

Xinjiang a stark warning for Taiwan

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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The situation in China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region is rapidly deteriorating. Multiple reports on the ground in addition to analysis of satellite imagery and open-source data paint a bleak picture of repression and forced internment in the isolated region.

On this side of the Taiwan Strait, anyone who still believes that unification with China is a viable option should sit up and take note.

An analysis of government documents by German academic Adrian Zenz and a special investigation by the BBC has revealed the sinister reality of a rapidly expanding network of "vocational education and training centers" in Xinjiang.

Tender documents show that the centers' construction is replete with razor wire and watchtowers. Documents also reveal that staff in some centers are armed with a plethora of weapons and restraining devices, such as electric cattle prods, tear gas, stun guns, Tasers and spiked clubs known as "wolf's teeth."

At least one center requested the purchase of "tiger chairs," a device used by Chinese police to torture interrogation subjects.

There are estimated to be at least 181 re-education facilities in Xinjiang, which Zenz believes could be holding as many as 1 million ethnic Uighurs and other Muslim minorities.

Beijing initially denied their existence, but now claims that enrollment is entirely voluntary and has released propaganda videos in an attempt to spin the centers as vocational schools for grateful students to brush up on their Mandarin and try knitting or baking.

In reality, an ethnic and religious minority is being interned: 20th-century history shows that this will not end well.

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Radio Free Asia reported that in Haniqatam, up to 6,000 villagers have been indefinitely detained in centers; the initial batch of inmates has been incarcerated for two years.

Arbitrary quotas appear to be in effect and local sources have said that as many as 40 percent of residents in each village are being rounded up.

"In some houses the husband has been taken away, while in others the wife has been taken away and others still have had both detained, leaving the children behind," said a local police officer who wished to remain anonymous.

It is becoming ever more apparent that under Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平), China is fast regressing to its authoritarian past and the dark days of Mao Zedong's (毛泽东) Cultural Revolution.

An Agence France-Presse report quotes Xinjiang Party Secretary Chen Quanguo (陈全国) as saying: "To build new, better Chinese citizens, the centers must first break their lineage, break their roots, break their connections and break their origins."

The Chinese Communist Party of course has experience in this field. It invaded and conquered Tibet in the early 1950s and since then, it has systematically worked to destroy Tibetan culture and displace Tibetans with Han Chinese.

By contrast, Hong Kong was "peacefully reunited with the motherland" in 1997, yet the methods and end result are the same — the importation of mainland Chinese to dilute the local population and the gradual hollowing out of Hong Kong's independent judiciary, media and its mini-constitution.

The evidence could not be clearer. Whether conquered by force or through a peaceful accommodation with Beijing, Taiwan's freedoms would be gradually and systematically snuffed out.

Like the hapless residents of Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong, Taiwan would be left a shell of

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its former self and an impotent outpost of China's colonial empire.

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