

**The Long Arm of Assimilation: Uyghurs and Native Americans’  
Experiences with Genocide**

Donja Alnajar

Erasmus School of History, Culture, and Communication

Erasmus University Rotterdam

608026

608026da@eur.nl

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Supervisor: Sarah Bertrand

<b>Chapter 1 - "Parallel Erasures: A Comparative Study of Settler Colonial Assimilation in the U.S. and China"</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction	1
A case of settler colonialism	2
“Enduring Indigeneity”	3
“Logic of Elimination”	4
Methodology	6
Research Design	6
Data Sources and Collection	6
Case 1: Carlisle Indian School	6
My People the Sioux	7
American Indian Stories	7
The Dawes Act	8
The Curtis Act	8
Estelle Reel’s Curriculum	8
Sioux Chiefs’ Protests	9
Adela Rankin’s letter	9
The Meriam Report	10
Case 2: Konasheher New Vocational Skills Education and Training Center	10
Chen Quango’s speeches	11
Images of Detainees and Religious items	11
Satellite Imagery	12
Personal Memoir	12
Analytical Method	13
Limitations and Ethics	13
<b>Chapter 2: Historiography</b>	<b>15</b>
Defining Settler Colonialism	16

Language as an Instrument for Assimilation.....	17
Surveillance As Modern Assimilation.....	19
Transformative Justice and Resistance.....	20
Ongoing Debates.....	22
Neoliberal Education.....	22
A Case of Colonialism or Settler Colonialism?.....	22
Is it Genocide?.....	24
<b>Chapter 3 - The United States: Education and Legal Erasure in the Settler Colonial Project</b>	
<b>25</b>	
Introduction.....	25
Legal Policies as a Tool for Elimination.....	27
Indigenous Resistance Under Assimilation.....	28
<b>Chapter 4 - China: Surveillance, Assimilation, and the Technological Colonization of Uyghur Identity.....</b>	<b>30</b>
Introduction.....	30
The Criminalization of Religious Identity.....	31
Surveillance and State Control.....	33
Religious control.....	33
Internment Control.....	33
Ideological Control.....	34
Technologies of control.....	34
Spatial Transformation and Displacement.....	35
Demographic Engineering and Ethnic Domination.....	36
Uyghur Resistance.....	37
<b>Chapter 5 - Comparative Reflections: Settler Strategies Across Empires.....</b>	<b>38</b>
Introduction.....	38
Assimilation Through Education.....	39

Legal and Bureaucratic Tools of Elimination.....	41
Spatial and Demographic Transformation.....	42
Physical and Cultural Genocide.....	43
Indigenous and Uyghur Indigenity.....	45
<b>Chapter 6: Discussion.....</b>	<b>46</b>
Convergences: assimilation through language and data.....	47
Divergences: political structure, temporal location, global perception.....	50
Theoretical Reflections.....	52
Limitations.....	54
Future Recommendations.....	55
<b>Chapter 7: Conclusion.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>58</b>
Primary Sources.....	58
Secondary Sources.....	60

## Chapter 1 - "Parallel Erasures: A Comparative Study of Settler Colonial Assimilation in the U.S. and China"

### Introduction

"Death lurked in every corner. When the nurses grabbed my arm to "vaccinate" me, I thought they were poisoning me. In reality, they were sterilising us. That was when I understood the method of the camps, the strategy being implemented: not to kill us in cold blood, but to make us slowly disappear. So slowly that no one would notice."<sup>1</sup> Said Gulbahar Haitiwaji, a Uyghur Muslim woman who survived a re-education camp in Baijiantan, Karamay, in the Xinjiang region. After ten years of living in France with her husband, she was required to go back to China, supposedly to sign some papers, and was imprisoned in a re-education camp for two years before she was declared innocent by the Chinese authorities.<sup>2</sup> This is the reality of the lives of Uyghur people since China's imposition of internment camps in 2014, which are the so-called Vocational Skills Education and Training Center, which exemplify China's attempt at forcing Uyghurs into the dominant Han culture of the Chinese population.<sup>3</sup> The assimilation process accelerated since 2017, whereby more than 10,000 Uyghurs have been sent to prison in Kanasheher County alone, and prison sentences can date from two to 25 years.<sup>4</sup>

The physical and cultural elimination of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang is part of a broader global issue of eliminating indigenous peoples rooted in settler colonial violence.<sup>5</sup> Many settler colonial studies in the fields of political theory, climate justice, public health, and Indigenous studies agree upon settler colonialism as a structural problem embedded within the social, political, health, and environmental dimensions of society.<sup>6</sup> Within systems stemming from

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<sup>1</sup> Rozenn Morgat, "'Our Souls Are Dead'."

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Finley, "Tabula Rasa." 353.

<sup>4</sup> Chien-Peng Chung, "China's 'War on Terror': September 11 and Uighur Separatism," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 4 (2002): 8, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20033235>.

<sup>5</sup> Yann Allard-Tremblay and Elaine Coburn, "The Flying Heads of Settler Colonialism; or the Ideological Erasures of Indigenous Peoples in Political Theorizing," *Political Studies* 71, no. 2 (2021): 359–78, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217211018127>; Kerstin Reibold, "Settler Colonialism, Decolonization, and Climate Change," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 40, no. 4 (2022): 624–41, <https://doi.org/10.1111/japp.12573>; Nicole A. Thomas et al., "Pathways and Processes to the Embodiment of Historical Trauma Secondary to Settler Colonialism," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 79, no. 11 (2023): 4218–27, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.15818>; Michelle M. Jacob et al., "Indigenous Cultural Values Counter the Damages of White Settler Colonialism," *Environmental Sociology* 7, no. 2 (2020): 134–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23251042.2020.1841370>.

