

## **"Thoroughly Reforming them Toward a Healthy Heart Attitude" - China's Political Re-Education Campaign in Xinjiang<sup>[\*]</sup>**

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*Note: this article is currently being peer-reviewed by an academic journal.*

In February this year, during an interview with the Almaty Tengri News, Zhang Wei, China's Consul General in Kazakhstan, denied that there was such a thing as re-education camps for Muslims in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). In reference to a CNN report, Zhang argued that "we do not have such an idea in China", stating that the press should instead rely on official Chinese media sources ([AKIpress](#), 7 February; [CNN](#), 3 February).

Since summer 2017, troubling reports about large-scale internments of Muslims (Uyghurs, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz) in Xinjiang have multiplied. In autumn 2017, the phenomenon prompted a detailed piece from [Human Rights Watch](#) (September 10, 2017) and an article on [RFA](#) (September 11, 2017) that claimed that Xinjiang had set up political re-education camps throughout the region. By the end of the year, reports emerged that some ethnic minority townships had detained up to 10 percent of the entire population, and that in the Uyghur-dominated Kashgar Prefecture alone, numbers of interned persons had reached 120,000 ([RFA](#), December 14, 2017; [The Guardian](#), January 25).

Throughout 2017, the treatment of Xinjiang's Muslim minority groups was subject to repeated international criticism and increasingly dramatic media coverage. The Global Times, the CCP's English mouthpiece, eventually began to counter Western media reports by running pieces extolling the benefits of China's surveillance system and of Xinjiang's massive police recruitments ([December 20, 2017](#); [December 25, 2017](#)). However, Chinese state media has so far completely ignored the debates surrounding re-education camps. Zhang Wei's denial is effectively the only existing official Chinese statement on the matter. This raises the question of what official evidence we have about the existence and operation of re-education facilities in Xinjiang.

Currently, there is anecdotal and eyewitness evidence on re-education from Western news outlets ([AP News](#), December 17, 2017; [Wall Street Journal](#), December 19, 2017). This article demonstrates that there is, in fact, a substantial body of PRC governmental sources that prove the existence of the camps. Furthermore, the PRC government's own sources broadly corroborate some estimates by rights groups of number of individuals interned in the camps. While estimates of internment numbers remain speculative, the available evidence suggests that a significant percentage of Xinjiang's Muslim minority population, likely at least several hundred thousand and possibly just over one million, are or have been interned in political re-education facilities. Official public tenders indicate the construction of such facilities on city, county, township and village levels. Overall, it is possible that the region's re-education system exceeds the size of China's entire former "education through labor" system that was officially abolished in 2013.

Firstly, this article briefly charts the history and present context of political re-education in China. Secondly, it looks at the evolution of re-education in Xinjiang in the context of "de-extremification" work. Then, it evaluates the massive and unprecedented re-education drive initiated by Xinjiang's current Party secretary Chen Quanguo from spring 2017. Lastly, the article presents detailed empirical data on re-education facilities, costs and security as well as other features. Information from 73 government procurement and construction bids valued at nearly 700 billion RMB, along with public recruitment notices and other documents, provide unprecedented insight into the evolution and extent of the region's re-education (or so-called "vocational training") campaign.

## Political Re-Education in China

The concept of re-education has a long history in Communist China. In the 1950s, the state established the so-called "reform through labor", "laodong gaizao" (劳动改造) or short "laogai". The laogai system is part of the formal prison system, and inmates are convicted through legal proceedings. In contrast, the "re-education through labor" system or short "laojiao" (劳动教养 or 劳教) was an administrative penalty and internment system (行政处罚) that came into existence in 1957. Anyone could be sentenced to lao jiao by public security agencies without trials or legal procedures. [1] Revived in the 1980s, lao jiao was commonly used as a socio-political re-education system for dissidents, petitioners or petty criminals. Even family members or employers could recommend persons for re-education ([Laogai Foundation](#), 2006, p.17). Because of its extrajudicial detention process and inhumane conditions, re-education through labor (laojiao) was met with growing unpopularity and was officially abolished in 2013 ([Human Rights Watch](#), 8 January 2013). Since then, many of its facilities have become re-education centers for coercive isolated detoxification treatments given to drug addicts (强制隔离戒毒) ([Sina News](#), July 16, 2013).

In the early 2000s, another term for re-education emerged. In order to convert Falun Gong followers away from their spiritual pursuits, the state initiated so-called "transformation through education" (jiaoyu zhuanhua, 教育转化) classes. [2] The Chinese term "zhuanhua", which effectively turns "education" (jiaoyu) into (political) re-education, literally means to "transform" or to "convert". It is also used to describe the chemical process of isomerization by which one molecule is transformed into another. A state media report from 2001 describes the initiation of Falun Gong related "re-education classes" (教育转化学习班) throughout the country, including Xinjiang's Urumqi, and usually in the context of forced labor camps (劳教所; [Renminwang](#), 11 September 2011).

Besides combating the Falun Gong, the state also employs "transformation through education" to re-educate Party members, targeting e.g. cadres with "non-conformist" (不合格) or "backward" (落后) mindsets (Li Derong, [Baidu Scholar](#), 2002; Yuan Zhihua and Yi Waiping, [Baidu Scholar](#), 2006). Then, in educational contexts, so-called "problem students" are subjected to "transformation through education", although this often takes place in regular school contexts and only sometimes in closed training contexts or dedicated institutions. Finally, "transformation through education" is a common concept in the context of China's coercive isolated detoxification.

## Forms of Political Re-Education in Contrast to Other Forms of Internment

Akin to re-education through labor (laojiao), political re-education in Xinjiang is a completely extrajudicial procedure and therefore does not replace criminal punishment or reform through labor (laogai). The region's re-education facility network therefore operates alongside the regular prison and detention system.

For example, an official report on Dunbar Village (Kashgar Prefecture) distinguishes between: a) convicts who have been sentenced (判刑, i.e. to prison), b) suspects who have been detained (收押, i.e. in detention centers, awaiting judgment), and c) those in political re-education (教育转化人员) ([XUAR Food and Drug Inspection Bureau](#) via meipian.cn, May 8, 2017). Similarly, sources with close acquaintances in Xinjiang told the author that detained suspects there may be first placed in detention centers (看守所) in order to evaluate whether they will be sent to political re-education or to prison.

Typically, the use of the term "transformation through education" (教育转化) in Xinjiang is therefore restricted to: a) political re-education of the general population (especially of Muslim minorities), b) political re-education of cadres whose views are considered to be insufficiently aligned with Party doctrine (especially the so-called "two-faced persons" 两面人), and c) persons detained for coerced detoxification. Occasionally, it is also applied to those in prison, usually in connection with the concept of "de-extremification" (and therefore presumably in regards to sentenced "religious extremists"). However, the more common term for the re-education of those who have been sentenced to prison terms is "jiaoyu gaizao" (教育改造), akin to "reform through labor" (laodong gaizao) (e.g. [Legal Daily](#), March 16, 2016; compare [Baidu Knowledge](#)).

In terms of the different facility names, reform through labor typically takes place in prisons (监狱) while the former re-education through labor system was located in re-education "facilities" or "camps" (劳教所). In contrast, Xinjiang's contemporary political re-education drive is conducted through a network of "re-education" (教育转化) "centers" (中心), "bases" (基地) and "schools" (学校) (compare Table 1). Local Uyghurs often refer to re-education internment as "study classes" (学习班), "attending/entering class" (上/进学习班), or "getting an education" (受到教育).

Despite various exceptions, these distinct uses and terminologies aided the author's task of identifying material related to the political re-education of Muslim populations in Xinjiang (in contrast to other forms of re-education).

## The Inception of "De-Extremification" through Re-Education in Xinjiang

It was not until 2014 that the "transformation through education" concept in Xinjiang came to be used in wider contexts than the Falun Gong, Party discipline or drug addict rehabilitation. Prior to that year, publically available references to "transformation through education" in Xinjiang in the context of combating religious extremism and stability maintenance are very rare. A district in Turpan City, a Uyghur majority region, reported in August 2013 that it was undertaking "transformation through education work" (教育转化工作) in order to deal with "four special types of people" (四种特殊人群), with the aim of ensuring a stable society ([Turpan City Party Net](#), August 6, 2013). Efforts focused on those wearing veils, young men who wear long beards, those wearing

Kirgiz clothes and other ethnic dress that the state deemed to be problematic. Transformation through education goals were individually determined and implemented in various forms, including cadre visits to homes, counseling and vocational training. At that point in time, re-education efforts concentrated on a limited number of "focus persons" (重点人). Re-education was implemented in a localized and individualized fashion, through personal visits and special study sessions. Dedicated political re-education facilities likely only existed within the prison system and were restricted to those serving prison sentences.

The increasingly widespread application of "transformation through education" to Uyghur or Muslim population groups arose in tandem with the "de-extremification" (去极端化) campaigns. The phrase "de-extremification" was first mentioned by Xinjiang's former Party secretary Zhang Chunxian at a January 2012 meeting in Khotan Prefecture, was more closely defined in a Party opinion paper in May 2013, and became legislation in April 2015 ([Phoenix Information](#), 12 October 2015). On April 1, 2017, the region then enacted a comprehensive "de-extremification ordinance" ([Xinjiang Government](#), March 29, 2017). Throughout this time, "transformation through education" work has been closely tied to "de-extremification".

