China's High-Tech Repression Against Uyghurs: Novel Theoretical Insights

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Preface

Surveillance is as old as human history. In premodern eras, it predominantly occurred via spies, informants, and guards. In the modern era, it evolved into a systematic technique executed via bureaucratic frameworks. Technological advancements have rapidly transformed surveillance and repression practices. China's high-tech practices in East Turkestan go far beyond what is considered typical surveillance in other countries. Uyghurs in East Turkestan endure extreme surveillance and repression measures through China's widespread and strategic use of technology. More strikingly, Uyghurs who escape from the region are not isolated from China's gaze. They are constantly brought under China's techno-panoptic gaze through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). In this book, we document the experiences of the Uyghur people regarding China's practices both within and beyond its borders through surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus groups. We offer fresh empirical insights into the disruptive and manipulative aspects of China's repression by revealing the loss of privacy, dehumanization, and erosion of communal dynamics beneath the surface of China's rapid technological advances.

Equally important, in this book, we challenge existing frameworks on surveillance and offer an important theoretical lens through which to understand the complexities of China's surveillance and repressive practices. China's practices push the limits of social control, intrusion, power, and extraterritoriality. We offer new theoretical perspectives by analyzing

the interplay between technology, surveillance, and authoritarianism. First, we introduce the concept of techno-panoptic governance, which serves as a valuable theoretical framework to analyze how China's practices target, intrude upon, and shape social as well as personal dynamics, leaving no room for a sense of privacy due to the pervasive and strategic use of advanced technology. Second, we theorize the diffusion of China's repressive practices beyond its borders by arguing that these practices have paved the way for the configuration of "a transnational social space of insecurity" by creating "disciplinary" and "automated" subjects who are constantly compelled to engage in self-discipline and self-surveillance in the diaspora.

We enriched our analyses by utilizing sources in English, Chinese, Turkish, and Uyghur. The multilingual approach strengthens the academic rigor of the book and allows for a thorough exploration of the cultural, historical, and political dynamics at play surrounding China's repression of the Uyghur people. Overall, this book is essential reading for anyone interested in authoritarianism, surveillance, technology studies, state-minority relations, China studies, and Uyghur studies.

Istanbul, Türkiye — Lacin Idil Oztig
Ankara, Türkiye — Abdurresit Celil Karluk

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Additionally, we would like to thank our families for their unwavering support and understanding during this demanding process. As a co-author of this book, I (Lacin Idil Oztig) extend a special acknowledgment to my mother, Süheyla Öztığ, whose presence throughout this process was a source of inspiration. Her patience, unwavering support, and encouragement motivated me to push through challenges and strive for excellence in our research. Her dedication has always been a driving force behind my achievements.

As a co-author of this book, I (Abdurresit C. Karluk) am especially grateful to my wife, Anakız, whose unwavering support and readiness to make sacrifices during the fieldwork and writing of this study made this project a reality. Without her patience, understanding, and assistance this book would not have come to fruition. I also express my regrets

for the time not spent with my children, C. Mengütürk, Bilge C., and C. Batur, during weekends and holidays, whether in Türkiye or the UK. Their patience and encouragement during this period were invaluable, especially as they reminded me of the importance of giving voice to our family's untold story—the story of our beloved grandparents in Kashgar, and the enduring pain of separation.

We are also thankful to Medine Nazimi, of Uyghur origin from East Turkistan, for her significant support throughout our fieldwork. Additionally, we wish to recognize our dedicated Uyghur surveyors, who have opted to remain unnamed due to security-related concerns. Their courage and dedication made this work possible. Our gratitude extends to our Turkish surveyors, Ülkü Mara and Tarık Pasalı, whose discipline and commitment significantly contributed to the depth and vitality of our survey process. We are deeply grateful for the altruism and dedication displayed by all these individuals, particularly during the crucial phase of administering the surveys, which greatly enhanced the success of our fieldwork. Each of them has played an important role in bringing this project to life, and we will always cherish their contributions.

