tni
transnationalinstitute

FROM XINJIANG TO MISSISSIPPI

Terror Capitalism, Labour and Surveillance

Darren Byler

KAZAKHSTAN, ALMATY, APRIL 2019: Gulzira Auelhan, an ethnic Kazakh, returned to China's far western Xinjiang in 2017 to visit her ailing father. Instead, she was detained for 437 days in China's sprawling new system of incarceration and indoctrination. Instead, over the course of 437 days, she was detained in five different facilities, including a factory and a middle school converted into a centre for political indoctrination and technical instruction, with several interludes of a form of house arrest with relatives. The Chinese government has said it offers free vocational education and skills training to people such as Ms. Auelhan. But over more than 14 months, "that training lasted one week," she said, not including the time she spent forced to work in a factory. IG: @noorimages / Twitter: @noorimages

The Chinese state within Xinjiang has forged a form of capitalist frontier-making based on data harvesting and unfree human labour that exploits ethno-racial difference in order to generate new forms of capital accumulation and coercive state power.

'Where is your ID!' the police contractor yelled at me in Uyghur. I looked up in surprise. I had been avoiding eye contact, trying to attract as little attention as possible. In April 2018, in the tourist areas of Kashgar – where there were checkpoints every 200 metres – the contractors usually recognised a bespectacled white person as a foreigner. But over the years that I had lived and worked as an anthropologist in Northwest China I had often been mistaken for a Uyghur.

'I don't have a local ID. I'm a foreigner. I only have a passport', I responded in Mandarin. At another checkpoint, a Uyghur police contractor had advised me to stop speaking Uyghur if I didn't want to raise suspicion. So, I had adopted the tactic of only speaking or writing Chinese at checkpoints.

'Oh! Well show me your passport then', he said, switching to Mandarin, his tones nearly as flat and imprecise as my own. He leafed through my passport, pausing at my picture. 'That's a big beard', he commented. 'That's the style of a lot of young people in my hometown in the United States', I responded.

Other police contractors had also given me trouble at checkpoints because of the beard, which, for men under the age of 55, in 2014 state authorities had identified as a possible sign of religious extremism. I had watched them scan my passport photo and run it through an image-recognition system looking for matches with individuals on the watchlist. The beards that usually populated the screen looked as though the men might be from Afghanistan or Pakistan, though sometimes they looked like pictures of me.

He didn't seem convinced.

'Wait here', he said.

I stood there for nearly an hour, becoming increasingly worried. I did not like the idea of the police seizing my passport and holding it for such a long time. As I waited I saw dozens of young Uyghurs line up, waiting to hand over their IDs and phones for inspection. I peered over their shoulders trying to see the app that the police contractors were looking for after the smartphone owners told them their access code. I couldn't quite tell if the app was made by the digital forensics companies Meiya Pico or FiberHome. Both companies were working in the region to turn smartphones into devices that tracked movement and communication.

Eventually a Han man, a 'real' police officer who carried a gun, showed up. He asked me about my background, why I was travelling, how I learned Chinese. He said they had looked me up in the system, so they knew all about me.

I thought about the hundreds of Uyghurs I had interviewed since 2011. Some had already disappeared into the camp system, but most of my closest Uyghur and Kazakh friends had not yet been detained. I thought about the images of checkpoints, camera systems, signs and technical equipment that I had not yet uploaded to the cloud. The pages of notes on disappearances they might find hidden behind firewalls on my laptop. How they would force me to give them my email passwords. I imagined being shackled and thrown into a crowded concrete cell, forced to sign a false confession saying I was secretly

working for the US intelligence agency, that anthropology was just a front, and that my real mission was to incite Uyghur terrorism.

'Stand here', he pointed to the back of a nearby taxi. He pulled out his smartphone and took a picture of me next to the license plate. Then he told me to hold my passport open and he took a close up of me next to it. 'Get in', he said.

He turned to the Uyghur taxi driver and, switching to thickly accented Uyghur, said, 'take him back to his hotel. Don't go anywhere else. We are watching this car'.

I was allowed to leave. Unlike so many people I knew I was not held in a camp or assigned a low-wage factory job. My data had been harvested, but I had the protection of my US passport to prevent my property and labour from being expropriated – or legally stolen. In a general sense, as a fact of life in a system of global capitalism, I was implicated in the system of control and 're-education' I was studying. The digitisation of social life, the Global War on Terror, and the drive for low-cost commodities, is a fact of life almost everywhere. But as a protected citizen the fear I felt was a momentary glimpse of the terror that dominated the Uyghurs I saw at the checkpoints. For them, there was no way out.