<sup>6</sup> Allard-Tremblay and Coburn, "The Flying Heads of Settler Colonialism"; Reibold, "Settler Colonialism, Decolonization."; Thomas et al., "Pathways and Processes."; Jacob et al., "Indigenous Cultural Values Counter the Damages of White Settler Colonialism."

settler colonial history, ideologies such as “Terra Nullius” are identified, which entail the notion that land was “empty” when settlers arrived and consequently denied the existence of Indigenous people.<sup>7</sup> Another ideology is the belief that indigenous people are meant to disappear, culturally or biologically, which justifies settler dominance.<sup>8</sup> These ideologies persist in international academic and political discourse. Settler frameworks often reduce Indigenous land rights to property rights, which fail to account for Indigenous relational worldviews, even in international frameworks like UNDRIP.<sup>9</sup> Settler colonialism destroys Indigenous epistemology, especially how Indigenous people perceive land as a complex web of relations between human and non-human beings, and not merely as property.<sup>10</sup> Climate change accelerates colonial harms, increasing land loss and economic dependency.<sup>11</sup> Historical trauma from settler colonial violence manifests in intergenerational health disparities and chronic disease among Indigenous peoples.<sup>12</sup> To decolonize settler frameworks, it is essential to center Indigenous perspectives in law, politics, and climate change justice.<sup>13</sup> Existing approaches such as Canada’s truth commissions and the non-binding UNDRIP, remain state-centered and inadequate for dismantling settler structures.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, transformative justice led by Indigenous communities and grassroots movements offer a more radical path towards genuine decolonization.<sup>15</sup>

### **A case of settler colonialism**

Recent scholarship demonstrates that the repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang constitutes a case of settler colonialism. Through mass Han migration, cultural suppression, and incarceration of Uyghurs in re-education camps, the Chinese state seeks to permanently occupy and transform

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<sup>7</sup> Allard-Tremblay and Coburn, “The Flying Heads of Settler Colonialism.”, 361.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Reibold, “Settler Colonialism.”, 626-629.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 629.

<sup>11</sup> Allard-Tremblay and Coburn, “The Flying Heads of Settler Colonialism; or the Ideological Erasures of Indigenous Peoples in Political Theorizing; Reibold, “Settler Colonialism, Decolonization, and Climate Change.”; ; Jacob et al., “Indigenous Cultural Values Counter the Damages of White Settler Colonialism.”

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 4222.

<sup>13</sup> Nagy, “Transformative Justice in a Settler Colonial Transition: Implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.”, 191-192.

<sup>14</sup> Jacob et al., “Indigenous Cultural Values Counter the Damages of White Settler Colonialism.”, 142-143; Allard-Tremblay and Coburn, “The Flying Heads of Settler Colonialism; or the Ideological Erasures of Indigenous Peoples in Political Theorizing;

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 192-193

the region, moving beyond minority repression to an elimination project (Smith Finley 2021; Sahrasad et al. 2023; Ghani and Said 2025).<sup>16</sup>

### **Eurocentrism in Settler Colonial Studies**

There is an overall critique of Settler Colonial Studies (SCS) being too focused on what Amy Fung referred to as “whiteness”.<sup>17</sup> This Eurocentrism is embedded in theoretical frameworks and academic institutions, reinforcing white supremacy, marginalizing racialized experiences, and suppressing Indigenous knowledge and political autonomy.<sup>18</sup> While SCS aims to critique settler colonialism, it perpetuates it as the field centers on white guilt and shame instead of focusing on Indigenous voices, sovereignty, and decolonization.<sup>19</sup> Indigenous scholars have critiqued SCS for centering white scholars and sidelining Indigenous intellectual sovereignty.<sup>20</sup>

### **“Enduring Indigeneity”**

Kauanui critiqued Wolfe’s framing of settler colonialism as an ongoing process that overshadows the Indigenous people’s presence, resistance, and sovereignty.<sup>21</sup> The author argues that settler colonialism cannot be completely understood without including the perspectives of Indigenous people, critiquing how colonial studies overlook Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS).<sup>22</sup> Kauanui introduces the term “Indigeneity,” which she presents as a counter-analytic of settler colonialism, explaining how Indigenous people’s resistance is not just for survival but is an act of active sovereignty and cultural continuation.<sup>23</sup> The author describes how indigeneity goes beyond studying Indigenous people (practices, histories, cultures); the term involves the interaction of indigeneity with settler-colonial structures.<sup>24</sup>

The Eurocentric lens of colonial studies minimizes racialized stories and disassociates settler colonialism from its material violence.<sup>25</sup> Thus, Patrick Wolfe’s “logic of elimination”

<sup>16</sup> Finley, “Tabula Rasa.”; Jonathan Brooks, “Settler Colonialism, Primitive Accumulation, and Biopolitics in Xinjiang, China,” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3965577>; Nimrod Baranovitch, “The ‘Bilingual Education’ Policy in Xinjiang Revisited: New Evidence of Open Resistance And Active Support Among The Uyghur Elite,” *Modern China* 48, no. 1 (2020): 134–66, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0097700420969135>, 135-137.

<sup>17</sup> Amy Fung, “Is Settler Colonialism Just Another Study of Whiteness?,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 53, no. 2 (2021): 115–31, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ces.2021.0011>.

<sup>18</sup> Fung, “Is Settler Colonialism Just Another Study of Whiteness?”, 15.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Kauanui, “Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity,” para. 8

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 12

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Fung, “Another Study of Whiteness?”, 120-121

needs to be expanded to explore how settler colonialism manifests in geopolitical contexts beyond the West and to analyze different settler colonial logics across periods in history to uncover the evolution of settler colonialism and draw meaningful conclusions on how to work to prevent its further adaptation ultimately and spreads in othe parts of the world.

This thesis aims to reposition China as a settler nation and analyze its social, political, and cultural objectives for the Uyghurs, expanding Wolfe’s settler colonial theory. In contrast to the historical and legal mechanisms analyzed in traditional settler cases such as the U.S., China imposes contemporary tools of surveillance, ideological control, and advanced technology as central for elimination. By putting the U.S. and China in a comparative lens, the thesis aims to contribute to a global and non-eurocentric framework of settler colonial studies, applying mainly Wolfe’s definitions of settler colonialism as a structure, not an event, and the “logic of elimination”. Following Kauani’s conceptualization of “Indigeneity”, the paper centers Indigenous and Uyghur agency to challenge settler-centric narratives of Indigenous peoples being “victims” and passive members rather than active agents fighting for self-determination.

