

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT

# **“A Different Kind of Prison: Mass Surveillance in Xinjiang and Its Global Implications”**

EVENT DATE

**Thursday, June 27, 2019**

TIME

**1:00 p.m. EDT**

LOCATION

**2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, CSIS Headquarters, Washington, D.C.**

FEATURING

Speakers:

**Representative Mike Gallagher (R-WI),**

*Member,*

*House Armed Services Committee*

**Sophie Richardson,**

*China Director,*

*Human Rights Watch*

**Sarah Cook,**

*Senior Research Analyst for East Asia,*

*Freedom House*

**Emily Rauhala,**

*Staff writer,*

*The Washington Post*

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*Attorney and Board Chair,*

*Uyghur Human Rights Project*

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**Amy K. Lehr,**  
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Amy K. Lehr: Hi. It's great to have everybody here today. My name, as I said earlier, is Amy Lehr. I'm the director of the Human Rights Initiative at CSIS. And I just wanted to lay out the order of the day as a starting point. We'll have Congressman Gallagher joining us virtually, as I said before. Unfortunately, due a roll call vote he just can't be here in person today. We'll do some Q&A with him, and then we'll turn it over to a panel.

I really want to thank you, such a really good audience, being here today. This event is obviously focusing today on abuses in Xinjiang, with a focus particularly on technology there and surveillance, and also what that could mean for the rest of the world. We will be holding more events on this topic at CSIS, and our goal is really to highlight potential policy opportunities to both improve the situation in Xinjiang, and also make sure that some of these abuses there never become a new normal for the rest of the world.

So with us today we have Congressman Mike Gallagher. He was elected in 2016. He represents Wisconsin's 8th District in the House of Representative. He earned his bachelor's degree from Princeton, and then immediately joined the U.S. Marine Corps. He was actually on active duty for seven years, primarily in counterintelligence. He also served on the Republican staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. And somehow, in the midst of all of this, he squeezed in several master's degrees and a Ph.D. in international relations from Georgetown – which makes me feel pretty lazy. (Laughter.) He has written actually extensively about China and the China-U.S. relationship, both from a national security perspective and from more of a values-based human rights perspective. So I'm really looking forward to what he has to say today. And on that note, I'm going to hand it over to him. And let's hope that the technology works.

Congressman, to you.

Representative Mike Gallagher (R-WI): All right. Can you guys hear me over there?

Amy Lehr: Yes.

Rep. Gallagher: OK. Well, first of all, my profound apologies with this. The only problem with being in Congress is that occasionally you have to vote from time to time. And today we have an unusually chaotic vote situation with the House squabbling with the Senate over border appropriations. And we were supposed to be done by about 11:00 a.m. today, and now there is no end in sight. And so at any given moment you can hear a buzzing or a beeping. And that is not Chinese surveillance technology. That is the House notification system that will require me to sprint to the floor and vote. So I know you guys put a lot of effort into this event, and I spent a lot of time gathering my thoughts, and so I just really apologize for not being there in person. But I'm glad we're able to do this, even as suboptimal as it is.

So I guess your first question should be is, you know, what the heck does this guy know about Asia in general and China in particular. I spent the last 15 years of my life as an Arabist and focused on the Middle East. But I now found myself primarily focused on the Indo-Pacific region and the Eurasian rimland in particular. And that's where most of my focus on the Armed Services Committee and as chair of the Cyber Solarium Commission are, because that – right now, we're trying to effectuate this very complicated shift that is contained within the National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy away from prioritizing counterterrorism mission, and towards prioritizing great-power competition, with China in particular. And that strikes me as the most important shift that's going on in the National Security Community right now. And I view part of my job in the Armed Services Committee to make the military ready to implement that shift.

And furthermore, I did – though it took me a long time – read Mike Green's book, "By More Than Providence." And I underlined it a lot and I highlighted it a lot. So what I little know about Asia, I learned from that. And so it now serves as a paperweight and a door stopper in my office back in Wisconsin because it's so voluminous. And so, Mike, I have to thank you and thank all of CSIS's scholars for that.

And in Mike's point, he has this point where he talks about how Americans have for centuries hoped that the Pacific would serve as, quote, "a conduit for American ideas and goods to flow westward." But as Mike notes, some of that westward flow of ideas included missionaries who traveled to the Far East to spread the cross, the projection of our ideas and our values. But that was not always purely altruistic. Rather, American statesmen, especially in the Pacific, have for generations understood the connection between our values and our security.

Just as we wanted our ideas to flow west, as Mike puts it, we wanted to prevent threats from flowing eastward towards the homeland. And all you have to do is open the 2017 National Security Strategy to realize this is a concept that still resonates today. And since you're at a Washington think-tank event, I think we are contractually obligated to namecheck great-power competition as many times as humanly possible. But lost in the focus over the security and economic domains of that competition that's in the NSS and the NDS is its perception – and this is in the National Security Strategy – that we are in a, quote, "fundamentally political contest between those who favor repressive systems and those who favor free societies."

So think about that – fundamentally political contests. Despite all the debate over material factors like building a 355-ship Navy, making sure the future of 5G isn't dominated by the Chinese Communist Party, trade, our competition on all these other fronts, notwithstanding that, the competition is still fundamentally a political one. And I think this is a concept that would have been familiar to many of our Cold War statesmen in general and Ronald Reagan in particular, who national – whose National Security Decision Directive 75 set forth a plan not just to coexist with the Soviet Union but to change it. As that document laid out, U.S. policy must have an ideological thrust which clearly affirms the superiority of U.S. and Western values of individual dignity and freedom, a free press, free trade unions, free enterprise, and political democracy over the repressive features of Soviet community – an ideological thrust which clearly affirms the superiority of U.S. and Western values.

I think that's a stunning statement in the present day. I mean, 40 years later, much the same could be said about the Chinese Communist Party and its oppression – (audio break).

(Audio break) – focus the relationship solely on security and economic concerns, I believe we are not going to succeed. You can see this is in the Huawei campaign playing out today. It's hard to imagine how many more red flags we can raise about security vulnerabilities, but the reality is that many of our friends – even close friends – are going to make decisions based on Huawei's highly subsidized prices regardless of the evidence in front of them.

But I suspect human rights are a(n) even more fertile ground on which to engage our friends. There is a reason the CCP, for example, is so desperate to take human rights off the table. Look at the PRC officials arrogantly declaring that they will not allow the G20 to discuss Hong Kong. They are terrified of being embarrassed in a global forum, as they should be. Again, human rights are a universal language that threatens their legitimacy at home and abroad.

But what can we do? Well, a few things from a congressional perspective. First, I believe we need to elevate human rights to be a co-equal third pillar of our bilateral relationship. Again, going back to the Reagan administration, examine the archives, for example, with George Shultz preparing Reagan for his fourth summit in 1988 where he had the famous Moscow State speech. He lays out all the issues to bring up, and of course there's bilateral concerns, there's regional issues like getting out of Afghanistan, arms control. But the first item he urges him to bring up is human rights concerns, knowing full well that Gorbachev will object and talk about all the contradictions in our system, et cetera, but he urges him to reject the moral equivalency and bring it up nonetheless.

I think we should take advantage of every opportunity, beginning at the G20, to – at the highest levels – draw attention to human rights abuses in Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and throughout China. I think this should be a relentless part of our dialogue.

I think another leverage point is the 2020 Winter Olympics. As host, the Chinese government has pledged that it would abide by the Olympic charter and, quote, "prohibit any form of discrimination based on religion and ethnicity." It is clearly failing to live up to that standard,

and I think it's not unreasonable to ask whether the U.S. should participate in spectacle that invariably will hand the party a public relations coup. At a minimum, I think we should press the PCP to end ethnic cleansing programs that are Uighur areas with Han Chinese, and we should present lists of religious prisoners and demand their release, and we should push for the rights of all those languishing in Xinjiang's concentration camps to go home.

Second, I think we need to cut off American technology that is enabling China's techno-totalitarianism. My colleague, a Democrat from Illinois – so not only a Democrat, but a Bears fan, if you can believe it – we see eye-to-eye on this issue – has a great piece of bipartisan legislation called the Uighur Act, which prohibits federal procurement from entities that contribute to arbitrary detention in Xinjiang and calls for Magnitsky sanctions against officials responsible.

And more broadly, I think we need to understand that, to the CCP, there really is no distinction between civil and military programs; it's all part of comprehensive national power, and advanced American technologies that make their way to China at best contribute to further repression and surveillance, and at worst, they may be used against our own service members and our allies one day on the field of battle. And that's why, just yesterday, I introduced a piece of legislation with my colleague, Mark Green, to control the export of national interest technology to China, including technology and intellectual property that could be used by the CCP to violate human rights or expand its military capabilities.

And then third and finally, and perhaps most importantly, I think we need to differentiate – and this is difficult at times in terms of how we talk about this – between the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese people. We don't have a China problem. We have a CCP program. The Chinese people, and especially the Uighurs of Xinjiang are its primary victim. And I think that we need to relentlessly message that we are on their side against their oppressors and live that commitment through our own actions here in the United States.

The thing about totalitarian governments is if you look back I think they are less stable than they appear. And as Reagan said in Westminster in '82, regimes planted in that do not take root. And while it may be too much to hope for, you know, a version of a Berlin 1989 moment in the immediate future, I think we're at the beginning of a long-term competition with China, it is both in our interest and our tradition to bring that day just a little bit closer, and bring a peaceful world more closer.

And so, with that, I will stop talking. I, again, thank you for understanding for me having to beam myself in technologically. And I'm not watching, like, sports behind me. That's the House floor. So I'm just awaiting when the buzzers are going to go off and I have to run. So you have my full attention until that moment, and I'm happy to answer any questions that you have.

Amy Lehr: So thank you so much, Congressman Gallagher. And I am going to ask a few questions of you. I think it's going to be a little hard to open it up the room, unfortunately. My understanding is

there are some technological barriers to that, potentially. So we'll see where we get, and also when your buzzer goes off.

So you talked – I mean, thank you for covering so much territory really eloquently around the many challenges in the relationship and, again, the importance of values when we think about authoritarian states like China. You talked briefly about allies. So how could we be better engaging our allies as we try to combat authoritarianism around the world? What could that mean in practice?

