

Xi Jinping's Vision for Xinjiang

By Jude Blanchette

The systematic campaign of religious and cultural repression—as well as mass incarceration of minority populations—in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is one of the most disturbing and shocking human rights atrocities of the twenty-first century, combining as it does the basic and brutal elements of violence and fear with the latest manifestations of modern technology.

As governments and human rights organizations struggle to conceive of effective ways to pressure China to dismantle the network of detention facilities and concentration camps throughout the region, **key questions remain** about why the Xi administration has adopted such **extreme measures** to punish entire ethnic and religious populations.

As part of the Freeman Chair's ongoing project to translate neglected articles, speeches, and other documents that shed light on China's evolving political system and security considerations, the below translation offers some additional perspective from inside the Xinjiang party apparatus as to what is driving the repressive measures. Written in late 2017 by a researcher at a Chinese Communist Party (CCP) training facility in Xinjiang, the article was republished on various official websites, including the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Hunan National Religious Affairs Committee. While a good deal of the article contains the expected levels of platitudes that are part and parcel of Party-speak (the active reading of which Simon Leys **once likened** to “munching rhinoceros sausage, or to swallowing sawdust by the bucketful”), a cold and hard vision nonetheless imbues the piece. Xinjiang as described here is not a land of proud people with a rich and diverse culture and heritage, but is instead depicted as a stark security challenge, one that can only be pacified through “striking hard” and promoting state planned-economic development. That such a hostile narrative permeates Party discourse speaks volumes about how deep-seated the Party's dystopian vision for Xinjiang is.

Studying and Understanding the Essentials and Meaning of General Secretary Xi Jinping's Strategy for Governing Xinjiang

学习领会习近平总书记治疆方略的要义和内涵

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Original Source: Hunan National Religious Affairs Committee website.

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The CCP Central Committee has always attached great importance to “Xinjiang work” [新疆工作]. Since the Eighteenth National Congress, General Secretary Xi Jinping has repeatedly given instructions and made arrangements concerning various tasks related to Xinjiang. Beginning on December 19, 2013, Xi Jinping has put forward clear requirements for the work in Xinjiang under the New Situation and drawn up a major strategic plan. From April 27 to 30, 2014, he engaged in a high-level inspection of Xinjiang and made plans for its future from a strategic and comprehensive perspective. In May 2014, he delivered an important speech at the second Central Xinjiang Work Forum. On the morning of March 10, 2017, he participated in reviewing the Xinjiang delegation to the Fifth Session of the Twelfth National People's Congress and delivered an important speech. All these actions fully reflect the great importance General Secretary Xi Jinping places on Xinjiang. He has a deep concern for the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang, ardently hopes that Xinjiang will achieve the general goal of social stability and long-term peace, and wishes that the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang will lead wonderful and happy lives. General Secretary Xi Jinping's continuous attention to Xinjiang led to the formation of his thoughts on governing Xinjiang [治疆思想]. These thoughts not only contain the traditional wisdom of previous central governments in governing Xinjiang, but also embody the new thoughts, views, and strategies of modern governance.

I. COMPREHENSIVE UNDERSTANDING OF THE ESSENTIALS OF GENERAL SECRETARY XI JINPING'S STRATEGY FOR GOVERNING XINJIANG

General Secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out that “social stability” [社会稳定] and “long-term peace” [长治久安] are the overall goals of work related to Xinjiang. From this, we must grasp three core principles [Editor's Note: the author goes on to list five core principles]. First, taking social stability and long-term peace as the general goal of work in Xinjiang means that the CCP Central Committee, with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, will focus on the overall development of the Party and the country and take both the domestic and international situations into consideration. Based on the intensity of Xinjiang's anti-separatism and anti-terrorism struggles, the work in Xinjiang will be scientifically positioned. This is the general guideline to be followed [总指针·总遵循] by all work in Xinjiang at present and in the future. Second, taking social stability and long-term peace as the general goal of work in Xinjiang is an inherent requirement of the new situation and new tasks facing Xinjiang. This conforms to the eager expectations of the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang, elevates the CCP's strategy of governing Xinjiang, and reflects the Party's scientific grasp of the regularities of work in Xinjiang. Third, implementing the general goal of social stability and long-term peace is a major political task the Party Central Committee has assigned to Xinjiang. Work in Xinjiang has an important strategic position in the overall work of the Party and the country, and it is related to the overall situation of reform, development, and stability in the country. It also concerns the reunification of the motherland, ethnic solidarity [民族团结], security, the achievement of the “two centennial” goals, and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Fourth, implementing the general goal of