### **“Logic of Elimination”**

Wolfe explains how settler colonialism is an ongoing structure and not a one-time occurrence, distinguishing the term from traditional forms of colonialism in which <sup>26</sup> the “logic of elimination” refers to the different strategies of displacing Indigenous societies through cultural assimilation, physical extermination, and legal erasure of land rights.<sup>27</sup> According to Wolfe, settler colonialism centers acquiring land, and racializes Indigenous people differently from other oppressed groups such as the enslaved African Americans by focusing on dispossession instead of labor exploitation. The displacement of the Cherokee people was framed through the doctrine of discovery” exemplifying the logic of elimination, invalidating Indigenous land rights and reinforcing dispossession.<sup>28</sup> A fundamental aspect of settler colonialism is “assimilation,” which aims to dissolve Indigenous societies not just physically but also through cultural, legal, and social means.<sup>29</sup> Wolfe outlines strategies such as child removal policies, religious conversion, attending boarding schools, land allotment, and intermarriage

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<sup>26</sup> Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native.”, 388.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 388-390.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 388.



policies as seen in Australia's Stolen Generations.<sup>30</sup> While Wolfe's theory emphasizes settler tactics on Indigenous people, he overlooks Indigenous people's agency and how Indigenous people resist settler-colonial regimes, as criticized by J. Kēhaulani Kauanui.<sup>31</sup>

The re-education camps in China represent assimilation institutions that resemble the Indian boarding schools that were established in the 19th and 20th centuries in the United States, conducting a comparative framework.<sup>32</sup> The paper will focus on examining the Carlisle Indian Industrial School (1789 - 1918) and the Konasheher New Vocational Skills Education and Training Center (2014 - present). The paper seeks to fill the gap Eurocentrism of Settler Colonial Studies, expanding Wolfe's theory of settler colonialism as an ongoing structure.<sup>33</sup> The paper seeks to foster a deeper understanding of the long-term impacts of settler colonial histories and recognize historical and cultural specificity following Kauanui's call to avoid universalizing settler colonial patterns. Thus, the research question is: What are the different methods of elimination operating through assimilation camps that work to erase the existence of Indigenous people, specifically the Native American people in the United States (1879 -1918) and the Uyghurs in China (since 2014)? The paper aims to address questions such as:

- What are the different methods imposed by the U.S. and China to assimilate Indigenous populations?
- How is assimilation facilitated through legal frameworks in the U.S. and China?
- How are settler colonial strategies of the U.S. and China historically and culturally distinct to explain differences in settler colonial strategies?
- How do Indigenous and Uyghur forms of resistance reveal the limitations within settler colonial structures?

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.,401

<sup>31</sup> Kauanui, "Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity."

<sup>32</sup> Slaubaugh, "American Indian Residential Boarding Schools," 13.

<sup>33</sup> Fung, "Another Study of Whiteness?", 120-121; Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native."

## Methodology

### Research Design

The thesis conducts a qualitative comparative case study approach using Patrick Wolfe's "logic of elimination" and based on close readings of primary sources.<sup>34</sup> The research questions focus on two assimilation institutions: the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania (1879-1918) and the Konasheher New Vocational Skills Education and Training Center in Xinjiang (since 2014). The thesis compares how mechanisms of settler colonialism operate and evolve across distinct geopolitical and historical contexts. The study explores the digitalization and technological surveillance as mechanisms of elimination, which will be analyzed in the China case (chapter 4).<sup>35</sup> The research design also includes Indigenous storytelling, such as memoirs and oral histories, as primary sources. Including Indigenous storytelling is a deliberate attempt to center Indigenous experiences, agency, and resistance, rather than depending on state documents only that reproduce settler narratives. The Indigenous sources serve as examples of survivance and knowledge production, which are important to support and highlight Kauanui's theory of "enduring indigeneity" and her call to decolonize settler colonial frameworks.

### Data Sources and Collection

#### Case 1: Carlisle Indian School

The first case study involves the close reading analysis of the methods used to assimilate and eliminate the culture, language, and identity of the Native American children at the Carlisle Indian School. First, the thesis analyzes legal documents such as the Dawes Act (1887) and the Curtis Act (1898) retrieved from the website of the National Archives and Records Administration of the U.S.<sup>36</sup> Second, the paper analyzes memoirs of Indigenous authors including Zitkala-S's *School Days of an Indian Girl* and Luther Standing Bear's *My people the Sioux*.<sup>37</sup> Third, Indigenous resistance is analyzed from a wide range of online sources available at

<sup>34</sup> Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native.", 387- 409.

<sup>35</sup> Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native."

<sup>36</sup> U.S. National Archives. "Dawes Act (1887)." Milestone Documents, National Archives. Accessed June 7, 2025. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/dawes-act>; U.S. Congress. *Curtis Act of 1898*, 30 Stat. 495 (June 28, 1898)

<sup>37</sup> Zitkala-Ša, "The School Days of an Indian Girl," in *American Indian Stories* (Washington, DC: Hayworth Publishing House, 1921), 47–80; Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*, ed. E. A. Brininstool (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928).

the Carlisle Indian School Resource Center, which is an online site of memory dedicated to various Native people, including the Cherokee, Sioux, and Cheyenne tribes.<sup>38</sup> The digital center provides student records, publications, documents, photographs, and cemetery information.<sup>39</sup> Thus, retrieved from the Carlisle Center, the paper focuses on a protest letter written by Sioux chiefs (1881), a protest letter by Adela Rankin (1892), and the Meriam Report (1928).<sup>40</sup> The paper also draws on secondary sources that will serve as a reinforcement for my arguments in chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5.