Rep. Gallagher: Well, I was at the Munich security conference a few months ago. And I was struck by this moment when Vice President Pence gave what I thought to be a very powerful speech. And I'm going to – I'm going to butcher this line as I try to paraphrase it, but he said something to the effect of, you know, we cannot ensure the defense of the West if our allies are dependent on the East. And basically, he's talking about dependent on Chinese technology, particularly the future of 5G. That's the buzzer, but I have some time, where I think I'll at least have 10 minutes left.

But I think in that room, even a message as powerful as that feel a little bit flat, because clearly our allies are concerned about some of the other rhetoric that we've seen in recent years, whether it's rhetoric surrounding the utility of NATO, or some of the ways in which we've tried to convince them to spend more on their defense, which is not a new argument. And so I really do think the type of diplomacy we engage with matters. And I think for people like me, in public office, we've really taken for granted this idea that the American people are going to – are going to appreciate arguments about alliances and the rules-based global order. I think we need to do a better job of talking about why, if we don't want to do everything ourselves, we need to be in a constant business of building and maintaining our alliances, our partnerships, and our friendships around the world. And we're failing at that.

And on a practical level, how do we – how do we operationalize that? Well, you'd actually seen Congress in many cases pushing back on any suggestion that we're about to abandon our treaty allies. Jimmy Panetta had a bill, for example, at the beginning of this Congress reaffirming our support to NATO and preventing anyone in the executive branch from unilaterally trying to challenge our commitment to NATO. Similarly, I had pieces of legislation with Tom Malinowski that would not require – would not allow us to withdraw troops past a certain number on the Korean Peninsula. So Congress really needs to rediscover its role in foreign policy. I think we've had too much deference to the executive branch in recent years. And to have more of a struggle between Article 1 and Article 2 I think would send a healthy signal, not a weaker one, to our allies around the world, if that makes sense.

The final thing I'd say on this, there was a Chinese academic – I forget his name – who wrote an op-ed I think in 2011 in The New York Times, I want to say. And he said, the core of competition between the United States and China will come down to who has better friends. I agreed with then, and I agree with that even more today. So I guess that's a long-winded way of me saying: Rhetoric matters, and Congress should matter more than it does. (Laughs.)

Amy Lehr: Thanks so much for making those points. You know, actually, we're about to put out a compendium from different scholars around the Center talking about how Congress can be more active on human rights and why we think that it's so important that Congress take up that mantle that it's done before. So thanks for queuing up my opportunity to talk about that. That should be coming out in the next few weeks.

Rep. Gallagher: Fantastic.

Amy Lehr: And I think your points about strengthening our alliances in various ways is really, really important, obviously. And that's I think with our European alliances, but also, obviously, with countries in Asia that are much more directly affected by what's happening.

One of the issues you discussed was the role of technology companies and the role of technology generally, right, that in a way the kind of technology that's employed in the world and depending on its origin may affect national security, but also from my perspective have a profound effect on human rights. So what should we be asking, let's say, of our technology companies?

Rep. Gallagher: Well, morally I think this is an interesting issue for the heads of all of our leading technology companies to consider. I mean, Silicon Valley is famous for its woke culture, and I think it's worth pushing them to expand the definition of corporate social responsibility to include not partnering with techno-totalitarian states like China that are going to use those technologies for nefarious purposes. I think in the wake of the Project Maven scandal we've actually come to a little bit of a better place in terms of our technology companies being willing to work with the Pentagon, but that cultural divide between Silicon Valley and our own government is really what worries me more than anything else.

Because at the end of the day, you know, we can't – how do I put this? We can't do sort of what – in order to win this competition, we can't do what the Chinese Communist Party can do, right? In other words, we can't sort of force our best and brightest and conscript them into the PLA cyber force, right? I mean, it's just not going to happen. Nor would we want to go down that road, right? The sort of open, free society we have, the entrepreneurial society we have is a feature, not a bug of our system. But it's dependent upon the patriotic impulses of the employees in those companies and certainly the leadership to really recognize that, listen, I get it, America is not perfect, right? We are having brutal debates right now on the House floor about border security and we are constantly, you know, going back and forth over critical issues. But to paraphrase General Dunford or General Mattis – it was one of the Marines, I can't remember – you know, we may not be the perfect guys, but we are the good guys, at the end of the day. And I think rediscovering the – and dare I say, to steal Reagan's phrase – the moral superiority of Western values is a key first step, right? If indeed it's a competition between free societies and more repressive societies, then the worst thing we could do or the easiest way we could lose that competition is to not be a free society anymore.

So I don't know if any of that makes sense, but, it's a huge – it's a huge cultural challenge that I struggle to find an easy legislative solution to.

Amy Lehr: I just want to tease that out a little bit. I think when we talk about Western values, actually what's interesting to me is if you really look at how human rights were developed, yes, Eleanor Roosevelt played a really key role in that, but also China and Russia, for example, played key roles in that as well. And I've lived in Asia. I lived in Southeast Asia for several years, and I do think these values are universal. So I don't think they're just Western; I think it's just we're seeing different governments that either do or do not allow them to flourish. So I would just make that slight distinction because we certainly have Asian democracies.

Rep. Gallagher: Whenever – (inaudible) – I'm onboard with that, so.

Amy Lehr: I think some of your points about technology companies are interesting. They're interesting from my perspective. I helped write something called the U.N. Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and most of those large technology companies at least have signed up to those principles. So in theory they should already be thinking about their human rights impacts of their products and designing them in ways to minimize those adverse impacts.

How about – so here's another question. In terms of leading by example – which I always think is really important – as we think about the global normative framework for technology use, do we need to be doing more here at home in terms of: How do we deal with facial recognition technology, gateway recognition technology? How do we make sure the global standards around that are consistent with democratic norms?

Rep. Gallagher: Yeah, that's a – that is a great question. I tend to think we are at the beginning of that debate here in Congress. Maybe not specifically about facial recognition technology, but you're starting to see this very public debate between our tech companies and legislators, particularly legislators that are from a younger generation, some of the new senators, Josh Hawley in particular, who sort of understand how Facebook actually works – (laughs) – in contrast to some of their colleagues, and really having this tough debate over how we – how or if we should regulate these companies. Should we treat them as content providers? And, by extension, how we should treat technology more broadly.

I don't know where that debate is going to wind up, but I think it's a really, really healthy one that's happening right now. It may not seem that way, but I think it's – we actually have some really smart people in the Senate and in the House that are trying to wrap their heads around this issue in the way in which technology has pervaded all of our daily lives.

I mean, to some extent this tension between security and liberty has always been there throughout our country's history, and it's not easy to sort of get the balance entirely right. But I actually think the debate has been healthier here in Congress than people realize, notwithstanding some hearings in the last year that may have seemed embarrassing or outdated, let me say, but we're getting there. As Winston Churchill said about America – he could have been talking about Congress in particular – we can always be counted on to do the right thing after we've exhausted all the other alternatives.



But beyond that, I think the easiest thing we could do right now, as I alluded to before, is to ensure that none of our technologies, which are critical components in many cases of technologies, that China – that Huawei and ZTE rely upon are exported for nefarious purposes. And then the second piece of that is to build a domestic industry for certain things like – what would be a good example? Drone technology, right? I mean, how much of the market does DJI right now dominate? And we just don't have a domestic drone market.

That's a huge problem, right? If you sort of believe that DJI technology cannot be mitigated in the same way that I believe Huawei technology can't be mitigated, well, it's step one to try and block that technology from infiltrating our marketplace. But step two means you need to have alternatives, because the military needs drones. There's commercial drones that people are going to buy that have enormous vulnerabilities.

And I think our defense-industrial base and our defense innovation base have become so hollowed out in the last two decades that really we need to attack this more robustly. It's a reason, for example, why I supported and had a piece of legislation in the last Congress – I stole an idea from DIUx, Michael Brown and Raj Shah, which created a national security innovation capital fund where DOD, in partnership with private capital, could invest in hardware technology, right, because we've become so enamored with software that sometimes we neglected the hardware.

So there's a lot of different things we have to – we have to do. So I don't know if any of that made sense.

But I'm, like, nervous looking at – Flora's (sp) going to tell me when I have to vote, so.

Amy Lehr: Everything OK? OK, we have –

Rep. Gallagher: Yeah, everything's good.

Amy Lehr: We've got a few more minutes?

Rep. Gallagher: Yeah.

Amy Lehr: OK.

Rep. Gallagher: We've solved the immigration crisis, everybody. No need to worry anymore.

Amy Lehr: (Laughs.) Yeah, I think it's interesting. Going to some of your points earlier, I think there often is a tension between sort of the security and human-rights communities. But I also think, when we look at what's happening in China right now, there's actually some really interesting commonalities. And I think just continuing to have those conversations and work towards a right result, whether it's in terms of development of industry at home or abroad, is really, really vital.

I want to go back to something you said earlier, and it's something I think about a lot, which is you talked a little bit about the fact that maybe we haven't really made the case to – you know, since we're in a policy – room of policy nerds, but to, like – I'm from Oklahoma originally, right – people I know from home – the importance of alliances, the importance of values.

So how do we sort of reinvigorate that domestic constituency for this? Do you have any thoughts on that? I know this is well outside of China, but –

Rep. Gallagher: Well – oh, no, no, no, it's a – it's a huge problem. You know, politically, one of the things that confounds me the most is how often I get asked by people in my district about, you know, why do we continue to spend money on development? Why are we funding the State Department? You know, if only we stopped giving money to countries that hate us, we could balance the federal budget.

Now, even the quickest Google search and the most rudimentary calculator will tell you that that is absurd. And so we have to make the case for why these programs that have a link with – there are ways in which we advance our human-rights arguments are critical, right? And I think we need to take advantage of opportunities where, as I mentioned in my opening comments, our human-rights interests sort of coincide with our strategic interests, right, in which they sort of push in the same direction.

Of course there are going to be cases – I mean, I spent most of my life working on Middle East issues, and oftentimes you have to make terrible compromises between or you have to work with partners that don't share our values, right. Or you have to adopt a bear-hug approach where you work so closely with them, you're able to constrain their worst impulses and prevent a worse outcome.

But I think when it comes to China, we actually don't have to make this choice right now. We don't have to make any compromises. And that's true of certain other countries around the world. Russia would be the most obvious. So part of it's just how we talk about it politically, how we talk about it in ways that, you know, it could be understood at Lambeau Field over, you know, the course of a football game. And you know, part of it's just our willingness here in Congress to fund the programs and the mechanisms through which we advance human rights. And it's just crazy to me that every two years the State Department and USAID seem to be on the chopping block.