For example, an August 2014 news report about "de-extremification" work in Qaghiliq (Yecheng) County, a Uyghur majority region in Xinjiang's southern Kashgar Prefecture, described a newly established centralized re-education initiative that subjected 259 "problem persons" to 10 days of "closed-style" training (封闭式培训) ([Xinjiang xingnongwang](#), 25 August 2014). Activities followed a detailed schedule and included discussions, writing personal reflections, and watching educational videos. This is one of the first reports that describes re-education taking place in a closed setting over a certain period of time (as opposed to shorter teaching sessions that might only last a day). Whether this took place in a dedicated re-education facility is unclear.

Similarly, in 2015, Chapchal County in Ili Prefecture, which has a 66 percent minority population (28 percent Uyghur), held a 15 day "centralized transformation through education training class using a fully closed-style management" (集中教育转化培训班采用全封闭管理) ([This Year's Graduating Class Net](#), October 29, 2015). This training targeted 42 persons categorized as "class A" group (i.e. the most problematic or hardened). The training included military drill, patriotic singing, criminal law, marriage law, patriotic videos, writing personal statements and reflections, acting out contents through drama performance, and other activities. According to the report, the whole class rose up, broke out in tears, with participants emotionally announcing that they must "repent" and "become new persons". Such graphic descriptions of emotional displays of personal repentance as the necessary and expected result of political re-education are highly reminiscent of the Maoist era. [3]

Meanwhile, the re-education system also began to evolve into a network of dedicated facilities. A November 2014 news report stated that Konashahar (Shufu) County located in Kashgar Prefecture established a three-tiered "transformation through education base" (教育转化基地) system as part of its "de-extremification" efforts ([Xinjiang Daily](#), November 18, 2014). So-called "problem persons" (问题人员) were subjected to "centralized transformation through education" (集中教育转化) ([news.163.com](#), November 21, 2014). This system of bases, some of which were called "legal system

training schools" (法制培训学校), was set up at county, township and village levels, with participants who failed to achieve "transformation" being successively passed on to the next higher tier base. A three-tiered re-education system on county, township and village levels is likewise mentioned in a 2017 government research paper, and has apparently found widespread adoption ([Harmonious Society Journal](#) via [www.doc88.com](#), p.76, June, 2017). Similarly, the government bid documents analyzed by the author and discussed below prove the existence or intended construction of such facilities at city, county, township and village levels.

By late 2014, Konashahar 's re-education system had held a total 203 sessions involving 3,515 persons, of which 88 percent were successfully "transformed through education". Detainees thoroughly studied the "harmful" ways of religious extremism and sang patriotic songs. "Out of their own initiative", they replaced their burkas with modern Uyghur ethnic dress and "returned to a secular lifestyle." According to informants and observers, re-education classes in 2017 and 2018 additionally placed an increasing and significant emphasis on Chinese language teaching, including reading newspapers and watching CCTV. In 2018, at least one person was said to have successfully avoided being sent to re-education by voluntarily taking a Chinese language exam, which proved that this person possessed significant Chinese language skills.

In 2015, there was also the first media report stating the actual capacity of a centralized re-education facility. Khotan City's dedicated "de-extremification education and training center" (去极端化教育培训中心) was reported to hold up to 3,000 detainees whose thinking was "deeply affected" by "religious extremism" ([Communist Party News](#), 17 October 2015). "Transformation through education" was achieved through ethnic unity education, psychological counseling, lectures in government policy and other activities. Khotan's facility began operation in March 2015 and uses "military-style management" (军事化管理) to implement a "strict course schedule" ([Khotan Cadre Network](#), 4 March 2015). As confirmation of the internment-like character of these facilities, a late 2015 government report of an official visit to Yuli (Lopnur) County's "de-extremification transformation through education center" (去极端化教育转化中心) shows a picture of a barbwire-clad walled compound ([Yuli County Government](#), 16 November 2015).

Meanwhile, re-education methods had also become increasingly sophisticated. Ghulja (Yining) County, a Uyghur majority region in the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, subjected 5,000 persons to re-education training each year between 2010 and 2014 ([China Daily](#), 14 January 2014). In order to improve transformational effectiveness, "focus subjects" (重点人) were grouped into four groups, labeled A to D, based on severity. Group A, the most recalcitrant "strike hard detainees" (严打在押人员), received 20 days training. Group B, the "stubborn of thinking" (思想顽固人员) group, got 15 days. Those with "unstable thinking" (思想不稳定) who were influenced by extremist thought were assigned to group C and subjected to 7 days training. Those who only received light influence or may already have been reformed were in group D (4 days training). According to a similar report in the "Observer" (Guanchazhe), the success rate of this system stood at 70 percent ([Guanchazhe](#), 16 October 2015).

The same four-group re-education system was also set up in Yuli County where one third of the population is Uyghur. According to the county's 2015 government work report, there had been 96 "transformation for education training classes" (教育转化培训

班) that year, with 91.6 percent of the 1,945 re-educated persons being successfully "transformed" ([Yuli County Government](#), 24 January 2016). [4]

The four-group (or "ABCD") system continued to be in use in subsequent years. In 2016, Ghulja County set up "transformation through education classes" (教育转化班) in its "social correction center" (社会矫治中心) ([Ili Daily](#), January 6, 2017). That year, it held 85 such classes involving 2,292 persons, achieving a "transformation rate" (转化率) of 85 percent.

### **Cleansing the Countryside: Presumed Religious Thought "Pollution" Ratios Among the Population**

In late 2015, Xinjiang's justice department's party committee secretary stated that in a typical (Muslim) village, 70 percent of the population are merely "change with the wider surroundings" and are hence "easily transformed" ([Phoenix Information](#), 12 October 2015). In contrast, the other 30 percent are "polluted by religious extremism". This latter group "requires concentrated education...work; ...when the 30 percent are transformed...the village is basically cleansed". In the same report, the secretary of Khotan County's politics and law committee argued that of those who received religious extremist influence, "about 5 percent belong to the hardened faction, 15 percent are supporters, and 80 percent are illiterates".

About 18 months later, the region unleashed an unprecedented re-education drive, with internment rates in Muslim-dominated regions bearing a striking semblance especially to the ratios stated by the Khotan secretary. These statements explain the logic by which XUAR regions with major Muslim population share are simply being assigned fixed internment quotas for re-education, regardless of whether those interned can in fact be convicted of any legal transgressions. Generally, the experiences gathered by official re-education and other social reengineering strategies especially between 2014 and 2016 provide an important backdrop for understanding how in 2017, the region brought this approach to its logical conclusion.

### **Chen Quanguo Puts Re-Education into Overdrive**

In August 2016, Chen Quanguo became Xinjiang's new Party Secretary. Previously, Chen had gained a reputation in Beijing of having pacified restive Tibet through a combination of intense securitization and penetrating social control mechanisms ([China Brief](#), September 21, 2017). In Xinjiang, Chen implemented the same policies, including massive police recruitments and hundreds of thousands of cadres deployed to monitor villages. But only about half a year after assuming power, Chen initiate a much more drastic measure than anything he ever did in Tibet.

Informant reports, both available to the author and derived from the Western media, place the onset of massive detentions among the Uyghur population at late March or early April 2017 ([RFA](#), January 22). This timing closely coincides with the publication of Xinjiang's "de-extremification regulations" (新疆维吾尔自治区去极端化条例) ([Xinjiang Government](#), March 29, 2017). Directive no. 14 in section 3 of this document states that:

"De-extremification must do transformation through education [教育转化] well, jointly implementing individual and centralized education, jointly implementing legal education and supporting activities, thought education, psychological counseling, jointly implementing behavioral correction and skills education, jointly implementing transformation through education and care for the person [lit. humanistic concern], strengthening the outcome of transformation through education."

A potentially influential document in this development was a research paper published in June 2017 by Xinjiang's Urumqi Party School ([Harmonious Society Journal](#) via [www.doc88.com](#), June, 2017). According to this paper, the "punishment of criminal offenders and transformation through education [教育转化] are the key elements of de-extremification work". In order to demonstrate the "success" of re-education, the research paper cites survey results among 588 re-educated persons in Ili, Aksu, Kashgar and Khotan prefectures. Whereas prior to re-education, 68 percent of respondents were unaware of their "mistakes", afterwards 99 percent were able to "distinguish illegal religion" or showed a willingness to report others who were transgressing legal regulations. The paper further argues that the present time represents a golden opportunity for intensive re-education measures, following the 3-year "strike hard" (严打) campaign and the "one-year stable residence" (一年稳住) campaign initiated by Chen Quanguo in October 2016 ([Aksu Daily](#), October 13, 2016). By building on this foundation, re-education could seize what would otherwise be a "missed opportunity", representing the next logical and necessary step in de-extremification work. Consequently, the paper recommends the creation of "centralized transformation through education training centers" (集中教育转化培训中心) in all prefectures and counties, with capacities for at least 300 persons each.

The research paper lists three types of re-education facilities: "centralized transformation through education training centers" (集中教育转化培训中心), "legal system schools" (法制学校), and "rehabilitation correction centers" (康复矫治中心). Locals often simply call them "study classes" (培训班). These different naming conventions are also reflected in official government procurement and construction bids related to these facilities, and all of them have at least some bids that specify strong security features such as walls, fences, barb wire, monitoring systems and guard rooms (Table 1). According to the paper, re-education facilities may be located at existing criminal detention centers (看守所 or 拘留所), in police training centers (警察培训中心), or they have been newly constructed. Government construction bids indicate that they are sometimes part of extensive new compounds that also host criminal detention centers, police stations, fire stations or even hospitals and supermarkets (Table 1). According to the paper, re-education time frames are 15 days, two months or three months, which is already considerably longer than the durations cited in the reports from previous years. However, since spring 2017 internment times have in actual fact typically lasted for several months, often over six or even over 12 months (compare [RFA](#), April 24).