## **My People the Sioux**

*My People, the Sioux*, by Luther Standing Bear, is a personal memoir and direct testimony of someone who lived to see the transition and destruction of the Lakota (Sioux) tribe.<sup>41</sup> Born in 1868, Standing Bear is one of the first Indigenous authors to write an autobiography in English. As a graduate of the Carlisle Indian School, he wrote from a unique insider-outsider perspective. The memoir was published in 1928 during a period of shifting US policy and growing white interest in the myth of the “vanishing Indian.” His memoir asserts the living continued existence, resistance and survival of his people while critiquing white systems that sought to erase them.

## **American Indian Stories**

*American Indian Stories*, written by Zitkála-Šá, is a collection of autobiographical essays and fictional short stories that provide insight into her experiences of assimilation into Euro-American culture and navigating her indigenous heritage.<sup>42</sup> Born in 1876 on the Yankton reservation in South Dakota, Zitkála-Šá was educated in missionary and boarding schools and

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<sup>38</sup> Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center. “Welcome.” *Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center*. Accessed January 25, 2025. <https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/>.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Spotted Tail, Two Strike, White Thunder, and Swift Bear to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 23, 1881, in *Sioux Chiefs Protest Deaths of Their Children and Ask for Local School*, Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/sioux-chiefs-protest-deaths-their-children-and-ask-local-school/>; Rankin, Adela. “Report of Abuse Towards Students in Discipline.” *Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center*, 2–3 Dec. 1892, <https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/documents/report-abuse-towards-students-discipline>. Accessed 7 June 2025; Lewis Meriam, *The Problem of Indian Administration: Report of a Survey Made at the Request of Honorable Hubert Work, Secretary of the Interior, and Submitted to Him, February 21, 1928* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1928), <https://narf.org/nill/resources/meriam.html>.

<sup>41</sup> Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*.

<sup>42</sup> Zitkala-Ša, “The School Days of an Indian Girl,” in *American Indian Stories*

later taught Carlisle Indian School, leaving in protest due to the dehumanizing curriculum. The volume was published in 1921, the volume includes, memoirs, fiction, and a political essay critiquing assimilationist policies. Like Luther Standing Bear, Zitkála-Šá provides a bicultural perspective, exposing the toll of assimilationist education, proving how assimilation is a structural problem that aligns with Wolfe's definition of settler colonialism.

### **The Dawes Act**

The Dawes Act was introduced by Senator Henry Dawes of Massachusetts and was officially approved on February 8, 1887.<sup>43</sup> The act aimed to supposedly protect American Indian property rights, particularly during the land rushes of the 1890s, prompted by the Homestead Act of 1862, which involved settlers claiming land that was previously taken by Indigenous nations. The Act aimed to erase Native titles to enable settler expansion. Dawes viewed land privatization and assimilation as necessary for “civilizing” Native people. The cultural agenda behind the act is to “drop the India-ness” of Native Americans through land privatization and cultural assimilation. The Act resulted in massive land loss, the breakdown of tribal communities, and economic hardship.

### **The Curtis Act**

The Curtis Act of 1898 extended Dawes Act provisions to the Five Civilized Tribes: the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Muscogee, and Seminole.<sup>44</sup> The Act increased land loss, imposed federal legal jurisdiction, and introduced settler structures such as taxation, schools, and towns, dissolving the Indigenous way of governance. It dismantled tribal courts, imposing federal jurisdiction, and redefining tribal citizenship. Together, these Acts exemplify settler colonial strategies of elimination through legal assimilation and land dispossession.

### **Estelle Reel's Curriculum**

*A Course of Study for the Indian Schools of the United States, Industrial and Literary*, which was published in Washington, D.C, in 1901 during the period of assimilationist federal

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<sup>43</sup> U.S. National Archives. “Dawes Act.

<sup>44</sup> U.S. Congress. *Curtis Act of 1898*, 30 Stat. 495

Indian policy.<sup>45</sup> The course study was created by Estelle Reel, a superintendent of Indian schools under the U.S. Department of the Interior and Bureau of Indian Affairs. Reel's curriculum was based on the belief of Native inferiority. The book was made to teach English, primarily reflecting Christian values, hygiene, and patriotism, replacing Indigenous traditions and develop Native children as self-sufficient individuals. The course study emphasized manual labor, agriculture, carpentry, dairy, tailoring, blacksmithing, and stable management.

### **Sioux Chiefs' Protests**

Regarding Indigenous resistance, in May 1881, a letter was written by the Brulé Sioux Chiefs, Spotted Tail, Two Strike, White Thunder, and Swift Bear, from the Rosebud territory (present-day South Dakota) to the commissioner of Indian affairs to protest the deaths of children who had been sent to distant boarding schools and request local education instead.<sup>46</sup> The letter was a response to the deaths of Rosebud Sioux students, Maud and Ernest, in December 1880 due to lung complications and diphtheria, respectively, both deaths reported by Carlisle school's physician, Dr. Charles H. Hepburn. However, the physician's report lacked context regarding the conditions leading to the students' illnesses, shedding light on the health challenges and mortality rates at the Carlisle school during the late 19th century, reinforcing the Meriam report.

### **Adela Rankin's letter**

On December 2, 1892, Adela Rankin, a teacher at the Carlisle school, teaching elocution and oratory at the Carlisle school, wrote a letter to the president, Theodore Roosevelt, to expose the systemic abuses that Native children had to endure, seeking external intervention.<sup>47</sup> Written at the height of assimilationist boarding school policies, systemic abuses included physical punishment such as bread and water diets, confinement in cold cells, and psychological abuse such as disciplining children based on fear as an attempt to break their spirit. As a white educator, critical of the school system, Rankin provides a unique perspective despite being an outsider to the Native community. Rankin appealed to political authority with moral urgency, offering to testify and provide evidence despite the risk to her career.

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<sup>45</sup> Estelle Reel, *A Course of Study for the Indian Schools of the United States, Industrial and Literary* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901)

<sup>46</sup> Spotted Tail et al., letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 23, 1881.