'Terror capitalism'

Over the past years, in analysing my ethnographic research findings from the Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang) I have developed a conceptual framing which helps me to explain the political and economic forces at work in the checkpoints, camps, and factories of Northwest China. I call the concept 'terror capitalism' – a form of capitalist frontier-making that exploits ethno-racial difference in order to generate forms of capital accumulation and state power. The term centers on the role of military–industrial complexes in building national economies from the US, Israel and elsewhere; and places it in conversation with thinking on the role of racialised difference in expanding corporate technology industries and deepening forms of labour exploitation. In many places worldwide, information infrastructure – digital forensics tools, biometric checkpoints, and image-recognition systems – are intensifying the power of the state and of international corporations.

In my case, the term 'terror' in this conceptual frame names the way Uyghurs and other Muslim citizens native to China's Central Asian colonial frontier have been deemed an irrational other and intrinsic threat to the 'civilized' non-Muslim majority. As in many other countries, the Chinese mainstream view of Turkic Muslims as potential terrorists – a socially acceptable way of talking about 'savages' or 'barbarians' – opened up a state of exception to the normal rule of law. Once someone has been named a terrorism suspect, or what anti-terrorism theorists refer to as a 'pre-criminal', normal civil protections no longer apply. The 'threat' component also allows the state to justify placing the nation and citizens from the majority population of the country on a war footing. This state of emergency means that private industry and citizens can be mobilised as proxies for the state.

So far what I've described is a particular kind of contemporary military or security industrial complex. My argument goes further to consider what sort of capital is actually produced by this complex and how it fits in the global economy. The first form of capital that is produced beyond the intellectual property inherent in systems of surveillance and policing infrastructure is *data.*

Defining Xinjiang as a war zone has created a data-intensive environment that allows some of China's largest private and state-managed technology companies to develop new tools in digital forensics, image and face recognition, and language recognition – something which in turn allows them to expand into other domains and markets for 'smart' business and security solutions. This was facilitated by data-collection programmes that provided the companies with a base dataset that is unprecedented in its scale and fidelity. From face portraits, to iris scans, to voice signatures, to digital histories the companies are continuously collecting patterned data from the 15 million Muslims in the region.

This system mirrors and expands on data-harvesting done by private corporations in Europe and North America, from Google to Palantir, but in the case of the Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Muslim populations in Northwest China the tacit consumer consent and legal rights available to protected citizens have been stripped away. In both cases, however, the information infrastructures make the intimacy of social behaviour and daily movement available to the gaze of the state and technology companies.

The second form of capital is in the unfree human labour that is facilitated by the digital enclosure system. Since 2018 Xinjiang's regional development authority has been describing the camp and re-education system as a 'carrier of the economy', on the same scale as oil, natural gas, cotton, and tomato resources that had drawn Han Chinese settlers to the region in the 1990s. These internment camps held hundreds of thousands of detainees in a camp-to-factory pipeline. The threat of detention along with infrastructural power of a complex surveillance system held others in forms of assigned labour.

The state documents suggest Uyghur and Kazakh 'surplus labour' has become an additional resource in the Xinjiang economy because state subsidies – ranging from rent-free factory facilities to payments for training workers, had combined with political pressure from local governments in Eastern China, and the subject population of workers to incentivise so many private companies to relocate parts of their production to Xinjiang. The information infrastructure system – smartphone tracking, checkpoints, face scans and so on – along with the fear of arbitrary detention, a form of state terror – held Uyghurs and Kazakhs in place, ensuring a docile workforce, and creating endemic conditions of unfreedom.

In this context, freely chosen work is impossible for most Uyghurs and Kazakhs. Instead, local authorities assign groups of former detainees and others deemed part of the 'surplus labour force' due to their lack of formal employment to jobs in state-designated factories. There is no space to negotiate wages or protest against them being withheld – which appears to be widespread throughout the system. In many cases, people are 'free' to choose to work in low-wage assigned jobs far from their families or 'free' to be interned. This false freedom – a condition beyond dependence on the 'free' market – is what I mean by 'unfree labour'. Importantly, much of what is produced in this system is destined either directly or indirectly for global export. This is why it is important to understand that Uyghur unfree labour is a frontier of global capitalism.

