

The Washington Post's phony campaign on Uyghur "genocide"

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It is just three months since former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, during his final day in office, branded China's actions against the Muslim Uyghur minority in western Xinjiang as genocide. He provided no evidence for the accusation and made no attempt to justify the use of the term "genocide" which implies a deliberate policy of extermination applied to Uyghurs.

Indeed, as *Foreign Policy* reported in February, lawyers involved in a US State Department review during the final weeks of the Trump administration concluded that there was insufficient evidence to designate the Chinese Communist Party's measures in Xinjiang as genocide. The lawyers warned that "wielding the g-word without a solid legal basis also carries the risk of politicising and eroding the power of the designation," given its application to the worst cases of mass killings including of millions of Jews murdered in Nazi concentration camps.

All of these objections were rapidly swept aside by Pompeo, then the Biden administration as it came to office. Indeed, during the presidential election, Biden attacked Trump for being too soft on China, including on so-called human rights. His campaign team issued a statement in August 2020, concluding that the unsubstantiated claims of mass internment of Uyghurs constituted "genocide"—a designation subsequently confirmed by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

With astonishing speed, the US media has swung into action churning out a growing deluge of propaganda with lurid horror stories of life in the detention camps in Xinjiang, calls for the US to boycott the Winter Olympics in Beijing, and demands for tougher measures against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime. The hue and cry about Uyghur "genocide" is aimed at stampeding public opinion behind the Biden administration's escalating confrontation with China and its military build-up for war.

A commentary published on Monday in the *Washington Post* entitled "China is intensifying the third phase of its genocide denial" exposes the lack of substance to the US allegations. After dismissing out of hand Beijing's denials, the *Post* baldly asserts, without a shred of evidence, the litany of claims: one million in brutal camps, mosques destroyed, women sterilized, Uyghur children sent to state institutions. "The Chinese Communists are attempting to wipe out a culture, a way of life, a people," it declared.

Undoubtedly, the CCP regime in Beijing uses police state measures to suppress opposition in Xinjiang, as it does throughout

China, particularly against the working class. For two decades, it has carried out its own "war on terrorism" against Uyghur separatists who have perpetrated violent attacks inside China. Beijing did so with the support of Washington, initially by the Bush administration, which was looking for international support for its own criminal activities under the banner of the "global war on terror."

No one, however, should give any credence to US claims to be concerned about the democratic rights of the Uyghurs, or anyone else for that matter. Washington has a long history of turning on and turning off "human rights" to fit the strategic interests of US imperialism. With the support of the Bush administration, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), a Uyghur separatist group, was designated as a terrorist organization. Last year, as the Trump administration ramped up its propaganda on "Uyghur rights," the State Department quietly removed the ETIM from its terrorist list.

What then is the basis for the *Washington Post*'s list of atrocities? "We know this thanks to Radio Free Asia reporter Gulchehra Hoja and her colleagues, to a few dogged academics and to dozens of survivors and exiles who have bravely given testimony," it declared. Nothing else. No evidence is provided. Nothing is substantiated. The remainder of the article is devoted to the glorification of Hoja, who, it claims, has been designated "a terrorist" and whose family in China has suffered as a result of her activities.

None of the basic questions are asked let alone answered.

Who is Gulchehra Hoja? For two decades, she has worked for Radio Free Asia, a propaganda arm of the US State Department, after leaving China where she worked as a journalist for the state-run media. She is intimately connected to Uyghur exile groups, including the World Uyghur Congress and the American Uyghur Association, which call for the formation of an independent East Turkestan.

Hoja is clearly trusted, and feted, at the highest levels of the US state apparatus. In March 2019, she was the hand-picked Uyghur exile who met with Secretary of State Pompeo as a representative of those whose family members are detained in Xinjiang camps. In November 2019, she was given the Magnitsky Human Rights Award for her reporting on "the human rights crisis" in Xinjiang and has been included in Jordan's list of the world's 500 most influential Muslims.

What is Radio Free Asia? RFA was set up and funded in the 1950s by the CIA to beam American propaganda throughout Asia.

The same essential function is played by RFA today, even though with the exposure of the CIA's dirty operations around the world, it was placed under the State Department and while nominally "independent" is funded and supervised by the US Congress.