<sup>47</sup> Rankin, "Report of Abuse Towards Students," 1892.

## The Meriam Report

The Meriam report, also known as *The Problem of Indian Administration*, published in 1928, provided a comprehensive and systematic critique of the federal government's policies towards Indigenous peoples in the areas of education, health care, land policy, economic development, and administration.<sup>48</sup> Commissioned by the Institute for Government Research and funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, it was led by Lewis Meriam and a team of experts who conducted on-site investigations of Native Americans' living conditions across the United States. The report's findings were scathing as they exposed the widespread poverty and malnutrition, condemned the allotment system, and criticized the boarding schools for their poor conditions, including underqualified staff, and methods of forced assimilation. The report laid the groundwork for succeeding policies and future reforms, including the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, which began to shift federal policy away from assimilation and toward a measure of tribal governance.

### Case 2: Konasheher New Vocational Skills Education and Training Center

Primary sources for the Xinjiang case include leaked police documents, internal security documents, state speeches, and photographic evidence, all derived from the Xinjiang Police Files.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, satellite imagery from the RAND Corporation (Research and Development) will support the analysis as visual evidence of detention facilities.<sup>50</sup> These sources provide insight into the modernized methods of surveillance and cultural erasure within the internment camps. First, the thesis analyzes two state speeches by Chen Quanguo in 2017 and 2018, respectively.<sup>51</sup> Second, photographs of Uyghur detainees and images of confiscated religious

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<sup>48</sup> Meriam, *The Problem of Indian Administration*, 1928.

<sup>49</sup> *Key Documents*, Xinjiang Police Files, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.xinjiangpolicefiles.org/key-documents/>.

<sup>50</sup> *Investigating the Growth of Detention Facilities in Xinjiang Using Nighttime Lighting*, Tearline, accessed June 7, 2025, [https://www.tearline.mil/public\\_page/xinjiang-nighttime-1](https://www.tearline.mil/public_page/xinjiang-nighttime-1)

<sup>51</sup> Chen, Quanguo. "Secretary Chen Quanguo's Speech During a Video Management Meeting of the Autonomous Region Stability Maintenance Headquarters." May 28, 2017. In *Xinjiang Police Files*. Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. Accessed January 26, 2025. <https://www.xinjiangpolicefiles.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Secretary-Chen-Quanguos-Speech-During-a-Video-Management-Meeting-of-the-Autonomous-Region-Stability-Maintenance-Headquarters.pdf>; Chen Quanguo, *Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo at the Conference of the Autonomous Region's Cadres (partial translation)*, June 18, 2018, obtained and translated by the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation as part of the Xinjiang Police Files, <https://www.xinjiangpolicefiles.org/>, distributed under CC BY 4.0 license.

items demonstrate cultural repression.<sup>52</sup> Third, a memoir written by Hoja Gulchehera, *A Stone is Most Precious Where it Belongs*, serves as an example of Uyghur persecution and resistance.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, secondary sources will contextualize the primary analysis. Notably, Adrian Zenz's report "*Sterilizations, IUDs, and Mandatory Birth Control: The CCP's Campaign to Suppress Uyghur Birthrates in Xinjiang*" (2020) will be used to extract evidence for the biological genocide aspect of settler colonialism.<sup>54</sup>

### **Chen Quango's speeches**

Internal speeches by Xinjiang secretary Chen Quango (2017-2018), addressed to cadres reveal the planning, logic and rhetoric behind the re-education centers and securitization campaign.<sup>55</sup> Translated excerpts in the Xinjiang Police Files outline "Strike Hard" campaign, the vocational training of detainees, and police militarization framed as "long term peace" and "stability". The speeches emphasize forced integration bilingual education and cultural assimilation under the guise of counterterrorism. A state-produced propaganda, the speeches invoke Party rhetoric of protecting "lawful religion", while erasing Uyghur identity and autonomy. Because the discourse focuses on enforcement rather than Uyghur experiences, the thesis draws on Uyghur testimonies to counter the settler narrative.

### **Images of Detainees and Religious items**

The images of detainees and confiscated religious items provide direct visual evidence of the mass incarceration of Uyghurs in Xinjiang.<sup>56</sup> The photographs report the scale and the targeting of Uyghurs by the state, showing men, women and minors under surveillance. Confiscated items such as prayer mats, papers of Quranic verses, Islamic clothing are framed as illegal objects. The leaked images reflect the criminalization of Uyghur identity and align with testimonies from survivors. However, the images are also state-produced intended for internal police files and does

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<sup>52</sup> Images of Detainees. *Xinjiang Police Files*. Accessed January 26, 2025.

<https://www.xinjiangpolicefiles.org/images-of-detainees/>; *Images of Security Drills and Police Work*, Xinjiang Police Files, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.xinjiangpolicefiles.org/images-of-security-drills-and-police-work/>.

<sup>53</sup> Gulchehera Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious Where It Belongs: A Memoir of Uyghur Exile, Hope, and Survival* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2023), preface and chap. 1.

<sup>54</sup> Zenz, Adrian. *Sterilizations, IUDs, and Mandatory Birth Control: The CCP's Campaign to Suppress Uyghur Birthrates in Xinjiang*. Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation, 2020.

<sup>55</sup> Chen, Quanguo. "Secretary Chen Quanguo's Speech"; Chen Quanguo, *Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo*

<sup>56</sup> *Images of Security Drills and Police Work*, Xinjiang Police Files

not include information or data on the statuses of detainees which risks the objectification of Uyghurs thus must be analyzed critically.

### **Satellite Imagery**

The analysis of the RAND corporation produced a report titled “ Investigating the Growth of Detention Facilities in Xinjiang” which uses nighttime satellite imagery to analyze the detention centers in Xinjiang.<sup>57</sup> The report highlighted the growth in facilities and the possible efforts of expansions based on increases in nighttime electricity. The report is invaluable as it provides insight in restricted areas that would be difficult to access due to restrictions. The report is reliable because it is based on objective data which can be used as supporting analysis for chapter 4. However, the satellite activity does not provide information on the conditions of the facilities and only captures specific moments in time, overlooking developments that may occur between intervals.