In May 2017, the first official "education through transformation" related recruitment notices appeared, although it is clear that most such staff was recruited by unofficial means. The Urumqi Party School research paper had noted a lack of formal recruitment

of qualified staff as a key weakness of the region's re-education system. Karamay, a city in northern Xinjiang, advertised 110 re-education center staff for four different "centralized transformation through education classes" (集中教育转化班) as well as 248 police officers for police stations, checkpoints and "transformation through education bases" (教育转化基地) ([Zhonggong zhaojing](#), May 20, 2017; [Zhonggong wangxiao](#), May 20, 2017). Later, Lop and Keriya (Yutian) Counties in Khotan Prefecture advertised several "transformation through education center" (教育转化中心) teaching position, requiring knowledge in applied and criminal psychology, "heart health education", Marxism and other subjects ([Shiye Danwei Zhaopin](#), August 2, 2017). Additionally, authorities have been setting up modern remote classrooms or video conferencing facilities in some re-education centers, presumably due to their large numbers (Table 1). Remote classrooms enable teachers to teach from anywhere without having to travel, or to simultaneously teach classes in multiple locations, both of which would alleviate human resource shortages.

Re-education work has been performed by various Party groups and institutions, some of which have been touring regions in order to hold particular activities in re-education and other facilities. In July 2017, the mid-year report of Bayingholin Prefecture's women's federation stated that the federation held "thanking, listening to and following the Party" propaganda sessions in several locations, including "transformation through education bases" (教育转化基地) ([Bayingholin Prefecture](#), July 14, 2017).

In August 2017, Meng Jianzhu, then Secretary of China's Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, visited Xinjiang's prisons and detention centers ([Supreme Court](#), August 28, 2017). He emphasized that:

[Through] religious guidance, legal education, skills training, psychological interventions and multiple other methods, the effectiveness of transformation through education [教育转化] must be increased, thoroughly reforming them toward a healthy heart attitude..."

On May 2, 2018, Zhang Jun, Procurator-General of the Supreme People's Procuratorate, remarked at the national procuratorate study conference in regards to Xinjiang that the region must:

"...extensively carry out de-extremification transformation through education [去极端化教育转化], ....making every effort to maintain national security..." ([Supreme People's Procuratorate](#), May 2).

## **The Costs and Features of Re-Education Facilities**

The start of Chen Quanguo's re-education initiative correlates not only with public recruitment notices but also with related government procurement and construction bids (采购项目 and 建设项目). Local and regional governments increasingly advertise construction projects or equipment procurements through public or private bidding announcement websites. This research uses a conservative approach by largely restricting the analyzed bid data set to procurements that specifically mention "transformation through education" or "legal system training" (法制培训). It includes a



limited number of vocational training center and correction center bids in instances where these facilities appear to serve as loci of re-education and/or internment.

Only one re-education related bid was advertised prior to Chen Quanguo's ascent to power in Xinjiang in August 2016. Nearly all bids were announced from March 2017, just prior to the re-education drive (Figure 2, based on Table 1). Likewise, the values attached to these bids were by far highest in the months immediately after the start of the re-education campaign (Figure 3). Even though only a fraction of re-education facility construction is reflected in these bids, and several bids did not specify a cost estimate, this data indicates a pattern consistent with re-education policy and implementation.

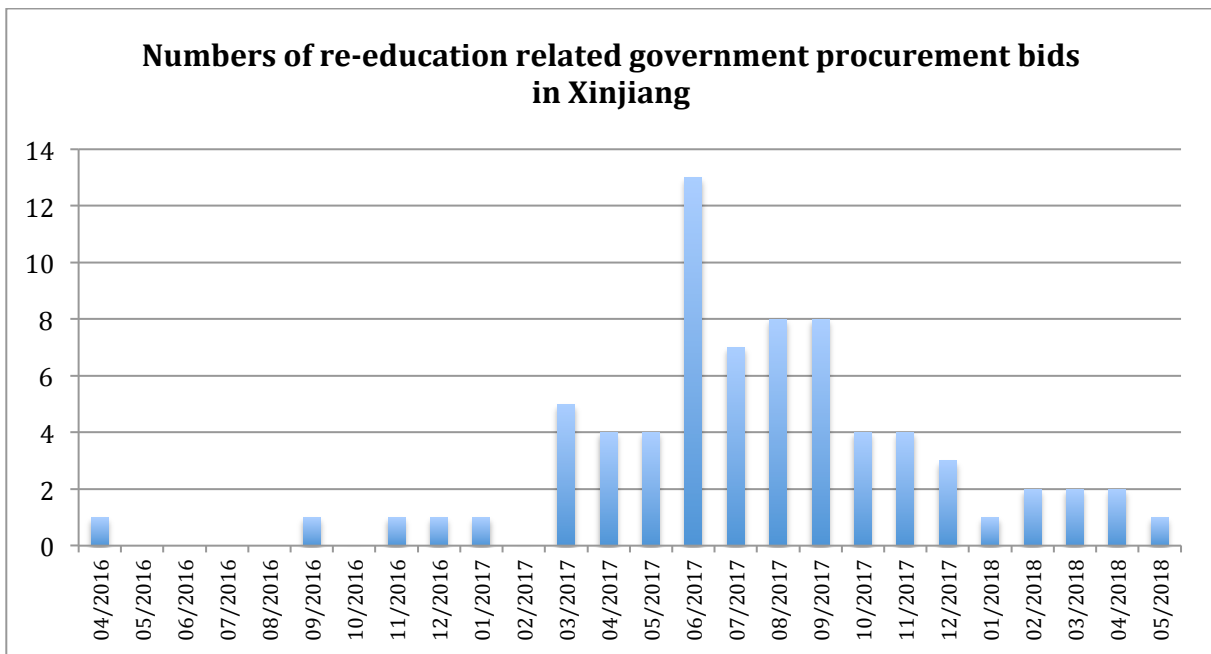
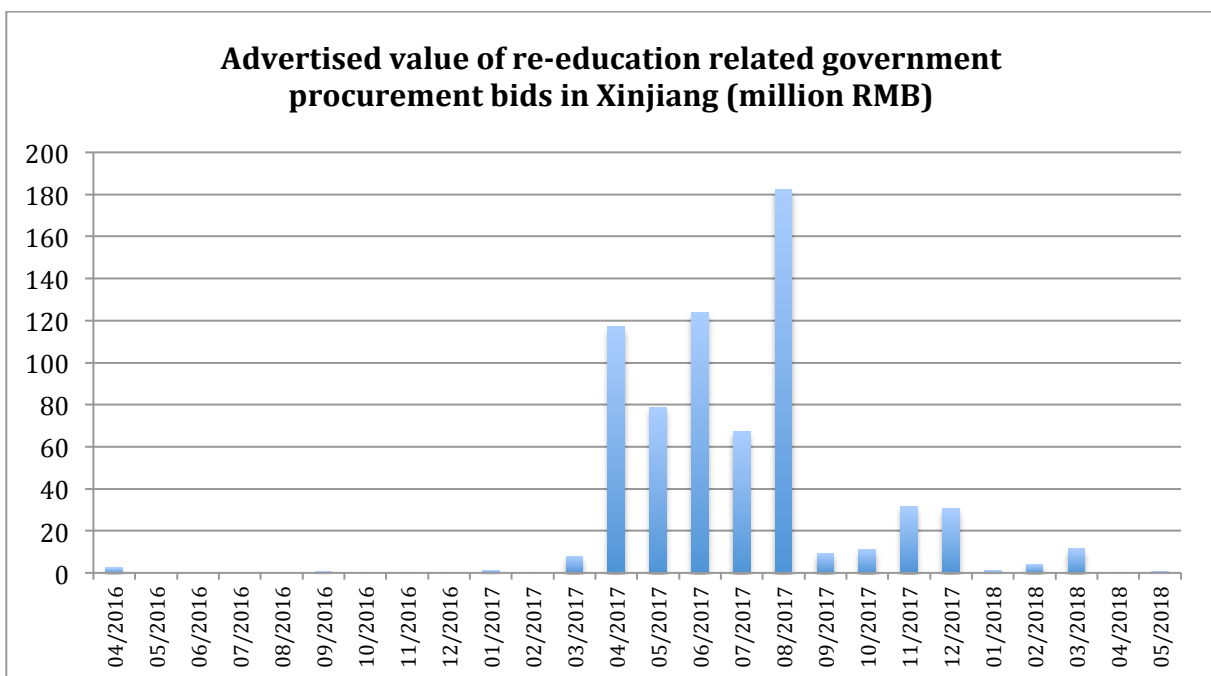


Figure 2. Source: Government procurement bids (Table 1).