Terror capitalism uses the rhetoric of 'terror' to justify state and private capital investment in data- and labour-intensive industries. Like sequences of racialised capitalism in other locations, the ethno-racialised threat of Uyghur and Kazakh bodies and societies allows their land and labour to be legally expropriated, or stolen, creating a new frontier in global capitalism. In my book *Terror Capitalism: Uyghur Dispossession and Masculinity in a Chinese City* (Duke University Press, 2021) I elaborate on the way colonial projects act as frontiers of capitalist expansion, arguing that colonialism and capitalism are co-constitutive.

In my current work, I examine how the systems that Uyghurs confront are linked to infrastructural power in locations around the world and how these systems open up the labour of unprotected populations to intensified forms of exploitation.
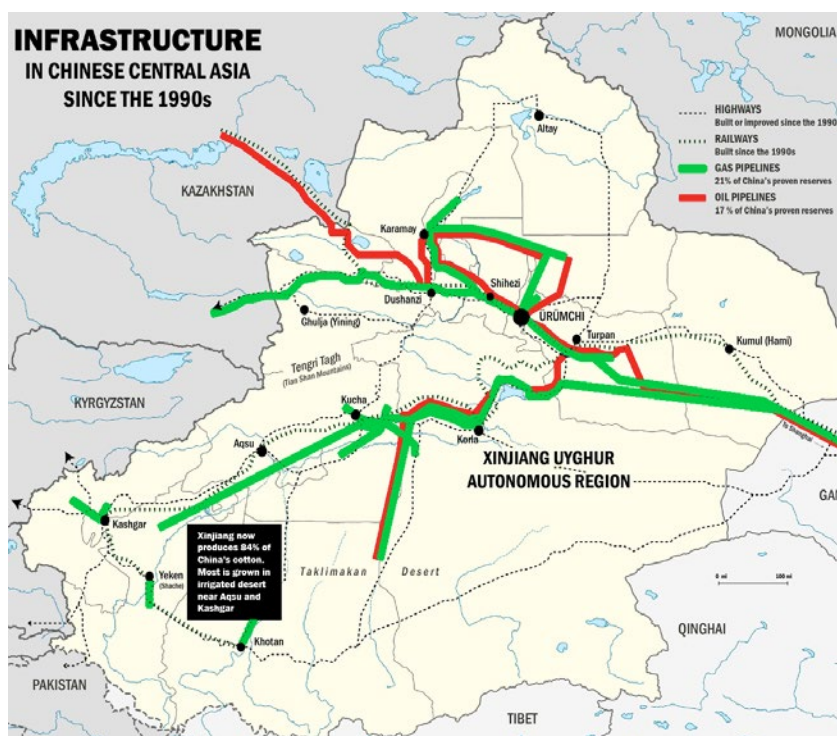
Map: Infrastructure in the Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang) since the 1990s.
Map by Darren Byler. Data source: National Geographic, Gro Intelligence

A history of structural antagonism

The Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang) is located in contemporary far Northwest China. It borders eight nations from India to Mongolia. The largest group of people native to this Alaska-sized region are the Uyghurs, a Turkic Muslim minority of around 12 million who share a mutually intelligible Turkic language with a population of 15,000 Uzbeks and, to a lesser degree, with the 1.5 million Kazakhs and 200,000 Kyrgyz who also call parts of the region their homelands. Like the Uzbeks, Uyghurs have practised small-scale irrigated farming for centuries in the desert oases of Central Asia.

At the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the population of Han-identified inhabitants of the region was around 6%, with Uyghurs comprising roughly 75%. Prior to 1949 it was unclear whether the region would become an East Turkestan republic within the Soviet Union or whether the imperial boundaries of the Qing dynasty would turn Uyghur and Kazakh lands into an internal colony of the People's Republic.

In 1949, Stalin and Chinese Communist Party leaders agreed that China should 'occupy' the region. Over a period of several years the Chinese state moved several million former soldiers to work as farmers on military colonies in the Kazakh lands in the northern part of the region. Today Uyghurs comprise less than 50% of the total population and Han more than 40%.

It was not until the 1990s, as China developed a market economy oriented to global capitalism, that the Uyghur majority areas of Southern Xinjiang – where Uyghurs represented more than 90% of the population – became the target of an internal settler colonial project. It was during this period that the oil and natural gas reserves of the region became the focus of profit-oriented state-owned or managed corporations. Since then, Xinjiang has become the source of around 20% of China's oil and natural gas. It had an even higher percentage of China's coal reserves and now produces around 20% of the world's cotton and tomatoes.