### **Personal Memoir**

*A Stone Is Most Precious Where It Belongs* by Gulchehra Hoja’s memoir was published in 2023 and offers a personal documentation of the repression of Uyghurs in China.<sup>58</sup> Hoja was a former state media presenter and now considered an exiled journalist, she provides firsthand testimony into the state’s efforts to suppress Uyghur identity and culture. This book serves as an example of Uyghur resistance and survivance which is central for countering the state narratives.

Unfortunately, only the preface and chapter 1 were accessible which provided significant information on the historical context of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, state control over language, media and life. Concerning limitations, the book provides partial information and should be carefully used to complement the analysis in chapter 4.

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<sup>57</sup> Evan Robinson, *Investigating the Growth of Detention Facilities in Xinjiang: Part I*, Tearline, accessed June 7, 2025, [https://www.tearline.mil/public\\_page/xinjiang-nighttime-1](https://www.tearline.mil/public_page/xinjiang-nighttime-1).

<sup>58</sup> Gulchehra Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious Where It Belongs: A Memoir of Uyghur Exile, Hope, and Survival* (New York: Algonquin Books, 2023).



## Analytical Method

The primary sources will be analyzed by conducting a close reading of visual and textual sources, which allows for an in-depth examination of language framing and discourses within state documents as well as Indigenous and Uyghur narratives. This particular approach will help analyze how settler colonial logics are constructed, justified, and maintained through different forms of communication. The analysis focuses on identifying thematic categories across the two case studies through applying Wolfe's "logic of elimination", Veracini's contribution on the normalization of settler colonial structures, and Kauanui's work on agency and resistance. The thematic categories:

- 1) cultural erasure, such as suppression of language, religion, and identity.
- 2) control through Surveillance, referring to methods of monitoring and controlling Indigenous and Uyghur bodies and spaces.
- 3) Physical and psychological violence; explicit and implicit forms of harm and coercion.
- 4) Agency and Resistance: Narratives asserting Indigenous and Uyghur survivance and protest.

Applying these categories in a comparative framework and structuring the thesis around them, the paper seeks to identify convergences and divergences in how settler colonialism is executed across different geopolitical and temporal contexts. As a result, this method of analysis can provide a global, nuanced, and pluralistic understanding of settler colonialism as an ongoing structure.

## Limitations and Ethics

The study recognized multiple limitations concerning data availability and biases within primary sources. In the case of the Carlisle Indian School, lots of archival material and published memoirs are available for the public; however, the legal documents and the Meriam Report reflect settler narratives produced by the U.S. government, thus requiring a critical reading of Indigenous memoirs to uncover Indigenous resistance.<sup>59</sup> In the Xinjiang case, the challenges are even bigger, as access to primary sources remains restricted due to state censorship and surveillance, leading to transparency issues.<sup>60</sup> The study mostly relies on leaked police files that

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<sup>59</sup> "Welcome | Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center," February 14, 2023, <https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/>.

<sup>60</sup> *Xinjiang Police Files*, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.xinjiangpolicefiles.org/>.

are translated and secondary reporting from the academic field and international organizations.<sup>61</sup> The leaked police files contain documents of the Chinese state, centering on settler narratives but also providing incomplete and fragmented representations of detention facilities that are often mediated, specifically the translated speeches. The paper also acknowledges the comparative framework of vastly different temporal contexts and levels of documentation, which impacts the depth and scope of research.

Ethically, the study understands the sensitivity of addressing settler colonial topics and seeks to approach the issue respectfully and responsibly. The central focus is not to reproduce dominant narratives of Indigenous and Uyghur people as “victims” and to avoid settler narratives produced by the state.<sup>62</sup> Thus, Indigenous scholarship is centralized in this thesis to raise awareness surrounding the repression of the communities.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ghani and Said, “The Role of International NGOs in Uyghur Muslim Humanitarian Issues.”; Carmen Molina Acosta, “‘Huge Uptick’ in Chinese Propaganda Over Uighur Camps, Report Finds - ICIJ,” *International Consortium of Investigative Journalists*, August 18, 2020,

<https://www.icij.org/investigations/china-cables/huge-uptick-in-chinese-propaganda-over-uighur-camps-report-finds/>

<sup>62</sup> J. Kehaulani Kauanui, “‘A Structure, Not an Event’: Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity,” *Lateral* 5, no. 1 (May 1, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.25158/l5.1.7>, para 3-8.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 2: Historiography

This chapter delves into the scholarship on education and the assimilation of Indigenous people as a means to eliminate Indigenous populations.<sup>64</sup> Education is used as an instrument by settler states to further their settler colonial projects, drawing from Wolfe's definition of settler colonialism as an ongoing structure.<sup>65</sup> The historiography examines historical institutions like Indian boarding schools in the U.S. and contemporary ones like the integration policies and detention facilities in China, sharing settler colonial logics such as surveillance, standardization, and control of culture, land, and identity.<sup>66</sup> Recent scholarship views neoliberal reforms and diversity speeches as a perpetuation of settler colonialism within educational institutions.<sup>67</sup> The literature reflects quite a Eurocentric lens of settler states examining Australia, Canada, and the U.S.<sup>68</sup> Thus, there is a growing understanding of expanding the research to non-Western, authoritarian contexts, identifying key themes and debates that inform the comparative analysis.