*Figure 3. Source: Government procurement bids (Table 1). Values for some projects were not available. For others, advertised values pertained to the construction of several different facilities. In the latter cases, values for re-education facilities were estimated.*

Bid descriptions (all shown in Table 1) indicate both the construction of new as well as upgrades and enlargements of existing re-education facilities. Some pertain to adding sanitary facilities, warm water supplies and heating or catering facilities, indicating that existing buildings are being used to house more people for longer periods of time. Several of the listed facilities are very large, with total compound sizes in excess of 10,000sqm. One bid combines vocational training and re-education facilities for a total size of 82,000sqm. Another calls for a hospital and a supermarket on same compound. A former detainee estimated that his re-education facility held nearly 6,000 detainees ([RFERL](#), April 26). At an occupancy density of up 1.5-2 detainees per sqm of dorm floor space, this would require a 3,000-4,000sqm dormitory, which is certainly realistic for the larger facilities ([@shawnzhang via Twitter](#), March 27). Several bids from Table 1 also indicate smaller facilities with possible dormitories sizes of several hundred sqm, which would still be more than sufficient for the minimum capacity figure of 300 specified in the Urumqi Party School research paper.

Many bids mandate the installation of comprehensive security features that turn existing facilities into prison-like compounds: surrounding walls, security fences, pull wire mesh, barbed wire, reinforced security doors and windows, surveillance systems, secure access systems, watchtowers, guard rooms, police stations or facilities for armed police forces (武警). One bid specifically emphasized that re-education facility security features must comply with the same security standards as those required for criminal detention centers (看守所) ([Qianlima](#), March 17, 2017). Another bid noted that the surveillance system must comprehensively cover the entire facility, leaving "no dead angles" (无死角). Yet another related to an "integrated information gathering platform" (一体化信息采集工作台) for the Sawan (Shawan) County (Tacheng Prefecture) Public Security Bureau, whose features included the ability to monitor all information gathering activities in regards to persons in re-education. Evidently, these features are not merely designed to keep unauthorized persons out of these compounds, as could be expected in a highly securitized environment. Rather, they are explicitly designed to keep re-education "students" securely detained, preventing escapes and ensuring a high degree of control over all ongoing activities and movements.

According to informants, Xinjiang's re-education system is notorious for its clandestine nature. Family members and relatives of detainees often do not know where their loved ones are being detained. Informants have told the author that authorities had them install a dedicated smartphone app. This enables remote communication without disclosing the location of the re-education facility. One procurement bid confirms this fact. In September 2017, China Telecom published a bid for Khotan City (Khotan Prefecture) that stipulated the procurement of 900 smartphones for a maximum of 840 RMB each, specifically designed for those in re-education centers (教育转化中心) to communicate with their relatives and friends. Presumably, interned persons may on occasion be permitted to use these dedicated devices, while the outsiders that they communicate would install the dedicated app. However, in many instances no communication with detainees is possible.

Overall, Table 1 lists 73 re-education facility related procurement and construction bids valued at 682 million RMB in respect to their re-education components (some bids did not show cost estimates). These documents prove facility construction at city, county township and village levels. Nearly all of these were for regions with significant Uyghur or other Muslim minority populations.

Due to the scale of re-education facility construction, local budget reports sometimes contain related information. Akto County's budget report shows that in 2017 it spent 383.4 million RMB or 9.6 percent of its entire annual budget on various security-related projects, including "transformation through education centers infrastructure construction and equipment purchase" (教育转化中心等基础设施建设和装备购置) ([Akto Government](#), February 2). Similarly, Charchan (Qiemo) County's reported budget activities list 105.1 million RMB spending on security-related investments, including the construction of three re-education centers (教育转化中心) ([Qiemo County](#), December 28, 2017). Yakan (Shache) County's 2017 budget report showed a 1.5 million RMB spending item on "legal system transformation through education" (司法教育转化), which likely pertains to operating expenses rather than facility construction. Similarly, Qaghiliq (Ruoqiang) County adjusted its 2017 budget to provide an additional 6 million RMB spending on re-education, likely also pertaining to running costs or smaller upgrades ([Shache County](#), March 8, 2017; [Ruoqiang County](#), January 29). All of these counties are located in regions with significant or majority Uyghur (or other Muslim) populations.

### **The Relationship Between Re-Education and Vocational or Other Types of "Training"**

Further evidence of the unprecedented scale of Chen Quanguo's re-education initiative comes from the link between re-education and vocational or other types of "training". For example, Xinjiang's 2017 mid-term budget report states that nearly 10 billion RMB were spent on various stability maintenance related items, including "centralized, closed-style education and training" (集中封闭教育培训工作). Overall, 1,47 million rural surplus laborers and 444,000 "persons of various types" (各类人员) received vocational training. Similarly, Ili Prefecture's human resource and social security department mandated a comprehensive vocational training scheme for rural surplus laborers ([Xinjiang Department of Human Resources](#), April 18, 2017). Training topics were to include military drill, Chinese language, legal knowledge, ethnic unity, religious knowledge and patriotic education. Each facility was to train "at least" 300 persons per year.

Several Uyghurs and others with direct links to Xinjiang told the author that re-education facilities are often disguised as vocational training centers, and this has also been witnessed by reporters and in interviews with former detainees (e.g. [BuzzfeedNews](#), October 18, 2017; [Le Monde](#), January 19, 2018). This can be corroborated by information gleaned from government procurement and construction bids (all in Table 1).

For example, in September 2017, Karamay City in northern Xinjiang commissioned a construction bid for a new "vocational skills education and training center" (职业技能教育培训中心). According to the bid, this facility is designed to meet the city's critical

security need of subjecting "key persons" (重点人员) to re-education (教育转化). In December 2017, Baghrash (Bohu) County in Bayingholin Prefecture issued a bid for various "stability maintenance" facilities, including a vocational training center (职业技能培训中心) specified to function as a "transformation through education base" (教育转化基地). The entire project, with a cost estimate of nearly 320 million RMB, was to include a police station, detention centers and a special police unit base.

Qaraqash County (Khotan Prefecture) commissioned a large "educational training center" (教育培训中心) that was to include multiple buildings, including a transformation for education center (教育转化中心) and a massive 2,074sqm armed police forces facility. Chapchal County in Ili Prefecture commissioned a vocational education and training center (职业教育技能培训中心) featuring a surrounding fence, a guardroom and various other security installations. Similarly, a district in Urumqi published a construction bid for a massive 36,000sqm vocational training compound that was to include a surrounding wall, fences, a 500sqm police station, a surveillance and monitoring system, and "equipment for visiting family members". The latter is typically found in prisons. Whereas in the past this meant that inmates could speak to relatives while remaining behind bars, the modern version is typically a video-based intercom system. A vocational training center bid for Yengisar County (Kashgar Prefecture), valued at 28 million RMB, was likewise to include a surrounding wall, a surveillance and monitoring system, equipment for visiting family members, and a police station.

Toqsun County in the Uyghur majority prefecture of Turpan commissioned a 4.2 million RMB monitoring and surveillance system for its vocational training center (职业技能教育培训中心). Notably, the same procurement document also called for a 3.3 million RMB video surveillance system for the county public security bureau and budgeted nearly one million RMB for the center's internal data network, making one wonder whether police and training center surveillance systems are connected. By comparison, Korla City's regular prison published a bid for a 1.8 million RMB surveillance system ([Xinjiang Development and Reform Committee](#), October 27, 2017). Even if this prison is smaller than Toqsun's training facility, the budgeted costs and scopes of the latter's security systems provides some indication that they are not just about catching potential intruders, but also (or primarily) about providing comprehensive surveillance of those interned. In April this year, Toqsun county's training center management office then commissioned a video matrix switch unit (视频矩阵) that permits managing large numbers of surveillance video streams.

Generally, the security features found in all these training center related bids confirm informant reports that they frequently function as well-secured internment camps. In some instances, vocational or other training facilities appear to have been "hardened" for stronger internment capabilities in retrospect, such as a May 2018 bid issued to add a police station to Changji City's vocational training center. Similarly, in October 2017 Nilqa County in Ili Prefecture had sought to procure a security fence and a monitoring and surveillance system for its existing "centralized closed education and training center" (集中封闭教育培训中心). In reality, there is likely a continuum of facilities, with some vocational training centers having a primary focus on vocational training and a secondary focus on political re-education, while others operate with a reverse focus and

likely in a more internment-like fashion. Much evidence would seem to point us towards the latter.

Besides bids, public recruitment notices provide another key data source regarding the internment-like character of many "training"-related facilities. From about May 2017 onwards, multiple counties with large minority populations initiated a wave of recruitments for so-called "education and training centers" (教育培训中心). Notably, this timing concurs with the first "transformation for education" recruitment notices cited above, as well as the onset of Chen Quanguo's re-education initiative. Often, job descriptions and requirements of these "training center" adverts fail to indicate any relationship with vocational skills training. Rather, numerous counties recruited "education and training center" staff in the same advert as other police positions. This likely correlates with the Urumqi Party School research paper statement that re-education also takes place in police training centers. Also, in many instances these recruitment notices did not call for relevant degrees, related knowledge or prior teaching expertise

For example, Kuqa County in Aksu Prefecture, where nearly the entire population is Uyghur, advertised 60 "education and training center" staff positions in the same intake as its convenience police station advert ([Zhonggong jiaoyu](#), May 31, 2017). The advert preferred recruits with a background in the military or police, and prospective teachers did not need to possess specific degrees or documented skills. In November 2017 and March 2018, Qitai County in Changji Prefecture, with a Muslim population of 26 percent, advertised a total of 260 "training center policing assistants" ([Qitai County](#), November 20, 2017 and [February 28](#)). In December 2017, it published a procurement bid for 260 special police unit (特警) outfits for its "public security bureau vocational skills training center security staff" (公安局职业技能教育培训中心安保人员), spending 431,860 RMB or 1,661 RMB per person (Table 1). If this were just a regular vocational skills training facility, the recruitment of such high numbers of dedicated security personnel with expensive special police outfits would be difficult to explain. After all, such facilities have not been targets of violent attacks, and would hardly require such a strong security presence (and related equipment) to protect them from outsiders.

