

THE UYGHUR GENOCIDE

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THE UYGHURS

The Uyghurs are an ethnic minority that consists of 11 million members.

They practice Islam and identify as Muslim.

They live in the contested Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China (PRC). However, they identify the region by the name of East Turkestan.

They speak Standard Xinjiang and Standard Soviet.

They are facing genocide carried out by the government of the PRC.

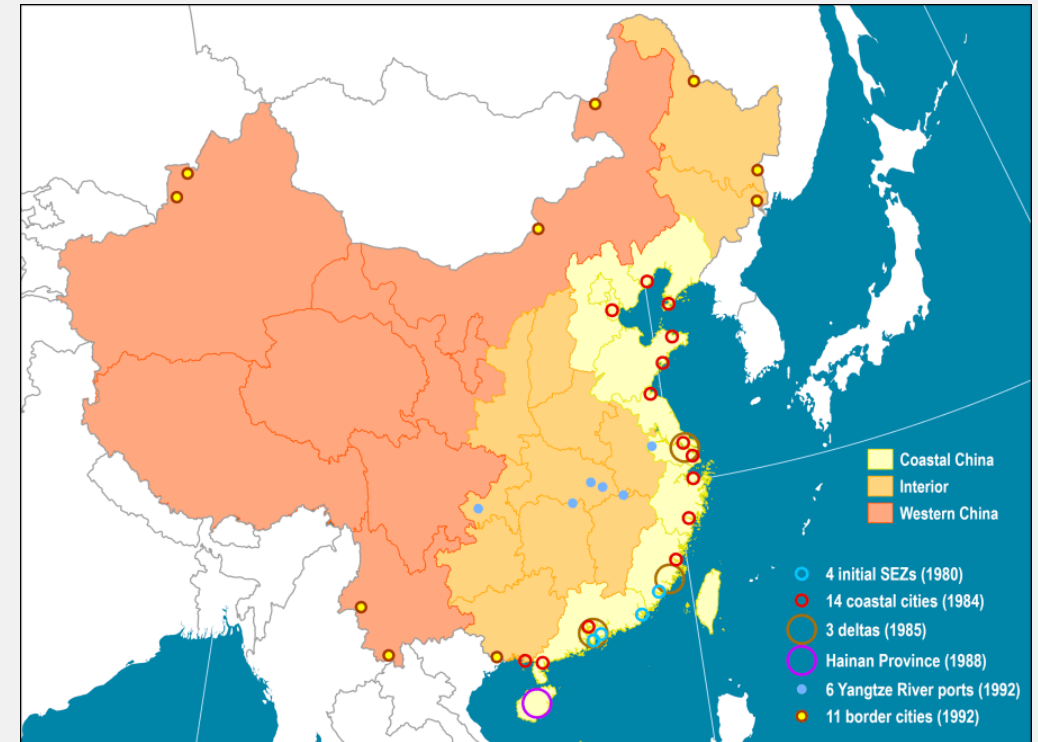


EAST TURKESTAN

The current size of the region is 1.82 million square kilometers. It's home to at least 11 million Uyghurs and 8.75 ethnic Han Chinese.

It was annexed by the Chinese Communist Party as the result of an invasion in 1949. This is how it got the name of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

Because of its abundance in oil and mineral supplies, it was designated a “special economic zone” in hopes of creating employment opportunities and attracting foreign companies.



ECONOMIC FACTORS

- As the home of the largest coal and natural gas reserves in China, Xinjiang is crucial to the PRC's Belt and Road Initiative, a massive infrastructure project meant to mimic the Silk Road. The Belt and Road Initiative will be a vast network of railways, highways, and energy pipelines that will extend westward through the former Soviet republics, southward to the Indian subcontinent, and to the rest of Southeast Asia. It would expand the international use of the PRC's currency, boost Chinese incomes and domestic consumption, and boost global economic links to the PRC's western regions.
- To continue development through Xinjiang, the PRC wants to make sure there is no possibility of separatist activity from the Uyghurs.
- As a hub of textile and apparel manufacturing, Xinjiang is crucial to the PRC's overall economic development. Because of this, Uyghurs are forced to work in factories linked to 83 global brands.

SECURITY FACTORS

- In 2009, Uyghur demonstrators rioted in Xinjiang's capital, Urumqi, against state-incentivized Han Chinese migration to the region. It resulted in the death of nearly 200 people.
- On October 28th, 2013, a vehicle crashed into a bridge and caught on fire, killing five people and injuring dozens more. The driver was identified as Uyghur, and the Turkestan Islamic Party, an Islamic extremist organization, claimed responsibility.
- In 2014, Uyghur extremists orchestrated and performed a series of attacks where 29 people were stabbed to death and over 100 were injured.
- Officials took these attacks and decided they needed to deal with religious extremism through government crackdown, enhanced security, and reeducation. However, they have come to characterize any and all Muslim practices as “extremist,” and efforts have gone too far.

PAST GENOCIDES

THE HOLOCAUST

- Took place in German-occupied Europe from 1941-1945.
- Resulted in the murder of 2/3 of the European Jewish population. Hundreds of thousands of Jewish were displaced and/or lost their culture.
- Adolf Hitler believed that the “Aryan” race was superior and needed to be “cleaned” of the Jewish race. He blamed the Jewish for Germany’s loss in WWI and the economic depression that followed. Before WWII had even started, Hitler was already destroying Jewish businesses, homes, and synagogues and placing Jewish people into concentration camps. The killing amplified once the war began.
- A Jewish state, Israel, was established but its establishment resulted in war.