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<sup>64</sup> Haven Bills and Sonja Klinsky, "The Resilience of Settler Colonialism in Higher Education: A Case Study of a Western Sustainability Department," *Teaching in Higher Education* 28, no. 5 (2023): 969–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2023.2197111>; Sophie Rudolph and Archie Thomas, "Education, Racial Justice, and the Limits of Inclusion in Settler Colonial Australia," *Comparative Education Review* 67, no. S1 (2022): S110–28, <https://doi.org/10.1086/722158>; Anna Lees, Tasha Tropp Laman, and Dolores Calderón, "'Why Didn't I Know This?': Land Education as an Antidote to Settler Colonialism in Early Childhood Teacher Education," *Theory Into Practice* 60, no. 3 (2021): 279–90, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2021.1911482>; María Cioè-Peña, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's School: Interrogating Settler Colonial Logics in Language Education," *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 42 (2022): 25–33, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0267190521000209>; Malathi Michelle Iyengar, "Not Mere Abstractions: Language Policies and Language Ideologies in U.S. Settler Colonialism," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 2 (2014), <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/download/19559/17835>; Shankar, "Language and Race: Settler Colonial Consequences and Epistemic Disruptions.

<sup>65</sup> Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native.

<sup>66</sup> Avery Smith, Hine Funaki, and Liana MacDonald, "Living, Breathing Settler-colonialism: The Reification of Settler Norms in a Common University Space," *Higher Education Research & Development* 40, no. 1 (2021): 132–45, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1852190>; Ju-Han Zoe Wang and Gerald Roche, "Urbanizing MinorityMinzu in the PRC: Insights From the Literature on Settler Colonialism," *Modern China* 48, no. 3 (2021): 593–616, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0097700421995135>.

<sup>67</sup> Shankar, "Language and Race: Settler Colonial Consequences and Epistemic Disruptions."; Lees, Vélez, and Laman, "Recognition and Resistance of Settler Colonialism in Early Childhood Education: Perspectives and Implications for Black, Indigenous, and Teachers of Color."

<sup>68</sup> Cioè-Peña, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's School: Interrogating Settler Colonial Logics in Language Education."; Slaubaugh, Briana. "American Indian Residential Boarding Schools: Historical Trauma and the Role of Government, Churches, and Tribes in Healing Indigenous Communities." *Eleutheria* 7, no. 1 (2023): 14–29. <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/eleu/vol7/iss1/3>.

## Defining Settler Colonialism

One of the key themes identified between settler colonialism (SC) and education is that education is not neutral, but it is essential for settler colonial governance.<sup>69</sup> Schools serve as institutions designed under settler colonial regimes to assimilate, dispossess, and erase Indigenous people. Haven Bills and Sonja Klinsky define SC as an ongoing process, as theorized by Patrick Wolfe, which is centered around land control, labor extraction, and the ongoing elimination of Indigenous ways of being and knowing.<sup>70</sup> The author's study focused on higher education and SC in sustainability programs, demonstrating how Western education systems perpetuate SC, reinforcing patriarchal, capitalist, and white supremacist values.<sup>71</sup> Another study showed how schooling in Australia operates in a broader framework of racialized governance and elimination, normalizing white settler norms.<sup>72</sup> Discourses surrounding "inclusion" take solace in a white-centered, settler-defined apparatus that does not disrupt settler colonial structures but reinforces them.<sup>73</sup> Lees, Laman, and Calderón referred to SC as the permanent migration of European settlers into territories who attempt to own land for capital gain by displacing Indigenous people and enslaving Indigenous African people.<sup>74</sup> The main argument is how SC is reproduced through education by examining early childhood education (ECE).<sup>75</sup> The analysis is guided by Tuck and Yang, and Wolfe's theory on how the U.S. SC was designed to deliberately erase Indigenous epistemologies initiated and maintained by the state.<sup>76</sup> Settler dominance is maintained by white teachers and institutions who do not take responsibility for reinforcing colonial structures, reinforcing Wolfe's theory on how SC is an ongoing process.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Bills and Klinsky, "The Resilience of Settler Colonialism in Higher Education: A Case Study of a Western Sustainability Department."

<sup>70</sup> Bills and Klinsky, "The Resilience of Settler Colonialism in Higher Education: A Case Study of a Western Sustainability Department.", 969.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Rudolph and Thomas, "Education, Racial Justice, and the Limits of Inclusion in Settler Colonial Australia," December 23, 2022., 110.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 112-117.

<sup>74</sup> Lees, Laman, and Calderón, "'Why Didn't I Know This?': Land Education as an Antidote to Settler Colonialism in Early Childhood Teacher Education.", 279.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 280-282.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 281.

## Language as an Instrument for Assimilation

Another key theme is how language is used as a key tool for assimilation.<sup>78</sup> Notably, the standardization of language reflects colonial legacies that are designed to exclude, pathologize, and assimilate minority students.<sup>79</sup> “British English” or “Castillian Spanish” are imposed through colonial conquest, which condemns racialized and colonized people for speaking “inappropriate” language, treating their language as a disorder and inferior.<sup>80</sup> In the U.S. education system, there is an overrepresentation of Indigenous, Black, and people of color (BIPOC) in special education despite not having disabilities and being placed in English Learner programs unnecessarily.<sup>81</sup> Cioè-Peña argues that this is a deliberate attempt to create segregation within schools by denying BIPOC opportunities to access higher education, advanced classes, and talented programs.<sup>82</sup> The author critiques language justice forms and bilingual education because they operate within Eurocentric colonial models that determine individuals who are deemed bilingual and serve settler interests.<sup>83</sup>

Language was not only standardized but also used as a tool to accelerate SC and pave the way for assimilation.<sup>84</sup> Iyengar argues that white settlers encouraged multiple European languages among white children, such as German, English, and Czech-English, to attract settlers to the settler on stolen land while Native children were only allowed to speak English in Indian boarding schools, reinforcing Wolfe’s theory of logic of elimination.<sup>85</sup> The Common School Movement ensured the acceleration of settler colonial goals by destroying Indigenous epistemologies while promoting universal literacy among white children.<sup>86</sup> This settler colonial strategy was financed through the sale of Indigenous lands which explains why Indian boarding schools were both a product and an instrument for settler colonialism's continuation in the U.S.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Cioè-Peña, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s School: Interrogating Settler Colonial Logics in Language Education,” ., 26-27.