Now, I think organizations like USGLC have done a fantastic job in bringing high-level former military leaders on board to talk to the American people about how investments in these non-military instruments of national power actually save us money over time and reduce the likelihood that we have to use guns, bombs, ships and airplanes. Mattis was quite eloquent on that subject. But still, that's a – that's an argument that we continually have to have. I mean, it's not a new argument, right? I mean, it's goes – you see it – you saw it throughout the Cold War. You see it throughout our country's history. So we just have to be vigilant.

Amy Lehr: Well, thank you. And thank you very much. I think we now actually do need to turn to the panel. And I know you're going to have to go vote in a moment, but I just really want to thank you. And can we please, please give Congressman Gallagher some props. (Applause.)

Rep. Gallagher: Well, again, my sincere apologies. You know, how these things work is they tell you: You're going to vote at 11:00, and then it's 11:15, and then it continually goes. And so they keep you on standby. So apologize, guys. It's Congress. We're at an 11 percent approval rating, and we seem to be doing our best to get below into single digits. (Laughter.) So I appreciate your patience and look forward to apologizing to all of you in person soon.

But thank you for the work you're doing, and I'm eager to get the – to watch the video of the panel later. And just thank you for all the great work that CSIS does. You guys are phenomenal. And with that, I'll let you go. Thank you.

Amy Lehr: Thank you so much. Bye. (Applause.)

So thank you very much. And I know that was a bit of an adventure. Is my lapel mic working? Yes? OK. OK. We're going to now basically turn to a different part of the program. I'm going to give a quick presentation, just to give some basic background and also let you know what we've been working on here at CSIS as it relates to Xinjiang, and where we may be going. So thank you for bearing with me during this.

Can we get – OK, the slides are up. All right. So this is just a slide of headlines related to the Uighurs. And most of these will be familiar with people in the room who are probably paying attention to this. And they related to mass surveillance, mass incarceration, and also more recently allegations of force labor. And I think it's important to bear in mind when we look at Xinjiang that it turns out reeducation efforts began in 2013, from what we can learn from public procurement documents and elsewhere, and they just became a lot worse around 2017.

And before that, there were other forms of significant cultural and religious repression in Xinjiang. So this is not a new problem. And what I actually think is quite remarkable is how little has been done from a policy perspective, right? There are bills in Congress but, like, little has actually happened. And it's quite extraordinary given the circumstances there and the extremity of what's occurring. I don't know if that's partly because we feel like it's not relevant for us here the U.S., but I think it is. And part of our goal at CSIS is to make that clear. And I hope today's panel helps with that.

Can we go to the next slide? Oh, actually, let's see. I have the clicker, aha. So this is a map of suspected detention facilities in Xinjiang. It's the most complete map I've seen. We're using data from a researcher in Canada named Shawn Zhang. All of his data is public, if you want to look at it yourself. And this is basically – he pulled together a lot of public procurement documents and other documents that he's able to review in Mandarin and combined it with satellite imagery to make these – to identify these sites.

And what I think is actually interesting about this map is how under-representative it is of the actual problems. So that may look like a lot of red, because there are 95 sites, but kind of a back of the envelope estimate based – if we take the assumption of a million people being in detention rather than, let's say – the most recent number's around 3 million from the Pentagon. If we take a million, we average out what we know from public procurement documents and all the number of people in these facilities, this is maybe, maybe possibly at the most probably 8 percent of the total. So multiply that by more than 10. Like, Xinjiang should be buried in red from these detention facilities.

And in terms of numbers, I think the Congressman covered that, right, but, like, at minimum it's 10 percent of the Uighur and Turkic Muslim population there. And, I should add, I'm probably going to say Uighur, but there are also Kazakhs and other groups that are Muslim that are also being incarcerated and abused. But when we look at this map, the other thing to bear in mind is that the people who aren't actually in detention aren't free either. And that's where the title of this event came from, right? Like, prisons by another name are another kind of prison. It's really the idea that, first of all, people are on house detention, and we don't know how many people that is. But also, they're, as we know, right, monitored every few blocks. There are checkpoints, they're physically surveilled, and then technologically surveilled. And I think the export of that technological surveillance should really concern all of us, which is why we're focusing on that today.

This is a map of the known facilities in Hotan Prefecture. There should be – I think it's 14 here, but they're kind of on top of each other, so you can't see a lot. We – and when you think about these detention facilities, again, what we know – and it's hard to get a lot of information both because not a lot of people get out of them and because we're really reliant on a lot of, like, public procurement documents and so forth. But we know that there's – there are different kinds of facilities. And so it's a complex picture. Some of them are former schools or prisons. Some of them are custom-built for this purpose. And they seem to have different levels of severity in terms of physical abuse. All of them have psychological coercion, right? That's basically what reeducation is, right, trying to eliminate a culture and religion through reeducation. So we're not talking about, like, a monolithic type of facility or experience.

We wanted to look at this particular facility because there's actually quite a bit known about it. Actually, I'm going to try to look at – there are slides in different places. I'm looking over here. So we know that there are allegations of forced labor connected to this particular one. And that's something we think we'll be focusing on in future work, because it's something we could actually do something about here in the U.S. This is obviously just desert in 2012. And this is an image from 2019. And this is an integrated facility that's the size of about 88 soccer fields. So this is really, really big.

And we don't know how big all of these custom-built facilities are, but we know, for example, from public procurement documents, that some of them have grocery stores in them, which are probably for people working there, and suggest to you the size and scale of this effort, which

maybe doesn't make a lot of sense at first blush. Why build these facilities in the middle of the desert with a very low-density population, on the edges of a country? But if you think about the Belt and Road Initiative, and the fact that a lot of the transportation, and pipelines and so forth though that – for that, they go through Xinjiang to get to Central Asia. It's actually a critical area. And so in that sense, the crackdown and the expenditure start to make a bit more sense.

Just briefly, this is from late in 2012, when this facility is starting to be built. You can see – you can see – actually, if you could see the northern part of it, there's this road network that really kind of encapsulates the entire facility and runs through it. You can see building in multiple locations that, again, suggests the whole thing was planned at once. So this planned and implemented over seven, eight years, probably. This is a more recent image. And I think there's a couple interesting points with this. One is that you can see it's not like a normal industrial facility for a few reasons.

One is you can see maybe here some little shadows. They're antenna from advanced communications capacities. We think this is probably a security and communications center. If this were just a normal factory, for example, you wouldn't need that, right? It's too – it's for security. You can also maybe see a little bit, there's fences both here in the middle and then all the way around the outside, that are 16 feet high, is our estimate from the imagery we've been able to obtain. So, again, if people are here willingly and happily you don't need 16-foot-high fences.

On that note, I want to turn to the northern part of this. So what we know from this facility – the way that we know it is really interesting. Chinese television, the official state TV, actually did a 15-minute segment on this – on this particular reeducation facility, and about how lucky and happy the Uighurs there were to be learning new skills to be part of a modern workforce, basically. And they talked about a particular company that was employing these detainees. And they named the company. And the AP then did some research and figured out that that particular company was shipping to the U.S., and their – the address it was shipped from was the same address as this detention center.

So we think there's a pretty – you know, I think the common understanding is this is probably that company's factory. I don't believe anyone has been able to interview a specific person who was in that factory, but from – I mean, just again, look at the facility.

I'm going to actually go to the next slide.

You can see the fences here. This is a 16-foot fence, that's solid down here, and then that's a wire fence up here. If people are there willingly, happily working in your factory, you don't need fences like this, right, so definitely appearances of forced labor, and that's consistent with increased reporting on this topic in terms of detainees who are able to escape or their families saying that this seems to be a growing problem. But we don't really understand the scale of it yet.

This is a different facility in Yining and it looks pretty benign. It's just a factory. There are six-foot fences around it, which is much more consistent with what we would expect for a normal industrial complex in China. And the only reason we know that there is something wrong with this facility is because we interviewed somebody, a former detainee, who actually was forced to work there.

And so we'll pick up on this more and this story more in future events, but we know this particular individual was in several different detention facilities with quite harsh conditions. And as a reward for good behavior and learning, was graduated to forced labor. So she – sorry, this individual was forced to work here, and I would say coerced, because this detainee was told that, if misbehavior occurred, the detainee would be sent back to much harsher – to these harsher facilities, right, so that's a form of coercion – and was paid a little bit for some of the work, but not for the rest of the work.

We also know that it was a mixed population in the facility, so both detainees and just normal folks from nearby villages. I think that really points out how complex the situation is likely to be as we try to untangle the conditions of forced labor there.

Actually, I just want to go back to one other thing. I think something that's really interesting, the CCTV – this Chinese television episode about the last facility I spoke about to me is really chilling in the sense that forced labor in some circumstances rises to the level of an international crime that's prosecutable at the International Criminal Court. And to have a television segment about basically what was probably the use of forced labor and to think that that is totally OK boggles my mind, right? It really shows some mental somersaults you would have to go through to get to that point.

Quickly I want to flag areas for further research that we are considering, and then we're going to get to the panel, and the panel is going to be great. So thank you for your patience.

One of the issues we're really interested in is the roles and responsibilities of international companies and surveillance in Xinjiang – that's, obviously, something a lot of us are thinking about both in terms of what they're selling and doing research on, and what they are buying from a human rights perspective.

Then, obviously, this issue around forced labor. How many people are involved in forced labor who are in these detention facilities, and is that being used to pay, basically, for those prisons – the prison state? And how does that connect to international supply chains, right? We know a little bit. We know China's largest tomato processing facility is in Xinjiang. We know what claims to be the world's largest yarn factory is in there. Apparel is produced there, tea packaging, mobile phone assembly, et cetera, but we don't really know how that connects with the outside world except that obviously all of us are wearing many things made somewhere in China.

The last issue – I know we’re going to talk about this on today’s panel – is really these international campaigns by the Chinese Communist Party of Chinese diaspora, particularly Uighurs and other Turkic-Muslim minorities for living in democracies, who are being harassed and threatened if they speak out about either their own experiences or those of their families and friends. And I think that that is – this is occurring in democracies, it has occurred here in Washington, D.C. So I don’t want to steal the thunder of my panelists, but I think that’s another really important issue to focus on.

On that note, we are going to turn to the panel now. And we’re going to have to do a little rearrangement on stage, so please just wait for a moment while they put a few more chairs up here. And I’ll ask the panelists to come up in a moment.

(Pause.)

Amy Lehr: So on today’s panel we have really some individuals with some incredible expertise on the situation in Xinjiang that in many cases have been working on these issues for years.