social stability and long-term peace is the hope of the people of all ethnic groups in the country. History eloquently proves that when there is no stability in Xinjiang, everything goes back to zero [一切都为零]. Realizing social stability and long-term peace in Xinjiang conforms to the wishes of the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang and is also the hope of the people of the whole country. Fifth, implementing the general goal of social stability and long-term peace is the political aim of all Party members and cadres in Xinjiang. All Party members and cadres in Xinjiang must insist on maintaining the core and loyalty to the Party and use theoretical identification to increase political identification.

II. ACCURATELY GRASPING THE RICH CONNOTATIONS OF GENERAL SECRETARY XI JINPING'S STRATEGY FOR GOVERNING XINJIANG

1. Xinjiang's Strategic Position: Accurately Grasp the "Two Particularities"

General Secretary Xi Jinping has emphasized that Xinjiang is an important security barrier in northwestern China, which has a particular strategic position and particular problems. It is of great importance to do work in Xinjiang well. These "two particularities" summarize the special nature of Xinjiang as a border province.

Xinjiang's "particular strategic position" refers to the fact that Xinjiang, as a strategic barrier in northwestern China, is a key area for implementing the Great Western Development Strategy [西部大开发战略], an important gateway China can open to the West, and also an important energy base and transportation channel for the country as a whole. This determines the important significance of doing work in Xinjiang well. The "particular problems facing Xinjiang" refers to the fact that Xinjiang is both the front line and main battleground for anti-terrorism, anti-infiltration, and anti-separatism activities. The anti-separatism struggle is protracted, intense, and complex. The most difficult and long-term problem in Xinjiang is the issue of ethnic solidarity. Religious extremism is spreading within and permeating the region, but development is still the key to solving all the problems in Xinjiang. In some parts of Xinjiang, the masses face many hardships and there are many people in hardship. Therefore, it is more difficult to achieve the goal of "building a moderately prosperous society in all respects" [全面建成小康社会] together with the country as a whole.

Based on the strategic judgments of the "two particularities," General Secretary Xi Jinping believes that doing a good job in Xinjiang is a matter related to the overall situation of the country. It is not just a matter that concerns Xinjiang, but a matter that concerns the whole Party and country. This shows that the CCP Central Committee has elevated Xinjiang's position in the overall situation of the country to an unprecedented height.

2. Key Points in Xinjiang's Development: Strengthen the Foundation, Maintain Stability, and Promote Harmony

General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that whether or not work in Xinjiang can be done well depends on the situation of the anti-separatism struggle and on whether a stable and united political situation and a harmonious and stable social situation have been maintained.

At present, Xinjiang has entered a critical period for laying a solid foundation for social stability and long-term peace. It has entered the decisive stage for winning the battle against poverty and building a moderately prosperous society in all respects. However, the situation is still difficult and complicated, and the tasks are still arduous. This requires that we focus on maintaining social stability as the key to work in Xinjiang.

First, we must deepen stability maintenance as well as the "strike hard" and rectification activities. We must further promote the special campaigns of rooting out terrorists, reducing their numbers, and clearing

the soil that allows them to grow [挖存量、减增量、铲土壤]; maintain perseverance in cracking down on violent terrorists and violent terrorist groups with high pressure and overwhelming force [高压震慑]; and carry out precise and devastating strikes in order to gain the time and initiative to fundamentally solve the deep-seated problems affecting Xinjiang's long-term stability and peace.

Second, we must strengthen education of the struggle against secession. [We must] deepen the ideological struggle against separatism, eliminate the influence of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism [双泛], promote the study of Xinjiang's history and culture, promote the excellent traditional culture of the ethnicities, practice core socialist values, strengthen the "five identities" [五个认同] effectively, and firmly occupy the ideological, public opinion, and cultural fronts.