This economic system produced what the anthropologist Andrew Fischer calls 'disempowered development', referring to the ways development projects in Tibet disenfranchised Tibetans. The process of placing settlers in positions of power had the effect of capturing Uyghur economic and political institutions, such as the banking system and grassroots governance.

Over time it created a system of domination that pushed Uyghur teachers out of the education system and restricted religious practice. At the same time the cost of living began to rise, buoyed by the natural resources sector, but Uyghurs were largely excluded from working in the new economy by systemic job discrimination. Uyghur scholars working within the Chinese academy have shown that as corporate settlers began to take over local government they created highly exploitative systems of tenant farming and Uyghur forced migration. This in turn led to under-employment among Uyghurs.

These structural antagonisms rose to a head in 2009 with large-scale Uyghur street protests, police violence and rioting in Urumqi, the Uyghur region. The local authorities responded with militarised 'hard-strike' campaigns across the region. This led to the enforced disappearances of several thousand Uyghurs, and began to build deeper forms of resentment about police brutality and state control. At the same time, land seizures increased across Southern Xinjiang as the state incentivised Han settlement in Uyghur-majority areas – another major source of tension.

 These increased forms of control and legalised theft were the primary causes of increased Uyghur protest and violence directed at state actors. Many such incidents were described by state media as 'terrorism', but often the majority of the people killed or hurt in these incidents were Uyghur demonstrators. They typically were unarmed or had improvised weapons and were killed or injured by the police using automatic weapons.

Along with the rise in police violence and Uyghur protest the arrival in 2011 of smartphone-based internet services began to shape Uyghur religious practice in new ways. Many Uyghurs used WeChat to discuss their place in the Muslim world. Because state authorities did not then have the technological capacity to regulate Uyghur digital speech, this new media platform precipitated a flourishing in Uyghur religious instruction. Many became more pious in their practice as Muslims, which my research shows was both a form of symbolic protection from the increasing pressure of rising Han settlement in Uyghur-majority areas and also a form of escape from state control of movement, education, and economic success. Several of the Uyghurs I interviewed at that time said they became pious 'because it gave them hope'.

In late 2013 and early 2014 there was also a rise in violent attacks carried out by Uyghur civilians aimed at Han civilians. Several incidents in cities such as Beijing, Kunming and Urumchi stand out. These coordinated, planned attacks – using knives, vehicles and explosive devices – were quite unlike many other so-called terrorist attacks that Chinese state media ascribed to Uyghurs, which were often spontaneous protests that turned violent and targeted state representatives rather than civilians. In May 2014 regional leaders declared the 'People's War on Terror' in response to these attacks.

However, the People's War on Terror targeted far more than the criminals who carried out attacks and those who supported them. Rather, it precipitated a criminalisation of basic religious practice and Uyghur ethnic affiliation. Initially it was only religious leaders who were sent to camps, but by 2017 the state began to assess the entire Muslim adult population.

It was not simply about preventing terrorism. In response to the rise in pious practice among Uyghurs, and global forms of Islamophobia that spread with the rise of terrorism discourse and the establishment of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, state authorities began to describe normative Muslim practices such as regular mosque attendance and fasting during Ramadan as signs of the spread of the 'mental illness' of religious extremism. The People's War in effect became a programme of preventing Uyghurs from being Muslim and, to a certain extent, from being Uyghur.

The state agencies outsourced authority to private companies and police contractors to attempt to transform the native populations of the region, and building hundreds of massive internment camps. Private industrialists and Han settlers, who had benefited from the natural resource economy, were mobilised through a dramatic increase in Private–Public Partnerships (PPPs) to develop a surveillance industry at the cutting edge of contemporary technological systems.

In 2016 and 2017, the state invested an estimated $7.2 billion specifically in the Xinjiang information security industry as part of an increase of over 90% in public security spending.[71] Over the same years the state awarded an estimated $65 billion in private contracts to build infrastructure and $160 billion more to government entities in the region – an increase of nearly 50%. The majority of this increase in construction spending was centred on the building of detention facilities and related systems.[72]

Global Discourses of counter-terrorism

As the scholar David Brophy has shown, the system established in the region was grounded in the logics of counter-terrorism as practised by many state agencies across the world, from Israel to the United States. Chief among these influences was counter-insurgency theory or COIN. This dominant form of military and policing science is premised on three elements: full-spectrum intelligence of the entire population, fracturing the social network of those identified as insurgents, and 'winning the hearts and minds' of the remaining population.

