice minister of Human Resources and Social Security)
- Qi Ji 齐骥 (vice minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development)
- Li Jinzao 李金早 (vice minister of Commerce)
- Wu Yin 吴吟 (deputy head of the National Energy Administration)

**Confirmed Xinjiang LSG membership at some point between 2002 and 2017*

Further, it is possible that others in the United Front and Politics and Law hierarchies are part of the Xinjiang LSG, given that their deputies are. This includes the MPS minister, the head of the CPPCC Committee for Ethnic and Religious Affairs, and the head of the UFWD. It remains unclear if one of the LSG deputy head positions definitively switched
(text continues on p. 9)

Table 3

Confirmed, Presumed, and Projected Xinjiang LSG Members During the Hu and Xi Administrations. (DOD = deputy office director)

<i>LSG position</i>	<i>Relevant concurrent position(s)</i>	<i>2002–2007 (Hu first term)</i>	<i>2007–2012 (Hu second term)</i>	<i>2012–2017 (Xi first term)</i>	<i>2017–2022 (Xi second term)</i>
Head	PLC secretary	Luo Gan 罗干 (2002–2007)	Zhou Yongkang 周永康 (2007–2012)		
	CPPCC chairman			Yu Zhengsheng 俞正声 (2013–2018)	Wang Yang? 汪洋 (2018–)
Deputy head	Xinjiang party secretary/ Xinjiang Production & Construction Corps (XPCC) first political commissar ⁸	Wang Lequan 乐泉任 (1995–2010)	Wang Lequan 乐泉任 (1995–2010), Zhang Chunxian 张春贤 (2010–2016)	Zhang Chunxian 张春贤 (2010–2016), Chen Quanguo? 陈全国 (2016–)	Chen Quanguo? 陈全国 (2016–)
Deputy head	Vice premier or CPPCC Vice chair with Ethnic Affairs portfolio*	Hui Liangyu 回良玉* (2003–2013) (vice premier)	Hui Liangyu 回良玉* (2003–2013) (vice premier)	Du Qinglin 杜青林 (2013–2018) (CPPCC vice chairman)	<i>Unknown</i>
Office director	PLC secretary-general	<i>(Unclear if Wang Shengjun 王胜俊 was on LSG)</i>	Zhou Benshun 周本顺 (2010–2013) office director		
	SEAC director			Wang Zhengwei 王正伟 (2013–2016), Bate'er? 巴特尔 (2016–)	Bate'er? 巴特尔 (2016–)
DOD	CPPCC Committee for Ethnic & Religious Affairs deputy head	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	Du Ying 杜鹰 (2014–2018)	<i>Unknown</i>
DOD	SEAC deputy director	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	Li Zhao 李昭 (2013–2016), Liu Hui? 刘慧 (2016–)	Liu Hui? 刘慧 (2016–)
DOD	<i>Unknown</i>			Lu Xin 鲁昕 (2016–?)	Lu Xin 鲁昕 (2016–?) (now on CPPCC Committee for Ethnic & Religious Affairs)
DOD	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	Hu Lianhe 胡联合 (2012–2017?)	<i>Unknown</i>

<i>LSG position</i>	<i>Relevant concurrent position(s)</i>	<i>2002–2007 (Hu first term)</i>	<i>2007–2012 (Hu second term)</i>	<i>2012–2017 (Xi first term)</i>	<i>2017–2022 (Xi second term)</i>
DOD	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	Li Xingmin 李兴民 (2011–2013?)	Li Xingmin 李兴民 (2011–2013?)	<i>Unknown</i>
Member	Xinjiang deputy party secretary/XPCC party secretary	<i>(unclear if Nie Weiguo 聂卫国 was on LSG)</i>	<i>(unclear if Nie Weiguo 聂卫国 was on LSG)</i> Che Jun 车俊 (2010–2016)	Che Jun 车俊 (2010–2016), Sun Jinlong? 孙金龙 (2016–)	Sun Jinlong? 孙金龙 (2016–)
Member	MPS vice minister	Yang Huanning 杨焕宁 (2003–2005)	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>
Member	PLC deputy secretary-general	Zhou Benshun 周本顺 (2004–2008)	Chen Xunqiu? 陈训秋 (2011–) (deputy secretary-general)	Chen Xunqiu? 陈训秋 (2011–) (deputy secretary-general)	Chen Xunqiu? 陈训秋 (2011–) (deputy secretary-general)
Member	Vice minister of Human Resources & Social Security		Hu Xiaoyi 胡晓义 (2010–2015?)	Hu Xiaoyi 胡晓义 (2010–2015?)	<i>Unknown</i>

**Not confirmed in authoritative media or government websites, but likely accurate based on state-affiliated or -permitted PRC media reporting*

(continued from page 6)

from being a vice premier to being a CPPCC vice chair in 2012, but Liu Yandong certainly remained active on Xinjiang issues during her recent tenure as vice premier; Sun Chunlan, as a current vice premier and former UFD head, is also a good bet to be involved in Xinjiang policymaking.