Qaghiliq County issued one of the few recruitment notices that actually pertained to a "vocational skills training center" (职业技能培训中心). However, the 200 prospective teaching staff only needed a middle school degree and demonstrated Chinese language skills ([Yecheng County](#), October 10, 2017). Similarly, Maralbeshi (Bachu) County in Kashgar, where Uyghurs make up 95 percent of the population, also advertised 320 "training center" positions where all recruits must be Han and the minimum educational requirement was a middle school degree. Rather than stipulating even a trace of either academic or practical skills, applicant requirements centered squarely on political loyalty ([Bachu County](#), February 26). In no other part of China would vocational teaching staff get hired based on such low educational requirements and narrow skills sets. In fact, Aksu Prefecture's regular public service intake advertised much smaller numbers of teaching positions for an actual "vocational skills school" (职业技术学校) that required bachelor degrees in relevant subjects (e.g. software engineering or videography) ([Aksu Government](#), July 28, 2017). Shayar (Shaya) County in Aksu also mandated some of its future teachers to have specific degrees. In this instance, however, degrees had to be in law or Chinese language, both "skills" that are more akin to political re-education, although some of Xinjiang's vocational training facilities only teach

Chinese language skills ([Civil Service Exam News](#), June 3, 2017; [Xinjiang Department of Human Resources](#), October 17, 2017).

Overall, the exact use and operation of each vocational or other training facility would have to be examined on an individual basis, requiring access and extensive fieldwork. However, the available evidence is sufficient to establish clear links between the region's large-scale vocational training initiative, the re-education drive, and the widely observed phenomenon that large numbers of the adult Muslim population are being disappeared to receive "training" in various clandestine forms of internment.

### **Influencing Popular Perceptions of Re-Education**

In February 2018, Zhang Chunlin, Xinjiang Party Standing Committee member and head of the Development and Reform Committee, visited Yakan County in Kashgar Prefecture ([XUAR Development and Reform Committee](#), February 26). During this visit, university student Abdullah A. was asked about his feelings regarding his family members who had been detained for "transformation through education" (教育转化). Abdullah is cited as saying:

This is a measure taken by the party and the government to cure illness and save people. It is to save my family from being punished under the law. I fully understand and hope that they will be corrected as soon as possible and be persons who will benefit society.

These types of reports are presumably intended to make the population more understanding of extensive re-education measures. Related efforts apparently started immediately after the massive re-education campaign began. In April 2017, Khotan Prefecture published a bilingual Chinese-Uyghur document titled "[Attending] transformation through education classes is like a free hospital treatment for the masses with sick thinking" ([Phoenix Fashion](#), April 10, 2017). [5] A related image shows "thought education" as the key for unlocking the heads of closed-minded people (Figure 1). The document begins by stating that:

In the recent period...a small number of...especially young people have been sent to transformation through education classes [教育转化班] to receive study; many parents, relatives and the general population do not understand transformation through education classes and may have some misgivings.

It then promises to dispel these misgivings by extolling the benefits of "transformation through education" as a free "treatment", effectively comparing religious ideology with a severe drug addiction. According to this logic, replacing religious beliefs with correct state ideology is akin to a detoxification process. Both the re-education of Muslims and coercive isolated detoxification are cast as "medical treatments" that are freely provided by a generous and benevolent state.

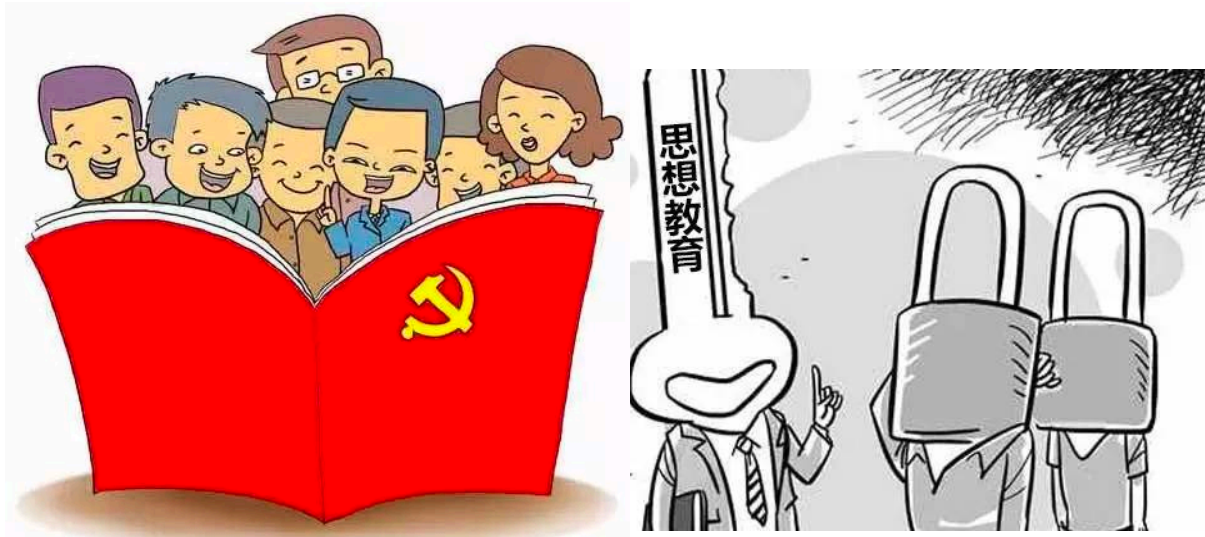


Figure 1: Propaganda images from the Khotan Prefecture government document on the benefits of re-education. Source: [Phoenix Fashion](#), April 10, 2017.

Consequently, Muslim populations are to be systematically subjected to re-education "treatment" in order to expel poisonous ideologies that have "intoxicated" them through their "addictive" effects. Since it is a cure, re-education cannot have harmful effects. In contrast to criminal punishment, detainees are therefore not subjected to legal procedures that evaluate legal trespasses. Rather, this "antidote" is applied indiscriminately and at the slightest hint of suspicion. This medical analogy also explains why the state feels no need to implement proper legal procedures for re-education, and simply requires counties with large Muslim populations to implement arbitrarily high internment quotas ([RFA](#), March 19). According to informant and media reports, detainees include ill persons, 80-year-old seniors and even breastfeeding mothers ([RFA](#), November 13, 2017). One (Han) Chinese official explained this approach in blunt words:

...you can't uproot all the weeds hidden among the crops in the field one by one—you need to spray chemicals to kill them all ... re-educating these people is like spraying chemicals on the crops. That is why it is a general re-education, not limited to a few people.  
([RFA](#), January 5)

### Estimating Re-Education Detainee Numbers

Unfortunately, there is no official information on numbers of re-education detainees. Besides the fact that many such facilities have been constructed across regions with minority educations, some insight might be gleaned from a Kuqa County report from early 2018. In this county with a 89 percent Uyghur population share, 14 video projection units showed patriotic and de-extremification videos in 515 re-education and other facilities on township and village levels to a total of 100,000 viewers ([XUAR media administration](#), March 2). For comparison, Kuqa's Uyghur population aged 20-79 numbered about 315,000 in 2015.

A Uyghur exile media organization based in Istanbul published a table of re-education detainee figures of 69 counties in Xinjiang, reportedly leaked from a reliable source

within the region's public security agencies ([Newsweek Japan](#), March 13). According to this source, the 27 counties in Khotan, Kashgar and Aksu prefectures, with a combined Uyghur, Kazakh and Kyrgyz population share of 90.2 percent, had 693,273 detainees in mid-February 2018. This would represent 12.3 percent of their Muslim population aged 20-79 (of 4.45 million). [6] For Kuqa County, the report gives a detainee figure of 15,614, which would equate to an internment rate of 5.0 percent.

A RFA report cites the head of security at a township in Kashgar City as estimating the total number of detainees in Kashgar City at about 32,000, which would constitute 10.4 percent of its Uyghur and Kazakh population aged 20-79. Similarly, another report cites local officials in Ghulja County as saying that their officially mandated adult internment rate was 10 percent ([RFA](#), March 19). According to informant reports, in autumn 2017 Urumqi City had numerous re-education facilities holding perhaps over 20,000 persons. Assuming that the current figure might be somewhere between 25,000 and 30,000, that would represent about 7 percent of its Uyghur and Kazakh population (aged 20-79).

The leaked document placed the total number of detainees in 68 Xinjiang counties at about 892,000. This excludes all regional and prefecture-level cities as well as the administrative units of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC). When assuming a Muslim adult internment rate of 10 percent for cities with a majority Muslim population share and of 5 percent for cities where this population share is below 50 percent, Xinjiang's total re-education internment figure might be just over one million (approx. 1,060,000). This would result in an overall internment rate of Uyghur and Kazakhs (aged 20-79) of up to 11.5 percent (12.3 percent for Aksu, Khotan and Kashgar, and 10.2 for the other regions). The accuracy of this estimate is of course entirely predicated upon the validity of the stated sources. Numerous anecdotal accounts from rural Uyghur majority regions indicate that adult internment shares frequently range between 10 and 20 percent, which is also consistent with the "problem population" ratios stated by the Khotan Prefecture official (cited above). While there is no certainty, it is reasonable to speculate that the total number of detainees might range anywhere between several hundred thousand and just over one million.