Third, we must do well in religious work. [We must] fully implement the Party's basic policy on religious work and persist in protecting lawfulness, stopping illegality, resisting infiltration, curbing extremism, and fighting crime; allow religious figures to play their proper role and guarantee the normal religious needs of religious believers in accordance with the law; control illegal religious activities in accordance with the law, persist in advancing de-radicalization, and curb the infiltration and spread of religious extremism; and adhere to the direction of the Sinicization of Islam in China and actively guide religion to adapt to the socialist society.

Fourth, we must strengthen border control; uphold military-civilian joint defense, police-civilian joint defense, and border-civilian joint defense; bring together people, materials, and technology for defense; and accelerate the construction of border protection and control facilities. [We must] improve the social prevention and control system based on civilian police stations, taking grid-based management as the starting point; strengthen the management and control of key areas and strive to remove all blind spots, gaps, and blank spots; and accelerate the establishment of a one- to three-minute rapid response perimeter [快速处置圈] to improve emergency response capabilities.

Fifth, we must protect cybersecurity and ideological security, strengthen Internet security management, maintain a combination of offense and defense, and strengthen positive voices on the Internet. In response to online words and actions that endanger cybersecurity or ideological security, we must improve the ability to monitor, detect, block, take countermeasures against, clean up, rectify, track down, and strike such threats.

Sixth, we must insist on grasping the grassroots and laying a foundation that can be a long-term plan and means to consolidate the stability and security of Xinjiang. [We must] deepen the work of "visiting the people, improving the people, and gathering the people" in villages, select and support the leadership of grassroots organizations, develop and strengthen Party members, and build grassroots organizations into a strong fortress that serves the masses, maintains stability, and opposes division.

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3. Xinjiang's Development Path: Focus on Long-term Stability and Development

General Secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out that it is necessary to implement the new development concepts, uphold an approach centered on improving the quality and efficiency of development, and promote

supply-side structural reforms as the main line of advance in order to cultivate and expand industries with distinctive advantages and strengthen infrastructure building.

Regarding the overall requirements for implementing the new development concepts: First, we must firmly establish a “general goal” [一个总目标]. ensure that all government work complies with and serves this general goal, and orient development, planning, and progress closely around it. Second, we must adhere to the “general tone” [总基调] of seeking progress while maintaining stability; strive to maintain overall social stability and stable macroeconomic policies, economic operations, and market expectations; firmly establish and implement the new development concepts of innovation, coordination, environmental friendliness, openness, and sharing; and adapt to, grasp, and lead the new normal of economic development. Third, we must uphold the “center” of improving the quality and efficiency of development and establish a comprehensive developmental concept. “Development” not only refers to economic development, but also includes the comprehensive development of politics, society, culture, and an ecological civilization. Economic development includes not only the speed of development, but also its quality and structure. Fourth, we must grasp the “main line” of supply-side structural reform and regard the ultimate goal as meeting demands, the main direction as improving supply quality, and the fundamental approach as deepening reform. In this way, we will reduce ineffective supply, expand effective supply, promote economic restructuring and optimization, and accelerate the pace of economic transformation and upgrades. [We must] seize the opportunity of the central government’s further promotion of Belt and Road Initiative construction to accelerate the construction of the core areas of the Silk Road Economic Belt and make this a powerful driving force for the development of Xinjiang.

4. The Starting and Ending Point of Work in Xinjiang: Use Full Force to Benefit and Improve the People’s Livelihood

General Secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out that, after reaching the strategic heights of stabilizing and bringing peace to Xinjiang, we must focus on the goal of allowing the people of all ethnic groups to live and work in peace and contentment, implement more projects to improve production and living conditions, take more practical actions to benefit the lives of the people, and implement more solutions to the problems that people of all ethnic groups worry about so that the people of all ethnic groups will feel the care of the Party and the warmth of the big family that is the motherland.