Contents

1 Introduction 1
References 11

2 An Overview of China's Policies on Uyghurs 17
The People's Republic of China and the Repression of Uyghurs 17
The Foreign Dimension of China's Repression of Uyghurs 38
References 41

3 China's High-Tech Repression in East Turkestan 53
China's Repressive Mechanisms 53
The Grid-Style Social Management System in East Turkestan 57
The 2015 Counterterrorism Law 61
The Collection of Biometric Data 65
Digital Repression 66
High-Tech Surveillance 67
The Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP) 67
The Idiosyncrasy of Repression in East Turkestan 77
References 81

4 Case Selection, Research Methodology, and Field Notes 89
Case Selection 89
Uyghur Diaspora in Türkiye 90
Uyghur Diaspora Mobilization in Türkiye 91
Türkiye–China Relations and Its Impact on Uyghurs 93

Research Methodology 99
Surveys 100
The Interview Strategies 105
In-Depth Interviews 105
Focus Group Interviews 106
Field Notes 109
Abdurreşit C. Karluk (The Project Coordinator; Male, Surveyor and Interviewer) 109
Medine Nazimi (Female Uyghur Surveyor) 112
Tarık Pasali (Male Turkish Surveyor) 113
Ülkü Mara (Female Turkish Surveyor) 116
References 117

5 Surveys, In-Depth Interviews, and Focus Group Interviews 123
Surveys 123
IJOP 125
Police Control 125
Obligatory Electronic Devices/Applications 125
Prohibited Phone Applications 125
CCTV Cameras 125
The Mandatory GPS Installation 126
The Collection of Biometric Data 126
Other Types of Repression in the Region 126
The View of the Chinese State 126
The View of Technology 126
National Identity, Social Relationships, and Cultural Practices 127
China's Transnational Repression 127
In-Depth Interviews 127
Focus Group Interviews 191
The Social Impact of High-Tech Repression 191
High-Technology and Mobility of Uyghurs 193
The View of Technology 194
The Psychological Impact of High-Tech Repression 195
The View of the Chinese State, National Identity, and Cultural Practices 195
References 196

6 Novel Theoretical Insights into China's Repression Within and Beyond Its Borders 197
The Panoptic Form of Governance 200
Beyond Foucault: Post-Panoptic Theories of Modern Surveillance 205
Theorizing China's Repression in East Turkestan 211
Internment Camps 212
The Ubiquity of CCTV Cameras 214
IJOP 218
The Techno-panoptic Governance 220
Theorizing China's ICT-Mediated Transnational Repression 222
Critical Geopolitics 222
Digital Geographies 226
Diffusion 228
The Spatial Implications of Transnational Repression 231
Transnational Social Space of Insecurity 233
References 238

7 Conclusion 249
The International Community 253
The People's Republic of China 254
The Republic of Türkiye 255
NonGovernmental Organizations 256
References 258

Appendix 1: Survey Questions 259

Appendix 2: Summary of Survey Responses 263

Appendix 3: Interview Questions 269

Index 273

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List of Tables

Table 3.1	China's repression in East Turkestan	68
Table 4.1	China's repressive activities against uyghurs in Türkiye	94
Table A.1	Distribution of respondents based on whether they can communicate with their relatives in East Turkestan after arriving in Türkiye	263
Table A.2	Distribution of respondents' knowledge about the IJOP system	263
Table A.3	Distribution of respondents based on whether they used smartphones in East Turkestan	264
Table A.4	Distribution of respondents based on whether they witnessed police control of home/workplaces in East Turkestan	264
Table A.5	Distribution of respondents based on whether they were punished after their homes/workplaces were checked by the police in East Turkestan	264
Table A.6	Distribution of respondents based on whether they witnessed police control of phones at home and/or on the street in East Turkestan	264
Table A.7	Distribution of respondents based on whether they were punished after their phones were checked by the police at home and/or on the street in East Turkestan	265
Table A.8	Distribution of respondents based on whether they were obliged to use electronic devices and/or applications in East Turkestan	265

Table A.9 Distribution of the types of electronic devices and applications that respondents were forcibly used in East Turkestan 265
Table A.10 Distribution of respondents based on whether they or someone around them witnessed punishment for not using certain electronic devices or applications in East Turkestan 265
Table A.11 Distribution of prohibited phone applications in East Turkestan (multiple answers allowed) 266
Table A.12 Distribution of respondents based on whether there were cameras in the building they lived in East Turkestan 266
Table A.13 Distribution of respondents based on whether they have been called by local Chinese police after leaving East Turkestan 266
Table A.14 Distribution of applications through which the respondents were called by the local Chinese police after leaving East Turkestan 267
Table A.15 Distribution of respondents who were threatened by the local Chinese police through WeChat or similar applications 267
Table A.16 Distribution of respondents by threats they received from the local Chinese police through WeChat and similar applications 267