Regional Leadership: Both Initiator and Instrument

PRC policies related to Xinjiang became startlingly more repressive in the last two years, even for a region that was already under more intensive digital and physical controls than most other areas of China. In particular, two interrelated efforts have signaled a stepwise increase in security efforts: the recall and forcible repatriation of ethnic Uyghur and other predominantly Muslim minority Chinese citizens from abroad, and the rounding up of those same populations in Xinjiang to put them in “education and transformation” and “counter-extremism training” centers.⁹

How to explain this relatively sudden escalation of measures against Uyghur citizens? The most obvious explanation is the presence of Chen Quanguo, the former Tibet party secretary who became Xinjiang party secretary in August 2016. Indeed, Chen oversaw the installation of “convenience police stations” in Tibet, and almost immediately after he arrived in Xinjiang, the region instituted a similar building spree. These small police substations, built very near to each other, serve as a way to increase the density of police presence. Adrian Zenz and James Leibold have convincingly shown that Chen is almost certainly the driving force behind these stations as well as the massive increase in security personnel hiring and overall security spending in the region.¹⁰ And with perhaps only a few exceptions, the timing of the recalls and repatriations of Chinese citizens abroad—said to have begun in early 2017—certainly lines up with Chen’s tenure in Xinjiang (though it is very unlikely that a provincial-level party secretary has the unilateral authority to order security operations overseas).

Table 4

Xinjiang Regional Leadership During the Hu and Xi Administrations

<i>Xinjiang regional leadership position</i>	<i>2002–2007 (Hu 1st term)</i>	<i>2007–2012 (Hu 2nd term)</i>	<i>2012–2017 (Xi 1st term)</i>	<i>2017–2022 (Xi 2nd term)</i>
Party secretary/XPCC first political commissar	Wang Lequan 乐泉任 (1995–2010)	Wang Lequan 乐泉任 (1995–2010), Zhang Chunxian 张春贤 (2010–2016)	Zhang Chunxian 张春贤 (2010–2016), Chen Quanguo 陈全国 (2016–)	Chen Quanguo 陈全国 (2016–)
Deputy party secretary/regional government chairman	Ismail Tiliwaldi 司马义·铁力瓦尔地 لىئىلىۋالىدىلى ىدلداۋىلىتى (2003–2007)	Nur Bekri 努尔·白克力 ىركەب رۇن (2007–2014)	Nur Bekri 努尔·白克力 ىركەب (2007–2014), Shohret Zakir 雪克来提·扎克尔 رىكاز تەرھۇش (2014–)	Shohret Zakir 雪克来提·扎克尔 رىكاز تەرھۇش (2014–)

<i>Xinjiang regional leadership position</i>	2002–2007 (Hu 1st term)	2007–2012 (Hu 2nd term)	2012–2017 (Xi 1st term)	2017–2022 (Xi 2nd term)
Deputy party secretary/XPCC party committee secretary	Nie Weiguo 聂卫国 (2005–2010)	Nie Weiguo 聂卫国 (2005–2010), Che Jun 车俊 (2010–2016)	Che Jun 车俊 (2010–2016), Sun Jinlong? 孙金龙 (2016–)	Sun Jinlong? 孙金龙 (2016–)
XPCC commander and deputy party secretary	Zhang Qingli 张庆黎 (2002–2005)	Hua Shifei 华士飞 (2006–2011), Liu Xinqi 刘新齐 (2011–2017)	Liu Xinqi 刘新齐 (2011–2017), Peng Jiarui 彭家瑞 (2017–) (regional vice chairman)	Peng Jiarui 彭家瑞 (2017–) (regional vice chairman)
Regional UFWD head	Wang Wei 王伟 (2005–2013)	Wang Wei 王伟 (2005–2013)	Cheng Zhenshan 程振山 (2013–2016), Shawket Imin 肖开提·依明 (2016–)	Shawket Imin 肖开提·依明 (2016–)
Head of Xinjiang PLC	Zhang Xiuming 张秀明 (2005–?), Zhu Hailun 朱海仑 (2006–2009)	Zhu Hailun 朱海仑 (2006–2009), Xiong Xuanguo 熊选国 (2011–2016)	Xiong Xuanguo 熊选国 (2011–2016)	Xiong Xuanguo 熊选国 (2011–2016), Zhu Hailun 朱海仑 (2016–)