To carry out work related to the livelihoods of the people of Xinjiang in the new era, first we must fully implement targeted poverty alleviation and elimination, using the poor areas of southern Xinjiang as the main battlefield; implement the rural settlement and nomad settlement projects as well as affordable housing projects; improve basic public services in farming, pastoral areas, and border areas; and strive to enable people of all ethnic groups to lead better lives. General Secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out that when discussing development in Xinjiang there is one thing that must be firmly grasped: Development must be implemented to improve people’s livelihoods, benefit the local area, and enhance unity. This requires us to effectively solve the problems of the disconnect between economic development, improving people’s lives, and promoting social stability and long-term peace. Second, through the focus on development and benefiting the lives of the people, the people should be able to find work, earn money, and have hope. We must continuously strengthen the Party’s cohesive force among people of all ethnic groups and increase the positive energy of a love of China and of Xinjiang. In recent years, the Party committee and government of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region have always made the safety and security of the people of all ethnic groups their chief desire. They insist on giving priority to people’s livelihoods and putting the people’s livelihoods first, as well as on using more than 70 percent of the fiscal expenditures and counterpart aid funds for Xinjiang to guarantee and improve people’s livelihoods. They continue to

promote the nine major projects for the benefit of the people [九大惠民工程] in the areas of employment, education, healthcare, social security, poverty alleviation, safe settlement [安居], psychological wellbeing [暖心], prosperous borders [兴边], and security so that people of all ethnic groups can continue to experience a greater sense of gain and happiness.

5. Lifeline of Xinjiang's Development: Ethnic Solidarity

General Secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out that China is a unified, multi-ethnic country and the history of the Chinese nation is a history of unity, cohesion, and joint progress among all ethnic groups. Ethnic solidarity is the lifeline of the people of all ethnic groups, the fundamental cornerstone of Xinjiang's development and progress, and the common will of more than 1.3 billion Chinese people.

To reinforce the cornerstone of Xinjiang's development and progress, first we must maintain ethnic solidarity, strengthen military-political unity, military-civilian unity, police-civilian unity, and XPCC-locality unity and build a Great Wall of Steel [钢铁长城] to allow people of all ethnic groups to jointly safeguard the unity of the motherland, ethnic solidarity, and social stability. Second, we must fully implement the Party's ethnic policy, hold high the banner of unity among all ethnic groups, and guide people of all ethnic groups to increase their identification with the great motherland, the Chinese nation, Chinese culture, the Communist Party of China, and socialism with Chinese characteristics; to love ethnic solidarity as they love their own eyes and lives; and to cleave together like pomegranate seeds.

General Secretary Xi Jinping has put forward many requirements for consolidating ethnic solidarity. To summarize: First, we must fully implement the Party's ethnic policy and unswervingly follow the correct path of solving ethnic problems with Chinese characteristics. Second, we must boldly train and use ethnic minority cadres because "the key to doing good work for ethnicities lies in the Party and people." Third, we must carry out in-depth publicity and education for ethnic solidarity, strengthen the "five identities," and cultivate a sense of community with the Chinese nation. Fourth, we must extensively carry out activities to create and advance ethnic solidarity and insist on a focus on friendship, peace, action, and the grassroots. Fifth, we must promote exchanges and integration among all ethnic groups and do a good job in the activities related to the "We Are One Family" [民族团结一家亲] campaign and to ethnic unity and friendship. Sixth, we must severely crack down on ethnic separatist activities and persist in the anti-separatism struggle with both cultural and military forces.

6. Strengthen XPCC Development: Give Full Play to its Important Role as a Stabilizer, Melting Pot, and Demonstration Area

General Secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out that it is necessary to implement the CCP Central Committee's plan for the reform of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), highlight reform priorities, refine reform plans, and strengthen guidance by category. It is necessary to actively and steadily implement various reform and development tasks and fully unleash the XPCC's special advantages and development vitality. It is necessary to firmly establish the idea of "**a game of chess involving soldiers and local areas**" [兵地一盘棋], fully support the development and growth of the XPCC, support the efforts of the XPCC to improve its ability to maintain stability and defend borders, support the efforts of the XPCC to deepen reforms and develop southward, and promote the integration and development of the military and local areas so that the XPCC can better play its role in adjusting social structures, promoting cultural exchanges, promoting regional development, and optimizing population resources. In this way, the XPCC will truly become a border security stabilizer, a melting pot for people of all ethnic groups, and a demonstration area for advanced productivity and advanced culture, making greater contributions to social stability and long-term peace in Xinjiang.

7. *The Key to Work in Xinjiang: Strengthening the Party's Leadership*

General Secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out that the key to realizing social stability and long-term peace in Xinjiang lies with the Party. It essentially relies on a strong team of cadres, a strict grassroots organization system, and effective mass work mechanisms.