To my right we have Emily Rauhala. Am I butchering your last name?

Emily Rauhala: That’s pretty good.

Amy Lehr: OK, great. She’s a Washington Post staff writer. And she was based in China for five years and Hong Kong for two years before that, and just came back to the States in 2018.

To her right we have Sophie Richardson, who has been working on issues – human rights issues in China for Human Rights Watch for years and has been doing some terrific work on technology in particular, along with one of her colleagues.

To her right, Nury Turkel has joined us from – he’s an attorney and the board chair of the Uyghur Human Rights Project. He lives here in the Washington, D.C. area. Some of you may know him. He’ll be talking about some of the experiences of the diaspora.

And last we have an empty chair, because our logistical challenges today were significant. I believe our last panelist might be just coming in. It’s Sarah Cook.

MS.: She’s made it!

Amy Lehr: Yes, she’s coming. (Laughter.) From Freedom House. And she’s one of their – one of their East Asia experts, but we’ll really be talking about their work on technology and how it’s sort of spreading from Xinjiang into other areas.

So on that note, Emily, I mean, your time in mainland China actually coincides almost exactly with the start of this whole reeducation process. So you kind of saw this coming, I think. And can you just tell us a little bit about that experience?

Emily Rauhala: Sure. First of all, thanks so much for having me. I'm a reporter for The Washington Post, and I was in China as a correspondent and reported from across the country, including from Xinjiang several times. So the perspective I can share is not one of, you know, high-level great-power competition, but of what it's like to report on the ground and how the factors on the ground there are really shaping how this story's told in ways that I think are really significant.

And you're exactly right, the way this story is talked about right now, because it is so urgent, can make it seem like it popped out of nowhere. And of course, the opposite is true. And that matters in terms of understanding how we got here and also what is going to happen next. This is not a discrete event. This is not just in particular one segment of the population, that one segment is suffering particularly acutely. And I think that understanding is critical.

I'll just share a few snapshots in time to give you a sense. As early as – what's been happening in Xinjiang has been a slow progress over, I mean, decades, but I was first reporting there as a correspondent in 2014. At that time it was already – it was lower-tech, but all of the sort of older-school methods of surveillance and the intrusion of the authorities into the home and cultural and family level was already there. And that matters because it shows that it's – it is about the tech in many ways that are important, but that the process has been ongoing.

So in 2014 I was trying to write a – what I thought would be quite a fun profile of a Uighur pop star, flew to his hometown outside of Hotan, and ended up in, you know, a pretty terrifying car chase trying to simply do this story. By that time already, you know, local authorities were – felt completely free to enter people's homes, to shape their religious practice, to provide guidelines on how people should worship. And so we really see the – I really saw firsthand the kernels of this campaign against a culture. And it's since been enhanced, of course, by surveillance.

I was on the ground again in 2016. Went out to do a story in Kashgar, where Nury's from, and went – pitched a – pitched a big story to my editors. And by that time, when I was on the ground reporting, found that it was – the surveillance was so intense and the number of people on our trail was so many that I didn't feel like I could safely interview a single person. And that was years ago, you know.

Like, and I think it's important to remember that because it has affected – the intensification of that surveillance, it's not about the journalists, but it's about how this story has been understood. This is a story that's being told with satellite images and with state media propaganda photos because that's all we have. And it's great that we have that, but if we ask why has this gotten – gone on so long and why has this gone so far, it's because the Chinese Communist Party has very effectively managed this message, and in stopping reporting at a human level, you know, been able to further dehumanize this campaign of dehumanization.

Amy Lehr: Thanks, Emily, and we'll come back to Emily in a few minutes.



Sophie, you just did this big report on technology, you and your colleague Maya, on – my understanding is you have somehow – I don't know how – got hold of an app that a lot of police officers have on their phones and, like, recreated it or dismantled it. So what did you find out? And what are the questions that remain for you, the burning questions?

Sophie Richardson: There's so much for us to talk about this afternoon. But first of all, I'd like to echo Emily's thanks. It's great to be here. And it's great to be having a conversation like this in a forum like this because I think it reaches a different and important set of people.

You know, we've written for 25 years about issues like ethnic discrimination and restrictions on religious freedom, about enforced disappearances in the wake of the 2009 protests. But over the last couple of years we've written a lot more about abuses of surveillance technology across China, not just in Xinjiang. But in the course of writing about predictive policing platforms, we started seeing references to something called the Integrated Joint Operations Platform, which is not a name that just comes tripping off the top. And we sort of thought, huh, we don't really know what that is, but we'll sort of keep an eye on it. And then over the course of the year a couple of interviewees, people who had been detained, mentioned to us that when they had been questioned by authorities that those – that the police had been recording that information on an app, and independently they all described something that looked fairly familiar. Police WeChat accounts included references to the IJOP, which, you know, again made us think clearly this is a tool that's being commonly used.

And then – (laughs) – sometimes life is strange – we found a copy of this app online, publicly available, so we downloaded it. And we sort of spent a month or two thinking, what do we want to do with this? We weren't quite sure whether we actually wanted to try to log onto it, which we ultimately decided was not such a great idea. So we worked with a group that's based in Berlin to reverse-engineer it. What we decided we wanted to know was what was the thinking that had gone into that app. What was it that police wanted to know? And what information prompted them to detail Sarah instead of Nury? You know, what was it that people had to have done?

And by reverse-engineering the app we were able to show that, first of all, this thing – the IJOP – is really sort of the central brain of multiple surveillance streams across Xinjiang. It hoovers up information from CCTV feeds, from uses of your ID. All of these different streams of information come together. And what the IJOP does is it essentially aggregates all of this data, it flags behavior that's considered suspicious, and it prompts officers or other officials to go out and investigate that behavior. Arguably, the most important aspect of this was that the vast majority of the behavior that was coded into his app is legal. It's legal. It was not about gathering, you know, information about how many parking tickets you have or, you know, whether somebody's actually committed a crime. It was things like – this was mind-boggling – whether you had suddenly started to go out the back door of your house instead of the front door of your house. Not a crime, last time I checked, under Chinese law. It tracks whether you had been putting gas in a car that you do not own, also not a crime under Chinese law. If you turned your phone off for whatever the system deemed an unusually long period of time, that too was

suspicious. So all of these different kinds of behaviors – there were 36 behavior types, along with the fact of having any one of about 50 different apps on your phone, that alone could trigger having officials turn up on your doorstep and detain you. And ultimately we did find cases of people we had interviewed who had been in political education centers whose behavior had been logged in that way. You know, so we really were able to connect sort of the hard coating, the thinking behind the app, the application of it, and then the outcome.

Amy Lehr: Thanks, Sophie. We'll come back to some more Q&A about that.

I think one thing Sophie reminded me – I should have said this earlier. Just to be very clear, there's a normal prison system in Xinjiang too, right. But when we talk about these detention facilities and these numbers, those are people who are being put there with, like, no charges, no due process, right. There's no evidence they did anything wrong other than maybe changed their gas-purchasing habits. And so I think it's just really important to bear in mind that that's what we're talking about. This is not like a normal prison population that's had some kind of charges brought against them, even if their legal system in China is not what it could be.

I think another part of your report, Sophie, I found really interesting is I think you talked about how, like, the police officers are exhausted, actually, because they're having to chase all these leads. And they themselves are actually at a bit of risk if they don't do it is my understanding.

Sophie Richardson: Yeah. It's sort of a peculiar experience to read some of these WeChat accounts, because, you know, it's not a population for one who innately has a certain amount of sympathy. But, you know, reading, first of all, about the very labor-intensive process of entering all of this data, but also, you know, and chasing up endless leads, you know, being obliged to follow through on what the technology dated people had to do.

But it was also interesting to read some of their complaints about sort of the automization (sic; automatization) or automotation (sic; automatization) – I'm getting my word wrong here –

Amy Lehr: Automatization.

Sophie Richardson: Automating, thank you – automating policing, right; that, you know, there were some interesting complaints that police said, look, we've been trained to actually, you know, know what crime is and how to investigate, and now we're irrelevant. We're just doing what the machinery tells us to do. You know, I think that's – somewhere in that there's an interesting conversation about, you know, what it means for a police force to really reduce them to being the executors of what technology tells them to do, where there's no – you know, there's no judgment. There's no humanity. There's no, you know, sense of proportion.

Amy Lehr: Yeah. Thank you.

Sarah, since we have you – I'm so glad you're here. Sarah was giving another talk, at the NED as I recall.

So you, obviously – I think you and Sophie have some overlapping expertise. I'm really hoping you can talk more about the work that Freedom House has been doing in terms of tracking how some of the technology in Xinjiang is spreading to other parts of China or interacting with other parts of China, and then also abroad. What does that picture look like?

Sarah Cook: So – well, first of all, I'm really glad I was able to make it here in time for – to hear parts of the panel, so I'm not walking in with no sense of the previous conversation.

I think what's really interesting is that some of the features that Sophie mentioned with regards to even just this particular app in Xinjiang, you see that coming up in other examples, either in China or elsewhere. One is this idea of lots of different streams of information being collected, maybe not on this scale of minutia, but there's these databases like these so-called safe-city or smart-city projects that basically will collect, you know, the CCTV footage and then, you know, maybe use some kind of facial-recognition technology to track someone's age or ethnicity and then draw from the police criminal database to see if this person has, you know, drug-possession records or something like that. So that's one.

The other is the shoddy data security. And so that's – you know, the flip side of it is that it's actually enabled us to – and just really in the last year, I think there have been, like, five big examples of this, some of them related to Xinjiang, some related to other parts of China, like there was this Beijing residential community that had one of these smart-city set-ups of, like, 200 residents, and the data was, like, really shoddily secured. And so someone got a database and we were able to analyze it, and then you really get to learn and see how all these different pieces of the puzzle come together, and some that actually extend outside of China.

So just to give an example – and this relates more to some of the – I think when you get to outside of China, there's two aspects of it. One is the ways in which the Chinese government can monitor people outside of China, like critics or ethnic minorities it might be interested in. The other is kind of the export of these technologies and know-how to other countries.

So the first kind – I'll just give one example, and then I'll turn to the other aspect, which was the focus of some other research we did. WeChat is a really, really – is, like, the app in China. And it's kind of an instant-messaging app. And more and more people in diaspora, and also English speakers, are using it. You have Australian officials, people – government officials actually outside of China in some cases using it to communicate with their Chinese constituents.