Soon after the Petraeus Doctrine of COIN was introduced in Afghanistan and Iraq in the late 2000s, policing and military theorists in China began to think about how it could be applied in the country. They also began to consider how so-called preventive policing programmes in Europe and North America – often called Countering Violent Extremism or CVE – could be used among Chinese Muslim populations.

As scholars of critical terrorism studies such as Arun Kundnani have shown, these programmes centre on the fallacy that pious Islamic practice necessarily leads to violent action. They can also be used to institutionalise Islamophobia in social institutions.

As I show in a recent article, in police academies across China and in Xinjiang in particular, theorists and state authorities began to combine both of these models and apply them to Chinese counter-terror strategy. In China, counter-terrorism really only applies to Turkic Muslims and primarily the Uyghurs, so in essence this new body of theory and application was being used to target Uyghurs. The Xinjiang Public Security Bureau adopted these frameworks to normalise and systematise intelligence operations

and their assessments of the population. Even the use of camps mimics and expands on the way the US military reinvented the category of the detainee in Iraq and the 'pre-criminal' spaces created by CVE programmes.

What made the camp system in Xinjiang unique, however, was the way it emphasised 'thought reform' or transformation of detainees. Here they were building on a Maoist legacy of re-education camps. In the case of the US in Iraq, 'winning the hearts and minds' of the nation the US armed forces had just destroyed and occupied was less about installing an American settler colony and more about installing a US franchise government that would protect the interests of US capital. As such it was presented as a freely given 'gift' and was instituted by leaders drawn from the Iraqi population but with US military support. In contrast, in the context of Xinjiang there is both a punitive and 'transformational' aspect to the programme and it is imposed and managed by non-Muslim state authorities and their settler proxies.

In the policing literature, Chinese theorists refer to this aspect of the preventive policing programme as its 'Chinese characteristics'. So, while an older Maoist-era logic of mass revolution does play an organisational role, it is also important to remember that Xinjiang is an internal settler colony of China. Thought reform implemented by Han colonisers on colonised Muslims turns revolutionary struggle *and* the 'winning the hearts and minds' of COIN into a colonial project.

In this sense, then, the colonial relationship between China and Xinjiang and the imperial relationship of the US towards Iraq are moving on distinct colonial trajectories – in Iraq, a movement towards a franchise colony ruled by an installed government with a surveillance and checkpoint system that was abandoned before it reached its full capacity, while in Xinjiang a movement towards a settler colony with a settler government and more elaborated system of infrastructural power.

Despite these differences, in both contexts information-driven militarism and extra-legal detention in the guise of preventive policing play significant roles. And, as I will explain in the final section of this essay, the logics and technologies that emerged out of both projects are creating novel forms of state power and unfree labour around the world.

Holding People in Place: Infrastructure and State Power

The checkpoint I described at the beginning of this essay is the type of space that exemplifies how state power and corporate experimentation are mobilized through flexible enclosure systems. It is at digital checkpoints that the population is sorted. As I myself experienced, it is at these moments of encounter that the police yell 'hey you', interpellating people as subjects of state power. Often, though, the information infrastructures perform this work for the police, sorting people into what anthropologists of technology refer to as 'scripts of action' that function according to gendered and ethno-racial guidelines.[73] Most of the individuals who entered the checkpoint handed over their phones and IDs automatically, as they did on a regular basis. The infrastructural system shaped the movement of watch-listed people, detaining anyone who appeared suspicious. The phone checks served to ensured that nobody downloaded banned Islamic materials and instead actively supported government policies by posting them on their WeChat walls.

The panoptic effects of both visible and invisible architectures of control, whether walls and watchtowers or cameras and checkpoints, both held those they targeted in place and extended the power of those who designed and were protected by these technologies.

Taken together, *the infrastructural power* of this system, as Michael Mann might refer to it, begins to arbitrate the possibilities of life itself – slotting individuals into defined roles on the factory floor, dormitory, surrounding community and nation.[74] This efficiency is further accomplished by informing inhabitants of the proper rules of action and conduct within the space and thus establishing self-discipline.

The Re-education Labour Regime

What I have described so far is the way private technology companies expand their market share and harvest data in the service of state power and their own economic interests. But how do such systems of control work to extend capital accumulation in relation to labour?