These are likely the early manifestations of a larger shift in policy in Xinjiang. The shift can be discerned by comparing speeches top leaders gave at the two Central Xinjiang Work Conferences (中央新疆工作座谈会), one in 2010 and one in 2014. While the 2014 conference did discuss the importance of employment, gone was the old-school Communist idea, explicitly stated in 2010, that “In Xinjiang, like in all of China, the primary social contradiction is still that between the people’s increasing material and cultural needs and backwards social production.” Instead, the 2014 conference had a much stronger emphasis on ethnic unity and assimilation, on security and surveillance, and on religion and extremism. Around roughly the same time, and probably tied to the conference, the Central Committee issued an “opinion” (意见) about Xinjiang work, as it had done after the 2010 work conference. Though the contents of these documents are not publicly available, the titles alone imply a shift in policy emphasis: “Central Committee and State Council opinion on promoting Xinjiang’s leapfrog development and long-term peace and stability” (中共中央、国务院关于推进新疆跨越式发展和长治久安的意见) in 2010, versus “Central Committee opinion on further safeguarding Xinjiang’s social stability and realizing its long-term peace and stability” (中共中央关于进一步维护新疆社会稳定和实现长治久安的意见) in 2014.

But even before this, at the very beginning of 2014, there were hints that “counter-extremism” would become a watchword for regional policy. The term *counter-extremism* (去极端化) received two mentions in the Xinjiang government work report, delivered at the region’s annual People’s Congress in January. Two mentions may not seem like much, but the term had not been used in any reports from 2008 to 2013. (It appeared

three times in 2015 and four in 2016, both before Chen became Xinjiang Party Secretary, and twice each year thereafter.)

Similarly, the mandated formation of Counter-Extremism Work LSGs at the regional, prefectural, and county level appeared formally in the “Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Counter-Extremism Regulations” (新疆维吾尔自治区去极端化条例), in effect as of April 2017. Yet this set of regulations was the result of a two-year-long drafting process, and at least some of its content was presaged in the “Plan for Deepening and Promoting ‘Counter-Extremism’ Work,” issued by the regional government at the beginning of 2015, containing similar provisions requiring the establishment of local Counter-Extremism LSGs.¹¹ This explains why Yuli County had such an LSG as early as mid-2015.

Which is not to say that Chen Quanguo has had nothing to do with the intensity of this latest phase of re-education and counter-extremism “training.” The reason the centers have become a recent focal point of international reporting is that they are now overflowing with people, the scale and scope of the campaign apparently stretching well beyond its pre-Chen limits. But it’s very difficult to know how much to attribute directly to Chen, because we have so little insight into the ethnic minority policy deliberation and formulation process. How much of these policies come from guidance issued at the 2014 Work Conference? From the Xinjiang LSG? From recommendations made by individual government departments, either at the regional or central level? From individual executive leaders? How much are these entities working in collaboration to formulate policy, and to what extent are certain functional hierarchies merely the recipients and implementers of policies formulated without their input?

The key policy document that this author found explicitly mandating the use of such centers was indeed issued in February 2017, after Chen’s arrival, but as noted above, it likely codifies or expands upon previous policy efforts.¹² Further, it was issued by the regional Department of Justice (as befits the government hierarchy responsible for overseeing prisons and re-education), rather than the regional party committee—though it remains unclear which lines of policy authority intersected to produce the more general “training center” policy, let alone this specific directive. And, of course, the preceding questions assume a trickle downward of policy directives. In some cases, we know that policies trickle *upward* after being implemented first in various localities, such as restrictions on various forms of Islamic dress.¹³ Without more insight into the policy coordination flow, it’s hard to tell where any specific idea or policy originated, or how institutional restructuring might affect the existing process going forward.

Chen is undoubtedly responsible for some of the significant changes in security and treatment of ethnic minorities in China—showing that policy innovation at the sub-national level is, for better and for worse, still alive in the PRC. The convenience police stations and intensive hiring of security personnel in Xinjiang bear his imprint. Given the timing, it’s also quite possible that Chen also lobbied for the recall and forcible repatriation of Uyghurs abroad. But in other cases, such as the zealous use of “training centers” in Xinjiang, he may only be responsible for the last feverish mile of policy

formulation and implementation. Chen's real policy innovations in Xinjiang may have come in the form of utilizing existing structures and priorities to enact exceptionally harsh measures on ethnic minority residents.

Notes

¹ Xia Baolong, one of several dozen vice-chairmen of the CPPCC, does have extensive experience with United Front issues, as he was party secretary of Zhejiang Province when it undertook a campaign to remove or otherwise make less visible the crosses on Christian houses of worship. Xia, however, is not a member of the party's Central Committee, and it remains unclear what his duties will be in the CPPCC.

