

When the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) was established in 2000, the prevailing wisdom underpinning U.S.-China relations maintained that increased trade and economic interconnectivity, as well as diplomacy and robust cultural exchange, would lead to greater openness and political liberalization within China.

In the years that followed, the Chinese economy grew dramatically, while the Chinese Communist Party became even more deeply entrenched in the political power structure and deeply committed to preserving its monopoly on power through state-sponsored repression, surveillance, and indoctrination.

Now, under the leadership of Xi Jinping, we see an ascendant and increasingly aggressive China, seeking to take center stage in the world, and in so doing, determined to shape new global norms on development, trade, the internet, and even human rights.

No improvement in human rights and rule of law

All the while, the fundamental authoritarian character of China's political system remains the same.

The Chinese government's disregard for human rights and the rule of law most directly affects the Chinese people—as evidenced by the more than 1,300 active cases of political and religious prisoners contained in the Commission's far from exhaustive Political Prisoner Database.

The Commission's Annual Report painstakingly documents rights violations in ethnic minority regions, religious freedom violations, harassment of rights defenders and lawyers, suppression of free speech, large-scale forced evictions, onerous restrictions on civil society and more—all of which are the markings of a repressive, one-party state.

The report highlights the dire human rights situation inside China and the continued downward trajectory, by virtually every measure, since Xi Jinping became Communist Party General Secretary in 2012 and President in 2013—the latter post likely to be his

beyond 2023.

Of particular concern is the mass, arbitrary, internment of as many as 1 million or more Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities in “political reeducation” camps in western China.

Reports indicate that this may be the largest incarceration of an ethnic minority population since World War II, and that it may constitute crimes against humanity.

Local officials in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) have used alarming political rhetoric to describe the purpose of this government policy, including “*eradicating tumors*” and “*spray[ing] chemicals*” on crops to *kill the ‘weeds.’*

Communist influence in the west

China’s authoritarianism at home directly threatens our freedoms as well as our most deeply held values and national interests.

Inside China, American citizens are targeted with exit bans preventing them from leaving China, often in order to resolve business disputes or pressure their family members or colleagues to cooperate with Chinese courts; American citizens are detained or deported for sending private electronic messages critical of the Chinese government; American journalists are harassed and intimidated; and American business interests are threatened by rampant intellectual property theft and forced technology transfers.

The “long arm” of the Chinese Communist Party extends beyond China’s borders and is increasingly pervasive and multifaceted under the direction of an enhanced *United Front Work Department*, a Party institution used to influence Chinese individuals at home and abroad to neutralize

possible challenges to its ideological and policy agenda.

The Party's efforts to export its authoritarianism abroad takes a multitude of forms, including but not limited to the following: interference in multilateral institutions; threatening and intimidating rights defenders and their families; imposing censorship mechanisms on foreign publishers and social media companies; asserting "cyber-sovereignty" and "national internets"; influencing academic institutions and critical analysis of China's past history and present policies; and threatening American companies who do not conform with China's narrative on "sensitive topics" like Tibet, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

The importance of "religious work"

The Chinese Communist Party agenda has undergone an "unprecedented increase" with "major innovations" under Party General Secretary Xi Jinping, according to an article published a few weeks before the October 2017 19th Party Congress in the major Party journal *Seeking Truth*.

Party and government officials emphasized several key policy principles in religious affairs during this past year:

Actively guiding religions to adapt to socialist society.

As explained by Party and government sources, this means "guiding" religious groups to support Party leadership and the political system.

The State Council Information Office stated in an April 2018 white paper that this principle also includes ensuring that religious believers are "subordinate to and serve the overall interests of the nation and the Chinese people."

[Read section on religions in China here](#)

The report concludes that:

CECC Report 2018 Shows Increase in Chinese Regime's Repression

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As American policymakers revisit the assumptions that previously informed U.S.-China relations, and seek to chart a new path forward, it is vital that our foreign policy prioritizes the promotion of universal human rights and the protection of basic human dignity, principles the Chinese Communist Party is actively trying to redefine.

[Read full report here](#)