Since 2017, factory owners from cities across Eastern China have arrived in Xinjiang to take advantage of newly built industrial parks associated with a re-education camp system and the cheap labour and subsidies that accompany them. By relocating part of their manufacturing base to the frontier, factory owners ensure that the political standing of their businesses will be protected by state authorities in their home provinces, while at the same time they can safely expand their production with the assistance of camps and security systems – something that is often described as a 'win-win' opportunity.

By late 2018 the Xinjiang Reform and Development commission issued a statement announcing that the camps or 'vocational skills education and training centres' *(jiaoyu peixun zhongxin)* had become a 'carrier' of economic stability in the Uyghur region.[75] The commission also mandated local authorities to 'establish a development mechanism linkage between the industrial management of rural collective economic organizations and *the industry of education and training centres'* – the euphemism used for re-education camps and associated factories (my emphasis).[76]

My interviews with former detainees indicate that this 'development mechanism' refers to the way camp administrators and factory owners coordinate detainee transfers with local authorities in the detainees' home communities. Sometimes, factory owners themselves select workers from the detainee populations, in other cases local authorities select the workers and arrange the terms of the labour contract for the group of assigned workers.

It is important to note that not all Uyghur and Kazakh labour directed towards these new factories had been camp detainees. A significant aspect of the People's War on Terror was a broader process of state-mandated proletarianisation of Uyghurs across the region. In order to meet centrally determined 'poverty alleviation' goals, which focused on placing Uyghurs and Kazakhs in Han-owned factory jobs and isolating the Muslim population through dispersal and family separation, local officials and their counterparts from Eastern China were tasked with creating jobs.

Migrant workers eat their lunch during a break from their construction job. Credit: © Andrea Bruce / NOOR / IG Handels: @andreabruce / Twitter Handels: @abruce_noor

The workers who were held behind the checkpoints of the factory complexes would be taught to speak Mandarin and embrace state political ideology while they learnt to work on an assembly line. Yet, though some of the new workers – called 'surplus laborers' – were simply farmers from nearby villages, many of them were the relatives of detainees. And all of them knew that overt refusal of these job assignments could result in their internment in the camps. According to state security guidelines, refusing 'poverty alleviation' *(fupin)* schemes was to be regarded as a sign of untrustworthiness, or pre-criminal religious extremism.[77]

The entire world of these workers took place inside the factory complex. Like migrant workers in other parts of China, they are housed in the same compound as the production site. The labour scholars Pun Ngai and Chris Smith have described this as a 'dormitory labour regime'.[78] Their work shows that this type of arrangement allows factory owners to exploit their workers to a greater extent, demanding overtime and weekend work, garnishing wages to compensate for housing costs and so on.

In her more recent work Pun shows that a system of subcontracting further insulates company owners from workers, making non-payment for work increasingly common.[79] The same is true in the re-education labour regime in Northwest China. Unlike migrant workers in other parts of China, however, Uyghur and Kazakh workers are prevented from leaving by the infrastructural power of surveillance systems, material barriers and the threat of internment. Rather than a system of subcontractors, factories in 'Xinjiang Aid' industrial parks are often managed by a combination of low-level police and civil affairs ministry personnel who also work in the camps – a management scheme that further blurs the line between private enterprise and the internment camps.

Throughout the region, local authorities had also established comprehensive 'safe county' surveillance infrastructure systems that used real ID checkpoints and camera systems to monitor the movements of registered citizens in the county.

The factory compounds typically feature 'convenient for the people police stations' (*bianmin jingwuzhan*) or surveillance hubs where movements of detained workers are checked and monitored. Inside the factories, camera systems and minders watch the workers – applying the logics of 'smart' factory and warehouse systems used around the world. In some cases, the factory floors are divided into cubicles locked from the outside, restricting the movement of workers who are deemed to be dangerous owing to the stigma of their previous detainment.

In the re-education labour regime, Uyghur and Kazakh workers can neither protest at having wages taken from them to pay factory owners for their housing, food and transport, nor even stage minor protests such as assembly line slowdowns without incurring the threat of detention. In addition, the surveillance infrastructure in the factories means that all aspects of their lives are monitored. Factory authorities decide if and when workers can go to the toilet, what food they eat, if they are permitted to carry or use phones, what language they speak, when and how long they work, when and how long they sleep, even what they do when they are not working.