² Marcel Anglivielle de la Beaumelle, "The United Front Work Department: 'Magic Weapon' at Home and Abroad," *China Brief*, July 6, 2017,

<https://jamestown.org/program/united-front-work-department-magic-weapon-home-abroad/>.

³ For simplicity's sake, this paper will refer to this group as the Xinjiang Leading Small Group (Xinjiang LSG), even though the group technically does not have the word "leading" in its name. For more on leading small groups, see Alice Miller, "The CCP Central Committee's Leading Small Groups," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 26.

⁴ Adrian Zenz and James Leibold, "Chen Quanguo: The Strongman Behind Beijing's Securitization Strategy in Tibet and Xinjiang," *China Brief*, September 21, 2017,

<https://jamestown.org/program/chen-quanguo-the-strongman-behind-beijings-securitization-strategy-in-tibet-and-xinjiang/>.

⁵ "加大支持力度推进新疆农牧业跨越式发展——农业部专家解读《支持新疆农牧业发展规划(2012–2020年)》" (Increase support for promoting Xinjiang's leapfrog agricultural development—Ministry of Agriculture experts decode "Plan to Support Xinjiang's Agricultural and Pastoral Development [2012–2020]"), Ministry of Agriculture website, March 25, 2013,

http://jiuban.moa.gov.cn/zwillm/zcfg/xgjd/201303/t20130325_3413085.htm.

⁶ "周永康：坚持不懈推进新疆跨越式发展和长治久安" (Zhou Yongkang: Unremittingly promote Xinjiang's leapfrog development and long-term peace and stability), *Xinjiang Xingnong Wang*, May 21, 2012, <http://www.xjxmw.gov.cn/c/2012-05-21/920751.shtml>.

⁷ In 2012, Li may still have been head of the Ministry of Education's National Language and Script Work Commission (国家语言文字工作委员会), which is responsible for formulating standards for Mandarin and ethnic minority languages as well as for promoting the use of standard Mandarin. She was head of the commission beginning in 2005.

⁸ The XPCC is an odd hybrid organization that is part martial, part agricultural, and has its own governance structures—including, for example, its own UFD—running in parallel to the regional ones. For an overview, see Alexa Oleson's "China's Vast, Strange, and Powerful Farming Militia Turns 60," *Foreign Policy*, October 8, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/10/08/chinas-vast-strange-and-powerful-farming-militia-turns-60/>.

⁹ A full discussion of the nature and purpose of these "centers" is beyond the scope of this paper, but is well documented in a number of outlets, including Radio Free Asia,

Human Rights Watch, BuzzFeed, and *Foreign Policy*. The total number of people detained in the centers over time is uncertain, but some estimates have it above 100,000.

¹⁰ “Chen Quanguo: The Strongman Behind Beijing’s Securitization Strategy in Tibet and Xinjiang” (see endnote 4); Adrian Zenz and James Leibold, “Xinjiang’s Rapidly Evolving Security State,” *China Brief*, March 14, 2017;

<https://jamestown.org/program/xinjiangs-rapidly-evolving-security-state/>; Adrian Zenz, “China’s Domestic Security Spending: An Analysis of Available Data,” *China Brief*, March 12, 2018, <https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-domestic-security-spending-analysis-available-data/>.

¹¹ “实现去极端化工作常态化、规范化、法治化” (realizing the regularization, standardization, and use of rule of law in counter-extremism work), *Legal Daily*, April 11, 2017,

http://www.legaldaily.com.cn/Lawyer/content/2017-04/11/content_7101504.htm?node=75894;

“新疆‘去极端化’工作的成效和意义” (The result and significance of Xinjiang’s “counter-extremist” work), *People’s Daily*, June 3, 2016, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0603/c1001-28408115.html>.

¹² The document, “Key points for [Xinjiang] Autonomous Region’s justice administrative grassroots work in 2017” (2017年自治区司法行政基层工作要点), explains that four types of centers should be utilized in northern Xinjiang, one of which is “social rectification centers” (社区矫正中心). In southern Xinjiang, an additional type of center is mandated: “key groups concentrated education and transformation training centers” (重点群体集中教育转化培训中心). Accessed at:

<http://www.yuli.gov.cn/Government/PublicInfoShow.aspx?ID=27973>.

¹³ “Ban on Islamic Clothing in Xinjiang,” *Dui Hua Human Rights Journal*, February 27, 2018, <https://www.duihuahrjournal.org/2018/02/ban-on-islamic-clothing-in-xinjiang.html>.