According to government sources, China's former re-education through labor system operated about 350 facilities with 160,000 detainees in 2008, although Western estimates have put the figure at several hundred thousand ([ChinaLawInfo](#), 2012). By comparison, Xinjiang has 119 city-level, prefectural and county-level administrative units, along with 1,079 township-level administrative units and over 11,000 village-level administrative units. Even if the three-tier re-education facility system was only implemented at county and township levels, excluding villages, the region's re-education network would count around 1,200 facilities. In this case, each facility would on average host 250 to 880 detainees (depending on total internment estimates). This is broadly in line with the Urumqi Party School research paper's suggestions, government bid data and informant reports (which also indicate that many if not most facilities are severely overcrowded). It is therefore possible that Xinjiang's present re-education system exceeds the size and capacity of the entire former Chinese re-education through labor system.



## The Socio-Economic Impact of the Re-Education Campaign

Xinjiang's large-scale internment of Muslim adults is having significant social and economic impacts. As part of its economic aid to Xinjiang, in 2017 Jiangsu's Kunshan city gave 3,000 RMB to each government employee in Xinjiang's Atush City, a Uyghur majority region ([Jiangsu Assist Xinjiang Web](#), January 1). The funds were designated to have them purchase homegrown fruit from nearly 1,000 families who had come out of re-education, presumably to help them re-integrate into social and economic life.

The social ramifications of re-education are pervasive and destructive. On a private legal counseling website where users can post law-related questions, one netizen asked whether one can divorce a spouse that is stuck in re-education ([Hualv.com](#), April 16). The person pointed out that her husband has been detained for over one year now, evidently citing their long time period of separation as the grounds for divorce. The post was dated April 16, just over a year after the massive re-education campaign started, therefore providing additional evidence of the inception of this campaign. In another instance, a Uyghur child posted on a similar legal advice website that his or her mother was detained after following the Uyghur habit of washing the body of a deceased person ([9ask.com](#), March 12). The child, not realizing that re-education is an extrajudicial act that does not involve court proceedings, asked whether the mother is likely to be sentenced, and if so, how long the sentence would likely be. This post was subsequently replaced with a removal notice. [7]

The extrajudicial nature of re-education also means that being sent to re-education is becoming an increasingly effective and widespread threat in a growing range of contexts. An informant relayed reports from acquaintances in northern Xinjiang that minorities who complain to their work superiors about working conditions are threatened to be sent to re-education centers. Similarly, an assistant policemen from Kizilsu, a Kyrgyz minority region, asked on a legal advice website what to do about the fact that he wants to resign, but his superior is threatening him with being sent to a re-education camp should he do so ([china.findlaw.cn](#), February 3, 2018). These incidents exemplify how the extrajudicial nature of re-education can turn the system into a major source of abuse. The fact such threats typically target minorities rather than Han is rendering the situation even more problematic.

According to several reports, re-education centers are extremely crowded, and local orphanages are overflowing with the children of detainees ([RFA](#), October 18, 2017). A reliable source told the author that late last year, re-education facilities were so severely overcrowded that locals were at times first being kept in detention centers for months in order to evaluate whether they undergo re-education.

This A close friend of an informant was detained in the second half of last year and placed in an extremely overcrowded detention center for three months. During this time, evaluations were conducted to determine whether this person would be subjected to re-education. By pulling various strings, s/he was able to secure his/her release after passing a screening process.

## Conclusions

The comprehensive evidence presented in this article shows how Xinjiang gradually adapted the transformation through education concept in the context of de-extremification, and then turned it into a massive campaign that is indiscriminately subjecting large swaths of the Muslim (and apparently Christian) population to extensive extrajudicial and humiliating brainwashing procedures ([WorldWatch Monitor](#), February 2). While detainees are supposedly taught to distinguish illegal religious activities from "normal" cultural customs, some reports and informants note that they are in fact forced to recant any religious beliefs (e.g. [RFERL](#), April 26). According to various reports, several detainees have died and others have suffered mental breakdowns as a result of the apparently inhumane conditions in these centers (e.g. [RFA](#), April 12; [China Aid](#), April 5).

China's pacification drive in Xinjiang is, more than likely, the country's most intense campaign of coercive social reengineering since the end of the Cultural Revolution. The state's proclaimed "war on terror" in the region is increasingly turning into a war on religion, ethnic languages and other expressions of ethnic identity. Even more than before, the boundaries between state security, stability maintenance and ethnic assimilation are becoming blurred.

Despite the negative press, the strain on the local economy, and the potentially disastrous long-term consequences for ethnic relations, Beijing's support for Chen Quanguo's extreme de-extremification measures is not likely to wane. Xi Jinping himself is a strong advocate of socio-religious reforms. While he has publically championed "native" Han belief systems such as Buddhism, Confucianism or Taoism are, "foreign" religions such as Islam or Christianity are kept on ever tighter leashes, and are told to sinicize in accordance with "socialist core values" ([New York Times](#), March 24, 2017; [Diplomat](#), [October](#) 24, 2017). Last year, Chinese authorities banned Party members from attending Christmas events, branding the holiday as "Western spiritual opium" ([Hong Kong Free press](#), December 23, 2017). In order to prevent these religions from spreading to the next generation, many religious teaching activities for children have been banned ([Reuters](#), December 24, 2017; [Independent](#), January 17). Besides preempting any form of political opposition to the state, Xinjiang's re-education drive is effectively part of a nationwide, albeit more subtle campaign of ideological control.

With Xinjiang representing the "core hub" of the Belt and Road Initiative, it appears that Beijing is hell-bent to pursue a definitive solution to the Uyghur question. While the region's massive securitization drive reduced the number of officially reported terror incidents in 2017 to zero, mere behavioral compliance is not sufficient ([China Brief](#), September 21, 2017). From Romania to North Korea, Communist regimes have long considered political re-education as a core instrument for achieving lasting social control. In this sense, Xinjiang's re-education network is at the very heart of China's battle for the hearts and minds of the next generation. Its frequently highlighted "successes" may lead the state to adopt similar measures elsewhere. One potential way of doing so would be to prescribe re-education treatment for individuals with low scores in the upcoming nationwide social credit system. Just as Xinjiang has become China's testing ground for cutting-edge surveillance technology, the state may use the experiences gathered from large-scale re-education for its social reengineering efforts across the nation. As pointed out by James Millward, we would do well to ponder

whether what is happening in Xinjiang will stay in Xinjiang ([New York Times](#), February 3).

**Table 1: List of Government Bids Related to Re-Education Facilities**

Region (date)	Bid title	Description	Cost estimate	Source
Yuli (Lopnur) County, Bayingholin (April 7, 2016)	Construction of de-extremification transformation through education base (去极端化教育转化基地)	Teaching room, dining hall, guard room, generator room (498sqm)	2.5 million	<a href="http://bidcenter.com.cn">bidcenter.com.cn</a>
Kalpin County, Aksu Prefecture (September 30, 2016)	Legal system school (法制学校)	Canteen and guard or duty room (228sqm), surrounding wall	0.81 million	<a href="http://bidcenter.com.cn">bidcenter.com.cn</a>
Ulughchat County, Kizilsu Prefecture (November 14, 2016)	Construction of transformation through education center (教育转化中心)	Office, video surveillance control room, multi-media room, police supervision office, dormitory, dining hall (1,836sqm)	n/a	<a href="http://camcard.com">camcard.com</a>
Qaghiliq (Yecheng) County, Kashgar Prefecture (December 23, 2016)	Transformation through education class facility (教育转化班)	Renovate and expand facility: office, teacher room, dormitory, canteen, toilets (1,500sqm). Install security fence, surrounding wall (120m, enclosed area 2,000sqm), guard facilities	0.19 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Lop County, Khotan Prefecture (January 18, 2017)	Transformation through education training facility (教育转化培训班)	Surveillance equipment, office furniture and automation equipment, bedding	1.29 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Ulughchat County, Kizilsu Prefecture (March 9, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education center (司法局教育转化培训中心)	Police equipment (警用装备, first installment), security doors, hand-held security inspection devices, access verification system, access control device with access card	0.15 million and 0.14 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Ulughchat County, Kizilsu Prefecture (March 15, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education center (司法局教育转化培训中心)	Curtains	0.024 million	<a href="http://bidcenter.com.cn">bidcenter.com.cn</a>
Keriya (Yutian) County, Khotan Prefecture (March 16, 2017)	Transformation through education center (教育转化中心)	Monitoring system	2.37 million	<a href="http://bid-china.com">bid-china.com</a>
Guma (Pishan) County, Khotan Prefecture (March 20, 2017)	Support equipment for transformation through education center (教育转化中心)	Office, security and remote video teaching equipment	2.53 million	<a href="http://okcis.cn">okcis.cn</a>
Qaghiliq (Yecheng)	Video surveillance equipment for	Video surveillance equipment	2.77 million	<a href="http://xjyc.gov.cn">xjyc.gov.cn</a>