The Uyghur region is the source of more than 80% of Chinese cotton, and is where the state hopes to relocate around 10% of garment-manufacturing jobs. This means that the drive for ever cheaper commodities – such as clothing – implicates consumers the world over at this frontier of global capitalism. In this sense, terror capitalism – the forms of economic productivity that are opened up by tying populations to the figure of the terrorist – produces a population of unfree workers at colonial frontier of labour exploitation.

Is Terror Capitalism Global?

While the system that is being implemented in Northwest China is unique in terms of its scale and the depth of its systemic cruelty, the Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims are not the only marginalised groups of people who are being partitioned by similar surveillance infrastructure and unfree labour systems.

In many countries, these new forms of power are consistently aimed at controlling minorities and refugee populations, many of whom are Muslims. In the West Bank, for instance, Palestinians are targeted by similar forms of Israeli infrastructural power through checkpoints, biometric surveillance and data harvesting. In my current research project in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur examines the way face-recognition enabled cameras designed by the Chinese firm Yitu shapes the lives undocumented

Muslim immigrants. The cameras which are worn by auxiliary police at the entrances of mosques and other high traffic areas, restrict movement of targeted populations—such as Rohingya and Uyghurs who have fled to Malaysia as refugees.

As the geographer Shae Frydenlund has shown in her work, fear of surveillance in turn pushes refugees into low wage contingent work butchering chickens and construction at the margins of the city.[80] Likewise across Europe and North America similar tools of information infrastructure managed by state agencies and surveillance companies have shaped the lives of hundreds of thousands of Muslims as part of CVE programmes. Since these systems first unfolded as part of the 'Global War on Terror' they have also begun to target other racialised minorities.

Over much of 2020 I have collaborated with the anthropologist Carolina Sanchez Boe to understand the parallels and differences between these systems, whether in Xinjiang or the West Bank or the US. She shows that in the US, asylum seekers from Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and South Asia who enter the country at the southern border, are being released from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centres with GPS monitors attached to their ankles, under an Intensive Supervision and Appearance Program (ISAP), which has been promoted as an 'alternative to detention'.[81] They, like terrorism suspects, are placed on differentiated watch-lists which prevent them from travelling. Increasingly, they are required to submit face scans using an app that they are made to install on their smartphones, which in many cases is supported by the private technology company Behavioral Interventions Incorporated with partnerships with Verizon, Sprint and Google Maps.[82]

In the US the surveillance infrastructures that arose from counter-terrorism systems after the attacks of 11 September 2001 – 9/11 – push unprotected refugee and immigrant populations into grey zones, at the margins of cities and into low-wage work. They produce forms of banishment and structural violence, so they are out of sight, but – unlike in Xinjiang – they generally do not colonise immigrants' own social institutions or begin to transform their knowledge system or religious practices in an intentional or overt manner.

In the US and Europe, systems of infrastructural power appear to centre less around transformation than to halt the circulation of individuals and ideas deemed harmful or racially threatening in prisons, detention centers and forms of electronic monitoring – simultaneously reducing potential friction for protected individuals and protecting the interests of capital.[83]

In Xinjiang, the goal of the surveillance system is to include the minoritised population in order to monitor them, rather than exclude them by pushing them out of public view. In both Xinjiang and elsewhere, the labour of populations controlled by surveillance infrastructure is devalued and becomes a source of heightened exploitation.

The Xinjiang case is unparalleled due to its scale of detentions and the role of the state in job assignments, but the re-education labour system in China and contingent undocumented work in the US are part of the same continuum of unfreedom. For asylum seekers in the US, the stigma associated with tracking devices is combined with the sense of threat they feel from not knowing about the way their movements are being tracked and how the data might be used.

A Guatemalan asylum seeker told Carolina Sanchez Boe that she feared that the digital *grillete* (the Spanish for shackle) was allowing ICE agents to look 'at where I meet with other people, to know where

undocumented migrants congregate'. Three weeks after she voiced this fear, ICE conducted one of the largest immigration raids in a decade at a poultry manufacturing plant in Mississippi, arresting 680 workers, leaving their children to come home from school to empty houses. The affidavit of the arrests reveals that federal agents relied on surveillance data from GPS monitors strapped on the ankles of Latin American women who had found work at the factory.