And so, like, just a few weeks ago, there was this big data leak of WeChat data that had, like, three-point-something billion messages within a particular day that was being automatically checked for certain keyword triggers like Tibet or Xi Jinping or 1989, and they were being picked up for, like, some kind of review. And several million of those were from outside of China and were English-language ones from outside of China.

And so you have, again, this example of – this would be – maybe be kind of – it's not clear they were actually censored. We know, like, other examples of WeChat conversations being censored. But this is just a Chinese tech company basically, clearly on a mass scale, monitoring its users outside of China based on the content that they're – the conversations they're having. And one keyword trigger was – because this big, massive data collection was able to trigger, like, collection of the whole conversation.

Now, in terms of this element of kind of exporting censorship, Freedom House produces an annual assessment of internet freedom around the world, where the last issue published at the end of 2018 looked at 65 countries. So we assess the various aspects of internet freedom in 65 countries around the world. And what we found in 2018 was that, for the eighth year in a row, internet freedom around the world had declined. And also, for several years in a row, and not surprisingly, perhaps, the Chinese government was the worst abuser of internet freedom.

But one of the newer findings – and this, again, kind of like what Emily was saying; these are coming out of the blue – but is the degree to which the Chinese government is being more proactive now at trying to really export its model elsewhere. And that – you know, it takes two forms, two specific examples. One is training officials from other countries. So we found that out of the 65 countries, 36 countries had sent some kind of government or media official to China for some kind of – you know, there are these euphemisms; internet management, new-media management. A lot of it – some of it – it's like also the ways in which to kind of use big data to monitor public opinion so that then it may be finding more ways to manipulate it.

And then the other was actually the actual physical export of supplying technologies using advanced artificial intelligence or facial recognition to other governments. And so we found that 18 of the 65 countries, you know, had received – had bought that kind of technology from China.

Now, that's not comprehensive, because, for example, just in the last few weeks, news came out that now Serbia and Tajikistan, for example, have that kind of technology. And they just happen to not be one of the 65.

I'll just add one more point. If you actually look at those countries and the way they rate in terms of their level of freedom, of internet freedom, I was looking at how that compared on the Freedom on the Net report. The actually largest proportion of those countries are ones that are rated partly free. So it's not just the autocrats that are buying this technology or trying to learn it.

So if you look at, for example, the 18 or so, 11 of them were actually partly – countries that are partly free on internet freedom. Only five of them were not free, and then there were two free countries too. So I think you see that, both in terms of – that this isn't just a problem and an issue in countries that are already authoritarian, but also in countries that, with internet freedom, there's a real battle going on, perhaps. And this could potentially tilt the balance.

Amy Lehr: Thank you so much, Sarah. I think the work you all have been doing on (the price of ?) export has been obviously really important for kind of helping us understand the state of play, and will continue to be so. I'm waiting for your next report.

I think it also really highlights just something we need to think about as smart cities roll out around the world, including here, right; like, the temptation to use that data, right? Even if you – I can imagine as a government you have good intentions at the beginning, but then it's there. It seems quite irresistible to me, and really an area where we need to think more about safeguards.

Turning to a slightly different topic, Nury, I mean, you've been here in Washington for a long time, but you're in touch with a lot of the Uighur diaspora. You've worked with them on legal issues as well. And I think, you know, one issue is just – it's starting to get more attention, but really is this harassment of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslim minorities living abroad when they're living in democracies, whether it's sort of just individuals or on universities. So – Emily will also talk about this. But can you just talk to us about some people's experiences, maybe your own?

Nury Turkel: First of all, thank you very much for organizing this important discussion.

There are about 1,500 to 5,000 Uighurs living in the United States, mainly in Texas, here in Washington, D.C. area, and California. And when you leave China, including my own experience, you thought that you were over with that kind of repressive policies. But the Chinese government's intimidation and surveillance is still with us today, preventing us from enjoying the constitutional rights, in particular speech – free speech in this country.

My organization, UHRP, is currently working on a report focusing on this particular issue. The draft report that we have concludes the Chinese government is implementing systematic, cruel, ambitious, well-resourced, relentless, multiyear, data-intensive, persistent policies to inflict pain and suffering on Uighurs abroad. When I mention Uighurs here in the United States, this same method have been applied to the others around the globe. The campaigns of harassment and surveillance, coercion of Uighurs is an assault on our freedom in this country, and it's also a threat to our sovereignty. There's a criminal ramification for those Chinese agents conducting this kind of illegal behaviors and acts on our soil.

There are four types of activities that they have been actively engaging in to surveil and intimidate Uighur population. One of them is just a regular harassment, either directly approaching them – approaching the Uighurs through text messages, WeChat messages, emails, even in some instance phone calls, threatening that they need to stay quiet and they're not supposed to talk about what's happening to them, their families. That includes the loved ones disappeared into those camps. So that's one of the most effective methods that they have been used.

As a result, many Uighurs have not been able to come out and share their stories. I can assure you – I can say this with certainty, that it will be hard to find a Uighur around the world,

especially in free societies, that you won't find a family that have not been affected by the ongoing crisis. So with that kind of large numbers being affected, we still hear – we still don't hear enough, because of that precise reason that I described.

And also the second type of method that they've been using is recruiting informants. They're forcing Uighur individuals around the globe. We have some firsthand information shared by specific individuals that they approach, forcing them to become informant and commit act of espionage, monitoring certain individuals and reporting certain political activities. The third type of the infiltration in Uighur organizations.

In 2006, Radio Free Asia reported a Uighur-American individual struggling to reunite by his family, was approached by Chinese police with the condition that he will be able to see his wife and children if he promised to become informant, and also run for office in the UAA – Uighur American Association. This was reported on Radio Free Asia. Because of his refusal, to this day he has not been able to reunite with his family. Actually, that refusal cost him his marriage.

The last one is the most disturbing one, that is misinformation, disinformation, and ad hominem attack campaign that has been waged. Uighur leaders and outspoken individuals, also dealing with a kind of misinformation campaign that looked like it originated from the Chinese, which is very much consistent effort or pattern of foreign influence and interference campaign in democratic politics that we have seen here at home and in Europe. I personally have not seen a convincing and direct evidence of China's government's actions stimulating these problems, but I've privately heard from several disinterested observers that what is happening in diaspora communities follow a classic pattern of foreign interference.

Of course, they're normal – these kind of conversations, especially focusing expression of political opinion is normal. But too often, they turn into character assassination and false controversies. I've personally been the subject of those controversies, professionally made 30-second soundbite published after I've done something publicly that seemed to be pretty significant to discredit me and target my personal and professional integrity. And diaspora community also suffer constant distractions from campaigns to save the Uighur people from the ongoing utter destruction as we cope with ad hominem attacks in the – on individuals and their political positions. That includes blame for lack of progress in stimulating an adequate international response, and petty criticism out of proportion on social media. There are very active troll activities in Twitter – on Twitter and Facebook targeting particularly established Uighur activists as we speak today.

Some of these are unavoidable in a political community, but I'm also concerned that these are classic signs of foreign interference and influence campaigns that we've been reading on in major newspapers. To address this, the United States government needs to step up and use the legal tools at its disposal. One of the things that we always talk about, as mentioned by the congressman, is the legislative actions much be completed before the summer recess, hopefully. That could – that in and of itself will address some of these concerns, because the UHRP Act, the Rubio-Smith bill, specifically addresses these issues. And also, the FBI should set up a hotline

to allow Uighur individuals in the United States to call and share their stories anonymously even in some instances. Despite, the FBI should also make it clear that anyone, despite – regardless of their citizenship and immigration status, should come forward and share their stories.

And also the technology companies should step up the content moderating efforts to eliminate hate speech and unnecessary distractions. I think as a society we're dealing with similar issues, but the focusing on the Uighur work requires urgent focus and attention. Thank you.

Amy Lehr: Thanks so much, Nury.

And, you know, one thing I should have said is one way in which the Uighur situation doesn't come out of nowhere is that also Tibet, obviously. And Tibetan activists face many of the same challenges, right? Sort of they're not applying a playbook that's also getting modernized with social media and so forth but applying it to a new population that's very vulnerable, obviously.

I also wonder – this is a thing I've been wondering about – I found some reporting on malware that was targeting Uighurs from, like, 2013. I sort of have to assume there's malware and spyware and things being used, but I haven't seen much about that. So maybe that's a topic for further conversation.

Nury Turkel: Sure.

Amy Lehr: Emily, you have been doing some reporting recently that actually touches on some of the lead issues to what Nury was just talking about. Can you tell that story? I found it pretty mesmerizing.

Emily Rauhala: Sure. So one of the challenges of telling this story is, A, that it's really complex and, B, that it sort of pulls on a mix of sort of classic coercion and intimidation and in a way that's enhanced by technology. The story that I think you're referencing is a piece I did with a colleague who's based in Beijing about a – what should have been just a simple talk on a university campus in Canada. And we found out from – the speaker was a Uighur woman who was scheduled to deliver a presentation on the camps before an audience like this. Very normal for a university setting for a variety of speakers to come in. And what we obtained was a WeChat conversation where a group of Chinese student groups on campus had organized and coordinated – per their own account in this WeChat group – coordinated with the local embassy and consulate in Canada to surveil – effectively record the speech and, you know, presumably for use in future intimidation or coercion of either people in attendance or the speaker herself.

I want to – it should go without saying, but I'll say it no matter what. The vast majority of Chinese students in the United States, and Canada, and elsewhere have absolutely nothing to do with this. But it was a really clear and rare example of getting to see on the inside, you know, a sort of a coordinated effort to shut down this event, and also to capture not just who was speaking but who was in the audience. And it raises complex issues, right? I was a university student. One of those things you can do in university is shout down speakers. That's protected

speech. (Laughter.) You know? We – presumably some of us have been there in our student days. But what is the – what are the rights of Uighurs in the United States, or in Canada, or of Chinese students in the United States or Canada to go to an event and participate without fear of surveillance, coercion? And how do institutions respond to that?

Universities have so far responded by being like, yeeew, you know? That's not a response. And broadly, if there was a theme that I'd also like to pull out of this conversation is, you know, how has this gone on for so long? Why does this keep happening? Where is it going? I mean, it's gone on for so long because there's been almost no cost to the players involved in this campaign. And until there are in these specific cases, I think it will continue.