The RFA and Hoja operate in close collaboration with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) established in 1983 as a means of continuing activities vital to US imperialism that had been tarnished by the CIA's notoriety. The NED quickly developed a notoriety of its own for funding right-wing, pro-US outfits around the world and for engineering the so-called "colour revolutions" in the former Soviet republics.

The NED has funnelled millions of dollars into the World Uyghur Congress since its inception in 2004 and the American Uyghur Association established in 1998. Both are part of an interconnected network of Uyghur exile organisations in the US, Europe and Asia backed by Washington and its allies aimed against China. A significant base of operations is Turkey, with which the Turkic-speaking Uyghurs have a historic affinity. The AUA reportedly has connections to Turkey's fascistic National Movement Party (MHP) and its Grey Wolves paramilitaries, which espouse a pan-Turkic nationalism that encompasses the Turkic-speaking ethnic groups of Central Asia.

It is this fetid, right-wing milieu in which Gulchehra Hoja operates and functions as a useful tool for US imperialism. Significantly, even as the *Washington Post* holds up Hoja as "proof" of China's "genocide" and oppression of the Uyghurs, it is forced to acknowledge that Chinese officials earlier this month released a video of her mother and brother showing they were free, not detained. The *Post*, however, does not miss a beat, dismissing the video as propaganda, and declaring that no one can doubt the hell in which Uyghurs suffer in the Xinjiang detention camps—citing as proof another lurid account by a Kazak exile in the *New Yorker*.

There is every reason to doubt all aspects of the self-interested accounts of a small number of well-connected and often wealthy Uyghur exiles. A word should also be said about the *Post*'s "few dogged academics"—the most prominent being Adrian Zenz, a right-wing German commentator and born-again Christian, who has declared he has been "led by God" to his work on Chinese minorities. He is associated with a network of right-wing, anti-communist European and American think tanks including the far-right Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation.

Yet Zenz's highly tendentious research forms a large component of the so-called evidence for allegations of Uyghur detentions, forced labour and sterilization of Uyghur women. His research is widely quoted, including in official US documents, he has given testimony in the US Congress, and is associated with right-wing Republicans and Uyghur exiles. When the Chinese government last month threatened legal action against him for damages to Chinese companies in Xinjiang, the *Washington Post* came to the defence of this "dogged academic" on whom the claim of Uyghur genocide largely stands or falls.

The rapidly escalating US-led campaign on "Uyghur genocide" recalls the "big lie" exploited by the US and its NATO allies to initiate the murderous bombing of Serbia in 1999. The Clinton administration justified its "humanitarian intervention" as a

mission to prevent the massacre of Kosovo's ethnic Albanian population by the new "Hitler"—Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic. A thoroughly pliant and corrupt American and international media immediately fell into line with sensational stories of Serbian atrocities.

Lurid claims that 100,000 ethnic Albanians had been slaughtered proved utterly false in the aftermath of the war. The actual death toll was around 2,000 and most of those killings were committed by the armed separatist group, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). Washington had previously branded the KLA as a terrorist organisation due to its ties with Al Qaeda, but rapidly reversed course, provided money and arms, and declared it to be the sole legitimate representative of Kosovo's population. KLA head Hashim Thaçi, who became the head of the US-backed Kosovo mini-state, is currently facing charges of war crimes in the Hague.

The NATO war on Serbia was part of the efforts of US imperialism and its allies to take advantage of the break-up of Yugoslavia along ethnic and religious lines.

On a far broader scale, the US campaign on "Uyghur genocide" is aimed at weakening and breaking up China along ethnic lines as part of the determined efforts by American imperialism to prevent China from challenging US global dominion. In the past, Washington's focus has been on the Dalai Lama and allegations of Chinese oppression of the Tibetan population. The switch to the Uyghurs has nothing to do with concern for their democratic rights, but rather is determined by the strategic position of Xinjiang—adjacent to Central Asia and its energy supplies and essential to China's Belt and Road Initiative linking the Eurasian landmass with roads, rail, pipelines and telecommunications.

As in 1999, the media has fallen into line. It is as if an orchestral conductor tapped his baton, and all the instruments have sounded in turn. The White House has declared that what is happening in Xinjiang is "genocide" and the media across the political spectrum is blaring out the same allegations in lockstep, in a manner that closely resembles the Stalinist police state in Beijing they claim to be opposing.



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