The simultaneous occurrence of racialised surveillance and exploitation in Mississippi and Xinjiang reminds me of an older moment in racialised global capitalism described in the historian Jason Moore's reframing of the words of Friedrich Engels: 'behind Manchester stands Mississippi'. The reference to Engels was that what made Manchester the heart of global textile manufacturing in the nineteenth century—itself a site of tremendous exploitation, was the unfree labour of slaves in Mississippi, working in the cotton plantations. As today's 'terror capitalism' is eating into the social fabric of unprotected populations around the globe, Mississippi is standing alongside a new site of global capitalist frontier-making. Perhaps, under conditions of 'terror capitalism', we might say that 'beside Xinjiang stands Mississippi'.

Darren Byler is a postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Asian Studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He is the author of the forthcoming book, *Terror Capitalism, Uyghur Dispossession and Masculinity in a Chinese City* (Duke University Press, December 2021). Twitter: @dtbyler

Notes

71   A state budget report indicates that this was an increase in security spending of over 90%. 'Guanyu 2017 nian zizhiqu yusuan zhi hang qingkuang he 2018 nian zizhiqu yusuan cao'an de baogao' [Report on the implementation of the autonomous region budget in 2017 and the draft budget of the autonomous region in 2018], Xinjiang Net, 3 February 2018. https://web.archive.org/web/20181014075113/http://www.xinjiangnet.com.cn/2018/0203/2044552.shtml. See also Zhang Dong (2017) 'Xinjiang's tens-of-billion-scale security market, the integration giant tells you how to get your share' [Ch: Shu bai yi de xinjiang anfang shichang, jicheng jutou gaosu ni ruhe caineng congzhong fen bei geng], Leiphone, 31 August. https://web.archive.org/web/20190406231923/https://www.leiphone.com/news/201708/LcdGuMZ5n7k6sepy.html.

72   'Banking body prepares list of PPP projects in Xinjiang', China Daily, 24 February 2017. https://archive.fo/qWSo4. See also Chin, J. and Lin, L. (2021) Surveillance State: Inside China's Quest to Launch a New Era of Social Control. New York: St. Martin's Press.

73   Bray, F. (2007) 'Gender and technology', Annual Review of Anthropology, 36: 37–53. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.36.081406.094328

74   Mann, M. (2008) 'Infrastructural power revisited', Studies in Comparative International Development, 43(3): 355–365. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12116-008-9027-7

75   Xinjiang Reform and Development Commission (2018) 'zizhiqu jingji jiegou wenzhong you huo fazhan liang hao 自治区经济结构稳中有活 发展良好' [The Economic Structure of the Autonomous Region Is Stable, Alive and Well Developed], Xinjiang Reform and Development Commission. web.archive.org/web/20190520143306/http://www.xjdrc.gov.cn/info/9923/23516.htm.

76   Yuan Weimin (2019) 'Dali jiaqiang nanjiang nongcun jiti jingji zuzhi jianshe大力加强南疆农村集体经济组织建设' [Vigorously strengthen the construction of rural collective economic organizations in southern Xinjiang]. Zizhiqu fazhan gaige wei jingji yanjiuyuan自治区发展改革委经济研究院 [Economic Research Institute of Autonomous Region Development and Reform Commission]. https://archive.fo/rb16r

77   Turkistan Press (2018) 'Çin'in Yeni Planlarinin Yazili Emri İfşa Oldu' [Written Order of China's New Plans Revealed]. http://turkistanpress.com/page/cin-39-in-yeni-planlarinin-yazili-emri-ifsa-oldu/247

78   Smith, C. and Pun, Ngai. (2006) 'The dormitory labour regime in China as a site for control and resistance', The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 17(8):1456–1470. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190600804762

79   Pun Ngai. (2016) Migrant labor in China. Malden, MA: Polity.

80   Shae Frydenlund (2020). 'Support from the South: How Refugee Labor Reproduces Cities,' (Doctoral Diss.), University of Colorado.

81   Carolina Sanchez Boe (2020). 'Fighting border control in three sites of confinement: The uses and experiences of prison, detention, and electronic monitoring for foreign-nationals in New York', in Champ Pénal: Contestation et subversion dans les institutions d'enfermement, edited by Joel Charbit, Martine Kaluszynski and Gwenola Ricordeau, https://journals.openedition.org/champpenal/12273

82   Carolina Sanchez Boe (2020). 'Institutions of Confinement as Sites of Passage,' The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology, 38(1): 70–87.

83   Carolina Sanchez Boe (2022). The Undeported: The Making of a Floating Population of Exiles in France and Europe, Rowman & Littlefield Press.