I'll add one more story which I will discuss quite gingerly. But in terms of this story being told, I've been working for several months with a family, a Uighur family who's in the United States right now, about whether they want to tell their story. And without getting into any details for safety reasons, I mean, it's – the logistics of trying to safely share someone's personal experience as it relates to what's happening right now are nearly impossible. It touches on everything that Nury has mentioned – you know, conducting the interview if you're not a Uighur speaker, who do you hire to translate the interview. People were terrified. You had, you know, a weeks-long debate over translators and who would be safe, and this is before we're even talking about being named or not being named, or family members that are still in China. And so the level of terror is extremely pronounced, and worth considering in its own right.

Amy Lehr: Yeah, I think it's been one thing that's been really surprising to me as CSIS has started to engage in this space more, which everyone on the panel I'm sure is well aware of, but how few people, first of all, are getting out of Xinjiang, especially Uighurs, actually. So it's easier to find people who are, say, Kazakh and who have joint citizenship, for example; their government has helped pull them out. So, so hard to find people that actually can give firsthand accounts of what's occurred. And then they're subjected to terror, so even the few that there are are afraid to speak, for completely understandable reasons.

Emily Rauhala: And one of the main activists who was recording and documenting the story of Kazakhs escaping the camps is now, of course –

Amy Lehr: In jail.

Emily Rauhala: – in jail. And so when people are – you know, the consequences are real, and the fear is well-earned.

Amy Lehr: Sophie, did you want to pick up on that?

Sophie Richardson: Just to – just to add, one thing that I should note about both the IJOP and the kind of information gatherers, but also something that we noticed when we published our report about the political education camps was the very clear focus of the authorities on the fact of people's relationships with people outside the country. If you had been outside the country, if you had a



cousin who'd taken a vacation in Malaysia, if you had relatives someplace else, if you were calling family members here or there, there's a list of 26 sensitive countries. That's in our September 2018 report, but it's also a clear series of questions in the – in the app that we reverse-engineered.

And you know, I have spent a lot of time in the last year thinking about what we should have all paid a lot more attention to along the way. And I think – and it's a long list in my mind – (laughs) – because what's happening in Xinjiang is just sui generis. It is absolutely sui generis. And not only do we need to deal with what's happening right now, we need to make damn sure it's not going to happen to anybody else anywhere.

But I think one of those signal pathologies we should have paid more attention to was the incredible effort the Chinese government put into sort of roughly 2009 to about 2015 enforcing back, or like literally physically repossessing people who were trying to flee the country. You know, most governments with refugees, they're like, meh, go, we don't want you; good riddance. If China wants you back, and it wants to know who you were talking to, hello, we need to pay a hell of a lot more attention to that. We really do, because that's, I think – you know, when you think about sort of the standard indicators of, you know, things like violence or, you know, ethnic conflict or things like this, we need a whole new set of diagnostic indicators – (laughs) – and that should be one of them. If a government is hunting people down who are trying to flee it, and especially when it's a P5 member state, we all need to pay a lot more attention to that.

Amy Lehr: That's a great point, Sophie. Thank you.

Nury Turkel: Can I –

Amy Lehr: Yes. (Laughs.) We'll keep going down the line.

Nury Turkel: Traditionally, the Uighurs even tried to stay away from the – certain geographical locations, like Munich or Washington, maybe Istanbul, where a lot of Uighur activity has gone. That even did not save some of the Uighurs from getting into trouble with the Chinese. And also, not being politically active didn't help either.

So everyone categorically, systematically been affected and been bullied, and we've seen some consequence. People who have spoken out pay a heavy price. Five of – some Radio Free Asia reporters ignored those warnings, and they are paying a heavy price to this day. I would say that Radio Free Asia reporters are the only Americans that have been punished by the Chinese directly for what they do professionally.

Amy Lehr: Sarah?

Sarah Cook: Just a couple of quick thoughts on some of what has come up here. I mean, I think one thing with regard to what's happening in Xinjiang and this question of bringing people back from abroad, I think it's – as bad as things were and were slowly getting, there has been this really

dramatic deterioration over the last three years. And so when people – you know, Uighurs or others, you know, Chinese – making calculations about I’m going to go study Arabic in Egypt, you know, or something – or a legitimate – that was common for years and years and years – Uighurs would do it. And then suddenly, like, you had this group of all-Uighur students who get sent back from Egypt to China.

So I think the speed with which this shift has happened, especially with regard to international communication and travel, actually has given a lot of data – like, because almost everybody – you know, there’s a much wider population of people who are guilty of it, so to speak, then there had been before.

I mean, I think the other thing in terms of thinking about precursors – and I’d written a piece about this in the Jamestown China Brief – is this issue of this kind of reeducation called transformation, and if you actually look at the language, at the tactics, and actually even at several of the key officials – whether it’s Chen Quanguo, or his assistant, or a couple of other people at the national level, they’ve actually been quite involved in previous campaigns, especially with regard to the meditation practice of Falun Gong that has been persecuted in China for almost 20 years, and where this term of kind of transformation through reeducation really started to gain progress.

And this is the creepy thing, to be honest, about – if you look at, like, Chinese journals, they are learning – they’ll be like, these are the most effective ways, and they have people with psychological backgrounds. So I think in terms of also thinking about how did they manage to ramp this up so quickly, they actually really did have a playbook already in place.

And the last thing I thought I’d share with regards to the question of Chinese students is a former intern of mine actually is – one of her projects – she had done a survey of Chinese students in America with regards to the question of surveillance. And so she – you know, she got 72 responses, but they were from 31 universities, and 58 percent of those people were actually aware and concerned about Chinese surveillance here in the United States.

Amy Lehr: And just so I – Sarah, those weren’t Uighurs, right? They were –

Sarah Cook: No, these were Chinese students.

Amy Lehr: – Chinese students. Yeah.

Sarah Cook: And so I think some of the things that, you know, we were talking about – whether it’s about informants and monitoring – and actually about 80 percent of them reported some form of self-censoring whether or not they had demonstrated an awareness of official surveillance, and it included, for example, whether they would choose to attend university events, which of their friends they would talk about their political views with, as well as things like what they might do online or even like speaking publicly.

So I think, again, in terms of this question of how has it gotten to this point, perhaps the responsibility of university institutions to create hotlines, you know, for Uighurs certainly and for other vulnerable populations like Tibetans, but like just for average Chinese students for them to know that if this happens, it's really not supposed to, and you could call anonymously and someone will look into – as well as, in some cases we actually know that there are Chinese diplomats who are doing this intimidation, and somebody should be really, like, get kicked out – (laughs) – for that reason.

Nury Turkel: Your presentation reminded me of something quite interesting that we should think about. When you look at the travel history that helped the Chinese to build this artificial intelligence database, there was a period starting in 2009, '12, all the way to '15, the Chinese government actually encouraged Uighurs to go out, to travel, go to Turkey, go to study in Egypt, go to Central Asia, Malaysia, and most of those countries – even including United States – made it to the list of 26 countries. So it begs the question have they been preparing this, building this for a long time, encouraging people to apply for passports and join the tourist groups to go to those troubling countries, come back with some sort of inspiration, expression of their excitement, especially the ones who went to Turkey – so the museums glorifying Uighur history, Uighur civilization that have been a problem for some Uighurs.

And also, if the Chinese government has really problem with separatism or all the other isms, where the Kazakh people fits in this? Are they trying to create another separate Kazakh state within the Chinese territories? It makes no sense.

Amy Lehr: No, no, I mean, I think this is really about culture, religion at the end of the day, and not being within the model that the Chinese government wants people to fit into, right – not being in the box – the mental box.

I want to turn to policy because we're a policy think tank, and then I want to make sure we have time for some audience questions. So there's various pending pieces of legislation both in the Senate and House. In terms of dealing with surveillance – I just want to go down the row quickly – what's the most important element in either of those bills that really needs to be maintained? That's a hard question, so.

Sophie Richardson: Why don't we make Sarah start? (Laughter.)

Emily Rauhala: Sarah start.

Sophie Richardson: So I can think for a minute.

Sarah Cook: OK. I'll keep it simple, but – because I'm not as familiar with these.

I think whatever would put the biggest cost on the company, potentially, and, like, to really – especially ones that are engaged in human rights abuses in terms of just sanctions of – but, like,

targeting ones with regards to ones that are responsible for certain kinds of abuses to really change the calculus.

And then I think the other thing would be I think anything in terms of also transparency, so that we understand more about who's doing what where, is generally – is generally pretty helpful and good, and something Congress can push the administration to do.

Amy Lehr: And to be fair, that's a fair way of interpreting my question. In terms of dealing with these surveillance issues, what are, like, one or two of the most important steps Congress could take which may be in one of these bills?

Nury Turkel: I agree with Sarah. The Chinese government has not suffered any cost for what they have been doing, particularly in the last two years. So going after technology companies in particular and certain scientists in the United States, either knowingly or unknowingly helping the Chinese police state, particularly in the area of genetics. There have been some disturbing reports that at least two very well-known American scholars/scientists have been implicated in this questionable scientific cooperation.

Amy Lehr: Right, and my recollection is the articles are around using genetic markers to identify different ethnic groups, including Uighurs and Tibetans and things. Yeah, I think that's a really interesting conversation that needs more unpacking.

Sophie?

Sophie Richardson: Unsurprisingly, I agree with these guys. I'm going to try to stitch something a little bit broader together, which is that, you know, I'm very pleased that the bills envision, you know, heightened concerns for protections of the Uighur diaspora community in the U.S.

But to also sort of pick up on some of the points about academic freedom and universities' role, and you know, concerns that, you know, bad behavior by the Chinese government or the Chinese Communist Party don't get legislated into anti-Chinese sentiment or, you know, the demonization of whole communities. The United States has made that mistake often. It does not need to repeat it.

And so I think it's not just about providing protection and support to diaspora communities so that, you know, you're able to enjoy all of the same rights that I do –

Nury Turkel: Right.

Sophie Richardson: – but also that, you know, students and scholars who want to be in an environment that is free and open are protected and supported and welcomed in solidarity and not treated reflexively as a national security problem. You know, that really – that's a complicated idea to hash out in policy, but it makes me very uneasy some of the discussions that really are – well, some of them are blatantly racist. Some of them are awfully close to that edge. And I think it's not hard to see

some very alienating effects amongst precisely some of the kinds of people whose presence and participation here should be not just welcomed, but celebrated. We got – we got to get that right. That's an important piece of this puzzle.

Amy Lehr: That's a great, great point, Sophie. Thank you so much for highlighting that and trying to avoid our mistakes from the past.

Sophie Richardson: And the present.

Amy Lehr: Emily?