County, Kashgar Prefecture (March 24, 2017)	transformation through education center (教育转化中心)			
Payzawat County, Kashgar Prefecture (April 11, 2017)	Legal system transformational center (法制教育转化中心)	Facility construction (35,000sqm), along with basic facilities such as water supply and drainage	103 million	<a href="http://bidcenter.com">bidcenter.com</a>
Yengisar County, Kashgar Prefecture (April 14, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education and training center (法制教育转化培训中心), 1st and 2nd phase	Facility construction: five transformation through education buildings, one office building, surrounding wall, security system, monitoring and surveillance system	n/a	<a href="http://qianlima.com">qianlima.com</a>
Yengisar County, Kashgar Prefecture (April 17, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education and training center (法制教育转化培训中心), 3rd phase	Renovation of main entrance door of surrounding wall, video surveillance system, changes to room interiors, renovation of the water heating system	6 million	<a href="http://bidcenter.com.cn">bidcenter.com.cn</a>
Yengisar County, Kashgar Prefecture (April 17, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education and training center (法制教育转化培训中心), 4th phase	Renovation of main entrance door of surrounding wall, video surveillance system, changes to room interiors, renovation of the water heating system	8 million	<a href="http://qianlima.com">qianlima.com</a>
XPCC Third Division, Section 51, Kashgar Prefecture (May 3, 2017)	Legal system education and training center (法制教育培训中心)	Surrounding wall, video surveillance system, dormitory building and dining hall, renovation of heating system etc.	n/a	<a href="http://bidcenter.com.cn">bidcenter.com.cn</a>
Keriya (Yutian) County, Khotan Prefecture (May 9, 2017)	Transformation through education center (教育转化中心)	Two-level structure with 13,814sqm	n/a	<a href="http://okcis.cn">okcis.cn</a>
Hejing County, Bayingholin (May 15, 2017)	Transformation through education training center (教育转化培训中心)	Modify, renovate and outfit a 938sqm room	1.7 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Yopurgha County, Kashgar Prefecture (May 23, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education school (法制教育转化学校)	School construction, including dormitory, dining hall, classrooms, guard room (22,000sqm)	77 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Atush City, (June 2, 2017)	Transformation through education correction center (教育转化矫治中心)	n/a (likely construction or expansion of existing facility)	7.25 million	<a href="http://xjats.gov.cn">xjats.gov.cn</a>
Payzawat (Jiashi) County, Kashgar Prefecture (June 12, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education center (法制培训教育转化中心)	Surrounding wall, low voltage electricity, monitoring system	25 million	<a href="http://bidcenter.com.cn">bidcenter.com.cn</a>
Wusu City, Tacheng Prefecture (June 9-12, 2017)	Centralized closed education training center (集中封闭教育培训中心)	Dining hall, electrical equipment, beds, office furniture (several bids)	n/a	<a href="http://okcis.cn">okcis.cn</a>
Xinjiang Construction Corps, 4th division, 68th	Transformation through education training center (教育转化培训中心)	Video surveillance system	n/a	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>

regiment (June 19, 2017)				
Maralbeshi (Bachu) County, Kashgar Prefecture (June 19, 2017)	Legal system training school (法制培训学校) no.1	School construction (4,404sqm)	11.3 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Maralbeshi (Bachu) County, Kashgar Prefecture (June 19, 2017)	Legal system training school (法制培训学校) no.2	Renovate, expand and build a police building, two prison buildings, a study building, armed police living quarters, a hospital, a meeting room, a detention room and a supermarket (10,533sqm)	8 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Maralbeshi (Bachu) County, Kashgar Prefecture (June 19, 2017)	Legal system training school (法制培训学校) no.2 (second floor)	Second floor, containing a dining hall (2,150sqm)	5 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a> and <a href="http://lunwenwang.com">lunwenwang.com</a>
Maralbeshi (Bachu) County, Kashgar Prefecture (June 19, 2017)	Legal system training school (法制培训学校) no.2	Two police officer buildings, four prison buildings, two armed police quarters, two teaching blocks (total: 20,267sqm), including support facilities and equipment.	17 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a> and <a href="http://lunwenwang.com">lunwenwang.com</a>
Maralbeshi (Bachu) County, Kashgar Prefecture (June 19, 2017)	Legal system training school (法制培训学校) no.2	Renovate 2,990m of draining and heating pipes, renovate guard room, meeting room, bathroom (310sqm), four watchtowers, harden 10,910sqm of floor space, install security nets, security doors and windows, security nets, fences and other security-related installations.	4.5 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Maralbeshi (Bachu) County, Kashgar Prefecture (June 20, 2017)	Transformation through education food distribution (教育转化学员食材配送)	Food delivery services	6.55 million	<a href="http://zfcg.xjcz.gov.cn">zfcg.xjcz.gov.cn</a>
Poskam (Zepu) County, Kashgar Prefecture (June 20, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education center (法制培训教育转化中心) modifications	Surrounding fence and wall, iron chains, protected windows, security doors, dining hall, toilet repairs (total area of 27,487sqm)	22.25 million	<a href="http://bidcenter.com.cn">bidcenter.com.cn</a>
Changji City, Changji Prefecture (June 21, 2017)	Transformation through education training center (教育转化培训中心)	Facility construction	4 million	<a href="http://chinabidding.com">chinabidding.com</a>
Yengishahar (Shule) County, Kashgar Prefecture (June 21, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education school(法制教育转化学校), 2nd phase	Construction of second teaching building (4943sqm)	12.85 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Yengisar County, Kashgar Prefecture (July 3, 2017)	Expansion of the legal system training school (法制培训学校)	Sanitary facilities, toilet drainage pipes, surrounding wall, barbed wire fence, security fence (expanded area amounts to 300sqm)	1.1 million	<a href="http://xj.cei.gov.cn">xj.cei.gov.cn</a>
Yengisar County, Kashgar	Convert former office building into	Building conversion: installation of monitoring system,	0.85 million	<a href="http://qianlima.com">qianlima.com</a>

Prefecture (July 3, 2017)	transformation for education center (教育转化中心)	surrounding wall, barb wire, security fence, plumbing for toilets and bathroom, etc.		
Wusu City, Ili Prefecture (July 5, 2017)	Legal system training school (法制培训学校)	Construction of new 3-floor teaching building (2,393sqm) and 5-floor dormitory (7670sqm). The government construction work report states that new security features were added to the facility, including a police station and steel-reinforced concrete walls.	40 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a> and <a href="http://xjws.gov.cn">xjws.gov.cn</a>
Qaraqash County, Khotan Prefecture (July 6 to August, 2017)	Educational training center (教育培训中心) and transformation for education center (教育转化中心)	Multiple construction phases. Construction of a 2,074sqm building for armed police forces, a 2,771sqm dining hall, generator room etc. Construction involves two 5-floor buildings with 17,820sqm. Later expanded to include 8 buildings.	n/a	<a href="http://qianlima.com">qianlima.com</a> and <a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a> and <a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a> and <a href="http://dlzb.com">dlzb.com</a>
Keriya (Yutian) County, Khotan Prefecture (July 13, 2017)	County transformation through education center (县教育转化中心)	Monitoring system, remote education system and center control room	0.49 million	<a href="http://zfcg.xjcz.gov.cn">zfcg.xjcz.gov.cn</a>
Konashahar (Shufu) County, Kashgar Prefecture (July 28, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education school(法制教育转化学校)	School construction behind the new detention center (27,000sqm incl. other facilities such as a party training school)	140 million (includes other facilities)	<a href="http://qianlima.com">qianlima.com</a> and <a href="http://bidcenter.com.cn">bidcenter.com.cn</a>
Dabancheng District, Urumqi (July 28, 2017)	Transformation through education school(教育转化学校)	Heat pipe network	n/a	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Makit County, Kashgar Prefecture (August 2, 2017)	Legal system education school(法制教育学校)	Construction of the 15,000sqm school	60 million	<a href="http://bidcenter.com.cn">bidcenter.com.cn</a>
Yopurgha County, Kashgar Prefecture (August 7, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education school (法制教育转化学校)	Various equipment, including surrounding wall and fence	10 million	<a href="http://xj.cei.gov.cn">xj.cei.gov.cn</a>
Qaghiliq (Yecheng) County, Kashgar Prefecture (August 15, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education school (法制教育转化学校) construction - Phase I	School construction (13,000sqm), including a 5.6 MW hot water boiler and two 2.8 MW gas boilers, tap water system, surrounding wall	38 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Qaghiliq (Yecheng) County, Kashgar Prefecture (August 15, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education school (法制教育转化学校) construction - Phase II	Supporting infrastructure, guard room, staff room, car garage, water supply and drainage network, heating pipes, ground hardening, surrounding wall, power supply, greenification	10 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Qaghiliq (Yecheng) County, Kashgar Prefecture (August 15, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education school and vocational training school (法制教育转化学校、职业技能培训学校)	Design of a combined re-education and vocational training facility. Size: 82,000sqm.	1.7 million (design only, plus 0.15 million for the pre-construction geological survey)	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a> and <a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>