THE CAMBODIAN GENOCIDE

- Took place in Democratic Kampuchea (present-day Cambodia) from 1975-1979.
- Resulted in the murder of 1.7 million to 3 million Cambodians.
- Pol Pot, the Prime Minister who orchestrated the genocide, wanted a “classless agrarian society.” People considered intellectuals (teachers, doctors, clergy, lawyers) were persecuted for special treatment. Everyone was forced to leave the cities and move to the countryside to live as farmers. Poor management on the government’s part is what led to so many deaths.
- Pol Pot remained in power until 1998 and Cambodia kept its seat in the UN General Assembly.

PAST GENOCIDES

THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE

- Took place in Rwanda in 1994 in a span of about three months.
- Resulted in the murder of 800,000 Rwandans, nearly all of the Tutsi ethnic-minority.
- In 1959, the Hutu revolted and forced the Tutsi monarchy as well as hundreds of thousands of Tutsi into exile. In 1990, a mostly-Tutsi force invaded Rwanda. The president accused the Tutsi and between 1990 and 1993, the government arrested and killed hundreds of Tutsi. In 1993, the president allowed a transition of government to include the force that invaded in 1990. Hutu extremists became angry, killed the president in 1994, and immediately began the Tutsi genocide.
- The UN Security Council sent a force of over 5,000 troops.

THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

- Took place in the Ottoman Empire from 1915-1922.
- Resulted in the murder of 600,000-1.5 million Armenians. Those that weren't killed were forced into exile.
- As a Christian minority in a Muslim majority country, Armenians long faced discrimination in the Ottoman Empire from their Turkish counterparts. They were first massacred from 1894-1896 through state-sanctioned pogroms. In WWI, the Ottoman Empire entered on the Central Powers' side, but the Armenians volunteered on the Allied Powers' side. This ramped up Turkish suspicions that the Armenians weren't loyal to the Ottoman Empire. The Turkish pushed for the "removal" of the Armenians from the war. The genocide began April 1915.
- Turkey denies anything happens and the West has not condemned them.

PAST GENOCIDES

THE BANGLADESHI GENOCIDE

- Took place in Bangladesh in 1971 through a period of ten months.
- Resulted in the murder of 2 million to 3 million Bengali.
- Before Bangladesh was its own country, it was known as East Pakistan, and together with West Pakistan made up the whole of Pakistan. West Pakistan was the political center and had the majority say in decisions affecting both enclaves, and East Pakistanis were viewed as inferior. The Bengali majority in East Pakistan called for self-determination, leading to the Bangladesh War for Liberation. In an attempt to suppress the Bengali, West Pakistan began murdering and raping them. Most were Hindu.
- Bengali Hindus continue to be persecuted in Bangladesh and their population will soon be non-existent.



THE GENOCIDE

- According to the Council on Foreign Relations, the “reeducation” efforts are estimated to have started in 2014, undergoing dramatic expansion in 2017.
- At least 1 million have been placed into internment camps, with victims claiming they have been mistreated. These internment camps are guarded 24/7 by guards and cameras. Inside, the Uyghurs live in such harsh conditions that victims report people dying of starvation, beatings, and suicide.
- Villages were split into squares of 500 people, each with a police station for close monitoring. Cell phone searches are regular, along with fingerprint and identification card scans. Citizen’s biometric data is collected and stored into a database.

THE GENOCIDE

- Mosques are being destroyed, men are forced to shave their symbolic beards, women are forced to unveil themselves, and everyone is being forced to renounce Islam and pledge allegiance to the Chinese Communist Party. This is in attempt to rid the PRC of religion and the “extremism and terrorism that follows.”
- Children are placed into orphanages for adoption by Han Chinese so that they may be assimilated into Han Chinese culture.
- Women are forced to take “sterilizations and intrauterine devices” to prevent the births of more Uyghurs. Those that have “too many” children face repercussions.

WHAT PRC OFFICIALS ARE SAYING

- The camps were first denied but were called centers for “vocational education and training programs” in 2018. They officially became the “vocational training centers” in March 2019. Later in 2019, officials claimed everyone “graduated” and that few remained voluntarily.
- Officials have maintained the camps are strictly for teaching Mandarin, Chinese laws, and vocational skills, and to prevent the influence of extremist ideas.
- The camps are part of counter-terrorism measures that have allegedly worked, with no terrorist attacks in Xinjiang in the last four years.
- All harsh treatment is still being denied, claiming that there are 24,000 mosques in Xinjiang that prove this.

WHAT THIS COULD MEAN FOR THE UYGHURS

A forced exile from East Turkestan, their
ancestral homeland.

Loss of cultural and religious identity due
to assimilation.

Continued civil unrest between the PRC's
government and Uyghur extremist groups.

A near complete ethnic cleanse.



WHAT THIS COULD MEAN FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- Unlike past genocides, the West has already begun condemning the PRC, which could strain the PRC's relation with the West.
- Due to its massive influence in Asia, whatever the PRC does is likely to be admired by other countries. If this goes virtually unpunished and the condemnations are only at surface level, this genocide could provide the confidence for other countries to commit similar crimes.
- Limited war if the West decides to take military action.

HOW THE WORLD HAS RESPONDED

- On July 2019, 22 countries sent a letter to the UN Human Rights Council condemning the PRC.
- The US imposed visa restrictions on PRC officials linked to the genocide. They also blacklisted over two dozen companies linked to the genocide from buying US products. These include chipmaker SMIC and drone manufacturer SZ DJI Technology Co Ltd.
- The US passed legislation prohibiting American companies from indirectly contributing to the genocide, for example, through investments and trade deals with Chinese companies linked to the genocide

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

GOVERNMENTS

- The UN must demand field missions to better assess what is going on.
- Other powers must place sanctions similar to those the US has placed.

GLOBAL CITIZENS

- Bring awareness through social media.
- Pressure our legislators to pass further legislation condemning the PRC.
- Pressure the UN to label the incident as a genocide so that proper action can be taken.

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