Emily Rauhala: I'm just a hack, I'm a journalist, so I won't comment on – (laughter) –

Amy Lehr: That's OK.

Emily Rauhala: – you know, in a – in a normative way on any specific piece of legislation. I'll leave that to the experts to my right.

But I will, you know, amplify the last part of what Sophie said, which is that, you know, to me this is not a – it is happening in China. This is something that we need to be concerned about, and – for everyone who follows China, people who study China, the whole sort of China-watching community in the U.S. But this is not something that reflects something specifically about China, and there's ways that – what I'm trying to say is the U.S. is not off the hook here, you know? These are issues that are affecting liberal democracies as well as authoritarian states. The demonization of specific cultures and specific people is not – you know, everyone has a hand in this game right now. And so I think the more that we approach this problem with that in mind, and with a sense of humility, and with a sense of common purpose, the better – and avoid the sort of East-West, us-them, good-bad thinking. I don't think that helps this cause.

Sophie Richardson: Leave it to the Canadian on the panel to talk about humility. (Laughter.) And on that one point, because I was really glad that Representative Gallagher made a point that I think is incredibly important, which is that the Chinese Communist Party is not the people across China. These are two very different things. And I think often, you know, policymakers are understandably thinking about governments and parties and, you know, governing institutions. But it's very easy to find examples of people slipping into that very, I think, kind of intellectually lazy conflation of the Chinese Communist Party or the Chinese government with China, or Chinese people, or the people of China. And I think it shouldn't be hard to be disciplined in that way, but it's an important point in these discussions.

Amy Lehr: Thank you. I want to just pick up one other policy issue that Nury and I have talked about particularly, which is that I don't believe is in any pending legislation. It's around protecting, let's say, asylum seekers, for example. What can we do, right? Like, one of the biggest problems is that people are afraid to talk about their experiences or experiences of their families.

Sometimes it's because of being harassed, but sometimes it's because their actual status isn't secure. So what can we actually do about that?

Nury Turkel: The United States government has a history of providing that kind of legal status. Back in 1990, right after the Tiananmen Square massacre, the U.S. government granted immigration status. But we don't have that many Uighurs living in the United States, either with a student status or expired student status, or an asylum applicant status. At least administratively the executive branch should expedite the adjudication process, which is not out of ordinary. But if the United States Congress wants to add a language in the pending legislation, they can do that as well.

But the numbers are not that substantial. We're talking about probably around 500-1,000 people in that situation. So that could be done at the executive branch with, you know internal memo instructing the USCIS to schedule pending Uighur asylum cases, at least adhere to a reasonable timeframe, if not 60-day rule. So that could be something that they can look into it. That gives a sense of assurance and protection to those who are wandering around in this country kind of being in a legal limbo. Can I go back home? Even receiving sending money can be a reason for somebody's parents to end up being in the camps.

Amy Lehr: Thanks so much for that.

Well, I want to turn this to the audience now. We have about, oh, 25 minutes, which isn't too bad. So I'm going to take three questions at a time, and then the panelists get to them. So there's one here in the back.

Q: Hi. Nina Gardner. Teaches business and human rights at Johns Hopkins SAIS. And very, very happy to see Amy put together this panel. One of my students actually wrote a paper about this, and it really alarmed me.

Amy Lehr: Can you speak – sorry, just speak up a little bit? Thank you.

Q: Yeah. So one of the questions I wanted to – was not touched on is the complicity, since we're talking about business and human rights – the complicity of some of the investors, OK, because a number of investors have invested in this technology – like Hikvision. These are in our mutual funds. And so I was just wondering whether any of you have done any work as to sort of highlighting that, letting people know that our pension funds, our mutual funds may be helping on that. And I think also if you could comment on Google and Dragonfly. I don't know if they are using that for these internment camps, but there is a lot of back and forth in terms of our tech companies being complicit in this. And it makes me very uncomfortable. So I was wondering whether you could illuminate us little bit more on that. Thank you.

Amy Lehr: All right. Let's take a question here in the front, and then there's one in the back on that side as well. Two women. And please identify yourself.

Q: Cathy Cosman.

My question has to do with – I’ve been told by people who are much more knowledgeable about this tragic situation than I am that in addition, of course, the Uighurs, all Muslims in China, including two Han groups – Chinese Han groups who are Muslim – are being affected by this campaign. And I think that’s important to point out, for many points of view, but I’d be curious to hear your view on that. And also, you mentioned Tajikistan, sadly, a very repressive country by now, having this facial recognition technology. I’ve also been told by firsthand witnesses that the Turkmen social – not Social Security – (laughs) – security services also have been sold this technology. So I’d be curious if you could mention some other countries of concern, shall we say, that have this technology and put it to bad use.

Amy Lehr: Thanks. And there’s one more in the back. Yes.

Q: Hi. My name is Lili Lu (ph). I’m from the Asia Foundation.

You mentioned that China has been exporting a lot of these surveilling technology and that the U.S. is not, you know, completely free of this issue as well. So what can really stop China from these surveillance activities? What are some restraints both domestically and internationally with other regional states, with the U.S., that you can see that can potentially put constraints on China? If its power is expanding and if it’s so ubiquitous, what are some things that international actors can do at this point?

Amy Lehr: Great. Does anyone want to pick up the first question around investors? I think this is – yeah.

Sarah Cook: I can – I can – (laughs) – a few of those were for me. That’s absolutely an issue in terms of investment. I think one of the interesting things is you’re starting to see some more news reporting about it, about some of the pension funds in places – teachers’ pension funds – in places like New York and California, it being found that they have been investing in some of these companies that are assisting with surveillance in China. I don’t yet know, because it’s not quite what I follow day to day, if they’ve actually divested from that. There’s actually, interestingly, one example at least of a Chinese – one of these problematic Chinese companies, SenseTime, that did divest from some subsidiary that was found to have been particularly involved in surveillance in Xinjiang, I think because it was afraid of the reputational damage and the actual monetary damage that was being done to it.

I mean, I think with regards to – but it’s not just surveillance. I’ll just say that it also relates to censorship. So if you think about the lengths that, for example, WeChat, which is owned by Tencent, or Sina Weibo, both of which are on the New York Stock Exchange, go to cover up these atrocities and other forms of persecution against a wide range of Chinese citizens, they’re basically assisting in covering up crimes against humanity. And so I think, you know, thinking about that, you know, also as we’re, you know, thinking of investing. I mean, my husband and I went to our financial advisor. I’m like, OK, no Chinese companies. And I think that’s something that, you know, even – you don’t have to be an expert on Chinese media and internet freedom to think about that, and even on an individual level to tell people.

On Google Dragonfly, it's interesting, it's actually kind of a good news story because I think because of this unusual situation of engineers within Google, actually, pushing back, alongside some of the different human rights groups and the usual suspects, it looks like they've actually stopped it now and cancelled. So there were still some questions. It seems like it's a maybe more solid victory than it even appeared a few months ago.

And countries – I actually happen to have a list here, but I can share some of the countries that the export has been gone to that are actually rated not free. So that would include – so actually Pakistan is rated as not free on internet freedom, and they've purchased this. These kinds of technologies, the UAE, Venezuela, Zimbabwe. I think in some cases you have countries, again, that we think – that are actually quite autocratic but are still – the internet is, like, a space that's relatively free. So they're rated partly free on internet freedom. But they're buying these technologies. And so that's where you see countries like, for example, Rwanda, that's very politically repressive but is still partly free. Places like Kazakhstan. Even though they have their own citizens that are in – and members of their ethnicity that are in some of the camps.

And then you've got, again, these partly free countries that have – they have real rules of autocratic tendencies. And there was this great New York Times investigation about what had happened in Ecuador, where after a change – political change there, I think there was more openness to discuss this. And it turned out that actually Correa's government, the previous president, had been using this against political opponents. And one of the interesting things related to Sophie's point about the police, the manpower, was that actually they were, of course, pitching it in Ecuador, which has high crime rates, that all of these cameras are to protect against crime. It actually turned out that in terms of police manpower, using this technology to follow a specific individual, a relatively small number of political opponents, it was actually much more conducive to that than to fighting crime more widely. So they're being pitched as serving a sort of public good, but in fact in terms of how the offline reality plays out it might – it might not go in that direction, necessarily. So I'll pause there.

Amy Lehr: Anyone else?

Nury Turkel: On the effect on other peoples, there are unconfirmed news reports about Hui also being affected, but we have not really had anyone done any investigative reporting on that yet.

But on the Uighur – in the Uighur region, I think one group that has not been really talked about is the Uzbeks. They are very devout and conservative Muslims mainly living in Kashgar and Ghulja. There are some of the epicenters of the – of the camp situation today, and they have not been talked about.

But there's only one incident about the Kyrgyz situation. A Kyrgyzstan-based parliamentarian stated several month(s) ago that his brother was detained in China in one of those camps.



So I can reasonably believe that all of the Muslim people who are part of the Turkic background, practicing Islam, have been affected by this.

Emily Rauhala: I can add that I interviewed several Kyrgyz folks last summer who were giving off-the-record testimony on their experiences in the camps. And I'll also say I've been out of China since last fall, so my information might be a little bit behind, but I was in Gansu last summer as well and there was a lot of reports of Hui mosques being destroyed. I think it's an important point to make because it shows that what is happening in terms of religious freedom more broadly is a range of policies, and that we've known about a lot of these for a long time – you know, a crackdown on certain forms of Tibetan religious practice, crackdowns on Christian religious practice. And it was much of that kind of thing where we're going to demolish this mosque, rebuild it, we're going to put a religious leader in place that we're more comfortable with, and then you're free to practice, you know, within this newly-redesigned space. And that instinct is certainly evident in what's happening in Xinjiang, though in a much more extreme degree.

Amy Lehr: Yeah, I think this is a great point. If you look at the U.S. – is it Commission on International Religious Freedom – you'll see a lot there, right, about these broader trends around religious freedom in China that are not trending in a good direction.

Emily Rauhala: The Sinicization of –

Amy Lehr: Exactly, trying to fit people into a box.

Sophie Richardson: I'll take a stab at the – at the last question. I mean, in terms of imposing a literal, actual price here in the real world, you know, there's a whole universe of sanctions that the U.S. government can consider with respect to some of the Chinese companies that are involved in repression in Xinjiang. The IJOP was developed under the ownership of a very large conglomerate called CETC. But you know, we all saw the same saw on the front page of The New York Times yesterday about how U.S. companies are still selling gear to Huawei. I'm curious to know how that went down in the White House.