To strengthen the Party's leadership over work in Xinjiang, first we must build a contingent of high-quality cadres who are politically strong and can withstand all tests. We must persist in seeing Party self-governance exercised fully and with rigor; firmly establish political integrity, thinking in big-picture terms, following the leadership core, and keeping in alignment; strengthen ideological and political education; promote normalizing and institutionalizing “Two Studies, One Action” [两学一做] learning and education; educate and guide the broad masses of Party members and cadres to strengthen the lofty ideals of communism and the common ideal of socialism with Chinese characteristics; and strengthen self-confidence, theoretical confidence, institutional confidence, and cultural confidence in the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Second, we must strictly enforce the Party's political discipline and rules and impose strict discipline in the struggle against separatism. [We must] establish a correct orientation for employment, adhere to good cadre standards and political standards for cadres in ethnic-minority areas, and strengthen the building of leadership teams and cadre teams. [We must] insist on grasping the grassroots and laying a foundation as a long-term plan and means to consolidate the stability and security of Xinjiang, strive to deepen the work of “visiting the people, improving the people, and gathering the people” in villages, strengthen the construction of grassroots organizations and grassroots political power, continue to rectify weak and scattered grassroots Party organizations, develop and expand the ranks of Party members, and build Party organizations in every social management cell [社会管理细胞].

Third, we must firmly establish an ideology that makes no exception for “particularisms” [特殊性] and insist on tackling the struggle against separatism with one hand and improving the Party's style of work, **building a clean government** and struggling against corruption with the other. [We must] deepen the implementation of special “study, transfer, and promotion” [学转促] activities to promote continuous changes in the work style of cadres. The more severe the situation and the more difficult the task, the more it is necessary for the CCP Central Committee to make overarching plans and lead the way. The key to realizing social stability and long-term peace in Xinjiang lies with the Party. By unwaveringly advancing the comprehensive and strict governance of the Party and giving full play to the Party's leading role, we will surely be able to build up the motherland's Xinjiang, making it more and more beautiful.

III. CORRECTLY USING THE SCIENTIFIC METHODOLOGY OF GENERAL SECRETARY XI JINPING TO REALIZE THE STRATEGY OF GOVERNING XINJIANG

Xi Jinping's thoughts on governing Xinjiang are the latest achievement of the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. It is a new development of Marxism that was formed by the process of guiding Xinjiang's practice and provides rich content and ideological connotations related to the present times. The series of new ideas, new thoughts, and new strategies it proposes are interrelated and interconnected, involving all aspects of productivity and production as well as economic foundations and superstructures. It forms a complete, logical, and scientific theoretical system that covers various fields of economic, political, cultural, social, ecological civilization, and Party construction. This system provides scientific theoretical guidance and practical guidance for adhering to and developing the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, realizing the general goals of social stability and long-term peace in Xinjiang, and realizing the “two centenary” goals and the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

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The ideological and working methods contained in Xi Jinping’s thoughts on governing Xinjiang not only tell us which things to look at and how to look at them, but also what we should do. His thoughts not only tell us that we must “cross a river,” but also guide us in constructing “bridges and boats” to get us across, making his words enlightening to their readers. He has repeatedly emphasized the establishment of dialectical thinking, telling us to adhere to and apply dialectical materialism and historical materialism, grasp the pulse and patterns from the complicated appearance of the situation in Xinjiang, and (in deeply considering Xinjiang’s history) do a good job in practical work and better move toward the future. He has emphasized establishing strategic thinking, telling us to: observe the overall situation, determine the overall situation, pursue major issues, be adept at understanding and judging the situation from a political perspective, look at Xinjiang from the overall perspective, and make the most advantageous strategic choices through weighing advantages and disadvantages. He has emphasized adhering to problem orientation, telling us to aim at the problem and proceed from it, regard the discovery of contradictions and understanding and resolving problems as the breakthrough points in our work, go to the root of Xinjiang’s social stability problems, and emphasize aligning problem-solving efforts with the actual situation by solving the problems that present themselves and focusing on solving prominent problems. These connotations of Xi Jinping’s thoughts on governing Xinjiang are very profound and provide us with important methodological guidance. ■

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