Guma (Pishan) County, Khotan Prefecture (August 22, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education base(司法局教育转化基地)	Surveillance system (as part of PPP project)	336 million (city-wide comprehensive surveillance system)	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Maralbeshi (Bachu) County, Kashgar Prefecture (August 30, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education school (法制教育转化学校)	Construction of the general building (4 levels) and an office building (5 levels), combined 16,319sqm	40 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Maralbeshi (Bachu) County, Kashgar Prefecture (August 31, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education school (法制教育转化学校) in the "old police office" (老公安局)	Two dormitory buildings, one school building, armed police station (9,250sqm), surrounding wall (820m length), dining hall (500sqm), change doors and windows, install security fence, hot water facilities	7.5 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Hoboksar County, Tacheng Prefecture (September 6, 2017)	Transformation through education and training center (教育转化培训中心)	Construct new facility with 262sqm	0.82 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Hoboksar County, Tacheng Prefecture (September 6, 2017)	Vocational skills training base (职业技能培训基地)	Video surveillance system and sound broadcasting system	n/a	<a href="http://qianlima.com">qianlima.com</a>
Sawan (Shawan) County, Tacheng Prefecture (September 11, 2017)	Public Security Bureau	Integrated Information Collection Platform (一体化信息采集工作台) that can (among other things) monitor the information collection situation on those detained or in re-education as part of the "strike hard campaign" (严打收押人员及教育转化人员)	0.13 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Maralbeshi (Bachu) County, Kashgar Prefecture (September 12, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education school (法制教育转化学校) of the county prison (巴楚监狱)	Installation of 180m of 10kV high voltage lines, 3,306m of low voltage cables, intelligent circuit breakers, etc.	4 million	<a href="http://ztb.xjjs.gov.cn">ztb.xjjs.gov.cn</a>
Akto County, Kizilsu Prefecture (September 13, 2017)	Transformation through education center (教育转化中心) - 2nd phase	Construction of second floor based on a concrete structure	3.7 million	<a href="http://qianlima.com">qianlima.com</a>
Khotan City, Khotan Prefecture (September 19, 2017)	Smartphone device procurement for Khotan "transformation through education centers" (教育转化中心)	900 smartphone devices for persons in re-education to communicate with their outside relatives and friends	0.8 million	<a href="http://qianlima.com">qianlima.com</a>
Karamay City (September 26, 2017)	Vocational skills education and training center (职业技能教育培训中心)	Facility design (according to the bid text, the center fulfills the city's security need of subjecting "key persons" to re-education)	n/a	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Dorbiljin (Emin)	Transformation	Equipment for convenience	n/a	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>

County, Tacheng Prefecture (September 28, 2017)	through education base (教育转化基地)	police station (that is located on the base)		
Nilqa County, Ili Prefecture (October 9, 2017)	Centralized closed education and training center (集中封闭教育培训中心)	Monitoring and surveillance system, security fence, security doors and windows, generator set	1.34 million	bidchance.com and <a href="http://gc-zb.com">gc-zb.com</a>
Yengishahar (Shule) County, Kashgar Prefecture (October 11, 2017)	Legal system transformation through education school(法制教育转化学校)	Supply of daily use items	0.04 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Toqsun County, Turpan Prefecture (October 17, 2017)	Vocational training center (职业技能教育培训中心)	Network, monitoring and surveillance system, public security bureau video surveillance system, videoconferencing system	9.1 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Kashgar City (October 17, 2017)	City transformation for education work group office (市教育转化工作领导小组办公室)	Equipment for multi-purpose room (first batch)	0.82 million	<a href="http://bidchance.com">bidchance.com</a>
Fuhai County, Ili Prefecture (November 7, 2017)	Transformation for education center (教育转化培训中心)	New terminal system for the video surveillance system	0.39 million	<a href="http://bidcenter.com.cn">bidcenter.com.cn</a>
Yengishahar (Shule) County, Kashgar Prefecture (November 17, 2017)	Training center (培训中心)	Facility construction, including water, electricity and heating supply systems, bathrooms, surrounding wall, sub-police station, guard room, family visiting facilities, surveillance and monitoring system	28 million	<a href="http://ztb.xjjs.gov.cn">ztb.xjjs.gov.cn</a>
Qutubi (Hutubi), Ili Prefecture (November 20, 2017)	County transformation for education training center (县教育转化培训中心)	Facility reconstruction	2.26 million	<a href="http://bidcenter.com.cn">bidcenter.com.cn</a>
Qaghiliq (Ruoqiang) County, Bayingholin Prefecture (November 27, 2017)	Detention and training center complex (两所一中): vocational skills training center (职业技能教育培训中心)	Upgrade of the video surveillance system for the vocational skills training center	0.71 million	<a href="http://ztb.xjjs.gov.cn">ztb.xjjs.gov.cn</a>
Baghrash (Bohu) County, Bayingholin Prefecture (December 12, 2017)	"Stability maintenance" facilities, including a vocational training center (职业技能培训中心) that functions as a transformation through education base (教育转化基地)	Construction of various stability maintenance facilities, including a police station, fire station, detention centers, special police unit base and traffic police facilities.	318.5 million (for all facilities)	<a href="http://zfcg.xjcz.gov.cn">zfcg.xjcz.gov.cn</a> and <a href="http://ppp.cbi360.net">ppp.cbi360.net</a>
Charchan (Qiemu) County, Bayingholin Prefecture	Township stability maintenance facilities, including a transformation through	Facility size 6,100sqm	551.1 million for multiple security-	<a href="http://xjzb.gov.cn">xjzb.gov.cn</a>



(December 12, 2017)	education training base (教育转化培训基地)		related facilities	
Qitai County, Changji Prefecture (December 22, 2017)	Vocational skills education and training center (职业技能教育培训中心)	260 sets of special police (特警) uniforms, shoes, caps etc.	0.43 million	<a href="http://bidcenter.com.cn">bidcenter.com.cn</a>
Qaghiliq (Ruoqiang) County, Bayingholin Prefecture (January 11, 2018)	Correction and rehabilitation center (矫治康复中心)	Surveillance and monitoring system with 122 cameras to cover the entire facility, leaving "no dead angles" (无死角), plus voice IP communication to the dormitory	1.2 million	<a href="http://ztb.xjjs.gov.cn">ztb.xjjs.gov.cn</a>
Chapchal County, Ili Prefecture (February 7, 2018)	Transformation through education and correction center (教育培训转化及矫治中心)	Monitoring system, reinforcement of doors and windows, pull wire mesh, fences, renovation of electricity and water system, canteen renovation	n/a	<a href="http://xj.cei.gov.cn">xj.cei.gov.cn</a>
Qaghiliq (Ruoqiang) County, Bayingholin Prefecture (February 28, 2018)	Correction and rehabilitation center (矫治康复中心)	Construction of a room (560sqm), surrounding wall (450m), security fence (600m), blast-proof coating or film, interior steel structure (350sqm), paint 2300sqm of walls	4.2 million	<a href="http://xj.cei.gov.cn">xj.cei.gov.cn</a>
Altay City (March 13, 2018)	Vocational skills education and training center (职业技能教育培训中)	Facility construction, including a convenience police station	11.4 million	<a href="http://bidcenter.com.cn">bidcenter.com.cn</a>
Chapchal County, Ili Prefecture (March 23, 2018)	Vocational education and training center (职业教育技能培训中心)	Surrounding fence, guard room and other security installations	n/a	<a href="http://xj.cei.gov.cn">xj.cei.gov.cn</a>
Shuimogou District, Urumqi City (April 25, 2018)	Vocational training center (职业技能教育培训中心)	Construction of a 36,527sqm compound, including an 8,000sqm underground facility, a 6 floor 7,300sqm dormitory, a 4,700sqm female student building, a 500sqm police station, power supply and heating system, surrounding wall and fence, security monitoring system	n/a	<a href="http://xj.cei.gov.cn">xj.cei.gov.cn</a>
Toqsun County, Turpan Prefecture (April 27, 2017)	Training center management office (培训管理局)	Video matrix switch unit	n/a	<a href="http://zfcg.xjcz.gov.cn">zfcg.xjcz.gov.cn</a>
Changji City (May 2, 2018)	Convenience police station (便民警务站) for skills training center (技能培训中心)	Construction of 80.6sqm convenience police station	0.62 million	<a href="http://xj.cei.gov.cn">xj.cei.gov.cn</a>

## Notes

[\*] The author gratefully acknowledges the help of Rian Thum with Uyghur place names, and of various others, along with anonymous informants.

[1] See Mühlhahn, K., 2009. *Criminal Justice in China: A History*, pp.215-257.

[2] Compare Tong, J., 2009. *Revenge of the Forbidden City: the Suppression of the Falungong in China 1999-2005*.

[3] Compare Deckwitz, S., 2012. *Gulag vs. Laogai - The Function of Forced Labour Camps in the Soviet Union and China*. [MA Thesis](#), Utrecht University.

[4] The existence of "transformation through education classes" was also reported for Turpan city in its 2015 government work report ([Turpan City Government](#), 18 January 2016).

[5] Chinese: 到教育转化班学习是对思想上患病群众的一次免费住院治疗.

[6] This and other calculations in this paragraph are based on 5-year age cohort population data from the China 2010 census by county (table 2). The 5-year cohort format explains why the chosen age range does not start at 18 but at 20 years. The combined 20-79 year age cohort shares of the entire population from the census data were multiplied with 2015 Xinjiang county and prefecture population data, and again multiplied by the combined Uyghur and Kazakh population shares (sources: 2016 Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook, table 3-7). The report shows potentially unrealistically high detention share for a few counties, which may result from the major population shifts triggered by Chen Quanguo's ethnic economic policies in late 2016 and early 2017. Alternatively, they may indicate inaccuracies in the report.

[7] In December 2017, a user posted a question on Baidu Knowledge (百度知道), asking how to write a personal reflection (心得体会) for Xinjiang's "transformation through education" ([Baidu Knowledge](#), December 26, 2017). The detailed response shows that such reflection writing exercises are potentially complex undertakings. Perhaps this netizen was trying to help a detained friend or family member who struggled to adequately complete this type of assignment.