But also, I think there is there a lot – and so there's a whole universe of sanctions. We talk a lot about things like Global Magnitsky, which is about targeting individuals who are credibly alleged to have committed human rights violations. But you know, there's the entities list. There's the SDN list. There are all sorts of lists that have different permutations of letters and numbers in their names that I don't quite understand all of. But you know, there's quite – there are a lot of tools to work with in that realm. So that's sort of one universe of responses.

I think Mr. Gallagher and I may disagree about just how brightly Silicon Valley's halo glows in these matters. I think there's a lot of room for looking much more carefully at what U.S. companies are making/selling, what services are on offer. At a rock-bottom minimum those companies should be publishing due diligence policies to show that their goods and services are not complicit in the commission or enabling of serious human rights violations. That's the bottom line of the U.N.'s Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

In the – in the sort of rhetorical realm, you know, this was not a wise moment for the United States to walk away from the Human Rights Council, where really the most – some of the most important discussions about accountability for gross human rights violations in Xinjiang are taking place, and they are playing out in a very different way because the U.S. is a part of that institution at the moment.

There are certainly avenues to pursue in New York at the Third Committee. You know, this is sort of under the heading of making China pay a reputational price.

And then the last point I would make about surveillance technology in general is that, you know, there's a lot of room for governments, and civil society groups, and individual activists to talk about setting very high, binding international standards on privacy rights. You know, we shouldn't – there is a lot of triage to be done about what has gone wrong. Clearly there is a need for setting a high bar and actionable legal standards internationally on what privacy rights should look like. And that's still a very – it's a very uneven conversation, and it really tends to be at the moment, I think, either about, you know, environments where, you know, rights are protected and surveillance technology is very advanced. And you read op-eds on the pages of The New York Times and think, wow, that would make no sense in China. Or they're about these very repressive environments and how technology is being used there, and I think lost in all of that is an actionable conversation about how to set legally binding standards at a very, very high level.

Sarah Cook: I would just add, I think, you know, if you – the upshot of having some of the countries that are buying this being relatively democratic is they do have active civil society, and they do have a level of accountability and organization and so from that perspective, actually, I think some of the really good investigative journalism that has been done about how this is playing out, especially in other countries, like this article about Serbia or Ecuador, or other examples that actually really raise awareness in these other countries so then their civil society can mobilize. And so one example that isn't so much on surveillance, but for example, more on the censorship side, but there's a Chinese company that has done a lot of the analog to digital transitions on the TV in Africa, and there are some questions about how they've used that power to suppress certain stations like BBC versus, say, Chinese state media.

Well, in Ghana, actually, this came up, and so then – and there are other kinds of corruption, and so you actually had the broadcasting association, you know, appeal to its own government not to sign this contract. I think it's still outstanding, but again, you have in countries around the world that have relative democratic systems – if people in society know about this, that this is happening, then they can push back. And I think that's one of the things for those of us working in this sphere to see how to do better at so that those actors can really push back.

Amy Lehr: Thanks for all those comments. I think for me what you were saying resonates in the sense of I think it's about leading by example, right? And like if we want there to be good global norms then we have to know what that looks like in terms of the use of these new technologies, and we

just aren't getting there. And also for our companies, right, to lead by example and be companies you would want to work with if you want to protect human rights.

Emily Rauhala: I was going to say, you know, I'm a Millennial – just barely, may be hard to believe – (laughter) – but when I talk to my friends and my peers about what I reported on in China and specifically things like, you know, facial recognition and surveillance, I get this, like, very fatalistic, well, all technology companies are bad. This is happening to us.

And you know, the reality is what, you know, Hikvision is doing in Xinjiang is not the same as what Facebook is doing, but that fatalistic – the cynicism about American technology companies is curbing the outrage about tech more broadly and stopping a response.

So, you know, you mentioned that activism from within Google had potentially curbed this program, you know, I think that's really significant in terms of the domestic piece: you know, are people speaking out about the role of tech companies and the role of surveillance domestically, and then what are the norms that are developed from that.

Amy Lehr: Thank you. I want to take just – I think maybe two more questions. We're running out of time. I know this has also been a long event, so thank you for sticking through it.

So question way in the back, and another one way in the back.

Q: Hi. Thank you for the wonderful panel. My name is Alvaro Maranon. I am with New America OTI, and I have a question for the panel.

So do you think we need more international consensus, like a digital Geneva Convention, on what technology is permissible and what isn't? Or do you think it would be more effective to have, let's say, domestic legislation, either through Congress acting through sanctions and legislation or local community actions, like CCOPs in San Francisco, and banning facial recognition? Thank you.

Amy Lehr: One more question?

Q: Thank you. Sean Lin from WQER.

So last week the independent tribunal concluded organ harvesting still ongoing in China, and if ongoing, the Uighur are the major victim groups. And they recommend, you know, taking action against pharmaceutical companies, actually. So I'm wondering any suggestion on how to push on the legislation on that, as well as any connection between the organ harvesting with potential group in – coming from Saudi Arabia. Because people have been asking is there any connection between Saudi Arabia's people doing organ tourism into Uighur area as well. Thank you.

Amy Lehr: That's a really interesting question. Who wants to pick up on that?

Sophie Richardson: I can take a stab at the first one. Either question. Both fair game.

Sarah Cook: I can take a stab at the second. So you go ahead and –

Sophie Richardson: Do you –

Nury Turkel: Go ahead.

Amy Lehr: Please go ahead, Sophie.

Sophie Richardson: Sorry, it was a little hard to hear your question. I think it was essentially which should we be working harder on, domestic legislation or binding international standards? You may be annoyed that my answer to that is both.

I mean, look, you know, one of the biggest problems implicit in what we're talking about here is that, you know, a seventh of the earth's population lives in a country where their rights aren't protected. And so, you know, you want – you know, on paper, some of China's legislation is OK, but that's not how things play out in reality. So there, you know, domestic legislation is not going to help people who are trying to, you know, obtain redress against serious human-rights violations. And it is that recourse to much higher international standards that they have to work with.

You know, one of the challenges also of domestic legislation is that it is obviously subject in democracies to change of governments, that, you know, change laws in ways that maybe are in tension with existing obligations, international legal obligations that are stronger. And so I think that, you know, setting out that kind of binding legislation for all governments is a very important thing to do.

Nury Turkel: The Chinese government has used the Uighurs' life and their homeland as a laboratory to come up with this system. And they have been promoting this officially through Global Times, even through the ambassador here in town, that other countries should look at it as a model to resolve this whole so-called world's Muslim problem. So this is coming. This is going to affect the lives of many, many people. And it should not be the only concern for the United States government. This has to be a global concern.

If it's only domestic, the Chinese government is already using a U.S. focus on these issues of kind of, you know, conspiracy, hamper China rise type of rhetoric. They've been actually calling this is the U.S. has – U.S. invented this whole hype, hysteria.

So it has to be a global effort. The Europeans has to speak out. We haven't heard anything from countries that have experience during the Second World War and know how it ends when a government or a political leader targets a specific ethnic group or religious minority.

So this is a global concern. I agree with Sophie that it has to be done in both domestic and global fronts.

Sarah Cook: On the organ-transplant issue, I looked at this a little bit when I was working on a report on religion in China a few years ago, and we did actually interview some – that was before the camps had even come up – Uighurs who had been blood-tested, certainly Falun Gong practitioners who had been blood-tested and had other things.

And, I mean, I think there's lots of ways we can get into what's creepy about the Chinese organ-transplant system. The basic facts are that you have many more transplants than voluntary donors or reported donors, and you have very short waiting times. I mean, we're talking, like, a couple of weeks, a month.

So you have somebody who's basically essentially being killed on demand, because even if it's executed, you know, criminal prisoners, which there probably may be some component, but there are many fewer than there used to be, it still – is execution being timed for when somebody needs a liver? Because – and there's lots of actually evidence and investigative journalism of – there's, like, recently a Korean TV station that went to a hospital, and you see people talking. And some of them are foreign tourists.

And one of the things I think is disconcerting is that a lot – you have a lot of – well, you have people in China, but you also have Japanese and Koreans who go. And for them, for example, ethnic Chinese organ sources, whether they're Falun Gong practitioners or criminal inmates, could, you know, be maybe a better match. But you have a lot of tourism coming from the Middle East. And I think that hasn't been looked at that closely. There are rumors about advertisements about halal organs, but that hasn't been so confirmed, I think, of whether that's actually happening. But you do have a lot of organ tourism. And from that perspective, having Uighur organs, you know, would be a better match.

And then I think if you tie that into the surveillance question and the massive amount of actual medical testing that's been done on Uighurs, and then applications like this where you – DNA sampling and – you know, like that, to – and then a mass extrajudicial detention-center system, it's very scary. And I think, as – and then you start to hear reports of Uighurs being transferred to other parts of China, to other prisons in China. Yes, that could be because of overcrowding. But again, I think, when you talk about these kinds of panels of experts, like this tribunal that was in London, it's that – or, like, when we were looking at it as part of this larger report.

The circumstances – like, you just get chills, because if some of these things weren't happening, it wouldn't be possible. But it just makes it so much more likely that these people, including Uighurs, are either now or could be killed. So even in thinking about the situation right now in Xinjiang, could it get worse? Yes, it actually could. There is a real possibility of this being a pre-genocidal situation.

And so I think if you're thinking about this international intersection, the question of – whether it's – I don't know enough about the pharmaceutical companies, the immunosuppressants and things, medical exchanges. One thing some countries have done, like Israel or Taiwan that have nationalized health-care systems, is they basically put a ban on people being reimbursed for going to China, for receiving an organ in China, because actually one of the most outspoken doctors on this is an Israeli heart-transplant surgeon, and he got this kind of legislation passed in Israel because he had a patient who said, well, I can't wait here anymore; I'm going to China and I'm going to get an organ in two – they told me if I show up in two weeks, I'll get an organ. And this doctor is like, how is that possible? How can you schedule a heart organ transplant?

So I think there's those types of also kind of – at the very least we should have legislation in place to make sure that we're not complicit. That would apply both to the surveillance realm and then to this type of even more, you know, even higher level of human-rights abuse.

Amy Lehr: Thank you so much. Yeah, we've been hearing bits and pieces about organ – potential organ harvesting among Uighurs, but there's not enough there to truly know what's going on yet, but obviously an issue to be watching.

I know there are a few more questions, but we're actually at the end of our time. And you all have been really patient.

So I just want to thank our panel so much. You were terrific. (Applause.)

(END)