<sup>79</sup> Cioè-Peña, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s School: Interrogating Settler Colonial Logics in Language Education,” ., 28.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>84</sup> Iyengar, “Not Mere Abstractions: Language Policies and Language Ideologies in U.S. Settler Colonialism.”, 33.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 51-56.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 42.

Aligning with Cioè-Peña's argument, Shankar argues how race and language are co-produced, leaving what is "acceptable" and what is "racialized" to white individuals.<sup>88</sup>

Just like Indian boarding schools assimilated Native children into European culture, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) uses education to assimilate the Uyghur population into Han culture.<sup>89</sup> The CCP implemented the Xinjiang Class Program, forcibly removing Uyghur youth from their families to teach them Chinese patriotism and pledge loyalty to the CCP.<sup>90</sup> The curriculum was designed in Mandarin, suppressing the Uyghur language.<sup>91</sup> Scholars agree that the re-education camps are established to culturally transform Uyghurs, under the guise of modernization, education, and development.<sup>92</sup> The erasure of Uyghur culture, religion, and language is evident in criminalizing Uyghur identity by racializing Uyghur Muslims as terrorists, separatists, and extremists, justifying the persecution of the Uyghur population.<sup>93</sup> The repression of Uyghurs aligns with Wolfe's logic of elimination, which provides a comparative framework alongside the elimination of Native people in the U.S.

### Surveillance As Modern Assimilation

Surveillance and control are essential for settlers to further their settler goals by exerting control in every aspect of the Indigenous way of being.<sup>94</sup> Although the technologies of surveillance differ across time and context, both the U.S and China use surveillance as a mechanism to discipline Indigenous people through total institutions.<sup>95</sup> In boarding schools, Native children were subjected to a strict regimen daily, imposing settler norms through a standardized Anglo-Western curriculum based on settler values such as Christianity, hygiene, patriotism, and

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<sup>88</sup> Shankar, "Language and Race: Settler Colonial Consequences and Epistemic Disruptions.", 386-387.

<sup>89</sup> Grose, "The Xinjiang Class." 97.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 101-106

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>92</sup> Trine Brox and Ildikó Bellér-Hann, *On The Fringes of the Harmonious Society: Tibetans and Uyghurs in Socialist China*, 2014.; Grose, "The Xinjiang Class: Education, Integration, and the Uyghurs."; Wang and Roche, "Urbanizing Minority Minzu in the PRC: Insights From the Literature on Settler Colonialism."; Dilmurat Mahmut, "Controlling Religious Knowledge and Education for Countering Religious Extremism – Case Study of the Uyghur Muslims in China," *FIRE Forum for International Research in Education* 5, no. 1 (2019): 22–43, <https://doi.org/10.32865/fire201951142>.

<sup>93</sup> Brox and Bellér-Hann, *On The Fringes of the Harmonious Society: Tibetans and Uyghurs in Socialist China*, 6.

<sup>94</sup> Slaubaugh, Briana. "American Indian Residential Boarding Schools: Historical Trauma and the Role of Government, Churches, and Tribes in Healing Indigenous Communities." *Eleutheria* 7, no. 1 (2023): 14–29. <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/elevol7/iss1/3>;

<sup>95</sup> Slaubaugh, "American Indian Residential Boarding Schools," 13; Jonathan Brooks, "Settler Colonialism, Primitive Accumulation, and Biopolitics in Xinjiang, China," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, January 1, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3965577>.

self-sufficiency.<sup>96</sup> The bureaucratization of Native children normalized and maintained SC among Indigenous tribes for generations.<sup>97</sup> The surveillance was also physical, with hair cutting as a violent erasure of identity, the confiscation of clothing, and replacing it with Western attire.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, children were forced to do laundry, cook, clean, and farm, which enabled discipline through hard labor.<sup>99</sup>

Similarly, surveillance in the re-education centers is more sophisticated and technologically developed, with Uyghurs being monitored daily through cameras and tracking their behavior through scoring systems and biometric data.<sup>100</sup> Thus, Uyghurs who are deemed “suspicious” are targeted and persecuted by the state.<sup>101</sup> The surveillance is not only limited to the detention facilities, but also within Uyghur communities with the establishment of police checkpoints and the monitoring of mosques.<sup>102</sup> Smith et al. argue that surveillance works through normative social control where settler institutions produce racially charged environments, making Indigenous people hypervisible.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, the thesis aims to explore new mechanisms of SC by exploring how China employs advanced technology to suppress Uyghurs, expanding on Wolfe’s theory of traditional assimilation methods, and filling the gap of Eurocentrism in Settler Colonial studies.

## **Transformative Justice and Resistance**

Scholars agree on how Western education needs to be replaced with Indigenous-led frameworks based on land and community-based education.<sup>104</sup> Liberal, multicultural, inclusion-based

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<sup>96</sup> Slaubaugh, “American Indian Residential Boarding Schools,” 17-22.

<sup>97</sup> Slaubaugh, “American Indian Residential Boarding Schools,” 22-25; Smith, Funaki, and MacDonald, “Living, Breathing Settler-Colonialism: The Reification of Settler Norms in a Common University Space,”; Parks, Keiteyana I. “Indigenous Boarding Schools in the United States and Canada.” *American Indian Law Review* 47, no. 1 (2022): 37-70.

<sup>98</sup> Keiteyana I. Parks, “Indigenous Boarding Schools in the United States and Canada,” 46.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

<sup>100</sup> “The Xinjiang Police Files.” *Xinjiang Police Files*. Accessed June, 8, 2025.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Smith, Funaki, and MacDonald, “Living, Breathing Settler-Colonialism: The Reification of Settler Norms in a Common University Space,” 2021., 138.

<sup>104</sup> Lees, Laman, and Calderón, ““Why Didn’t I Know This?”: Land Education as an Antidote to Settler Colonialism in Early Childhood Teacher Education.”, 281-285; Shankar, “Language and Race: Settler Colonial Consequences and Epistemic Disruptions.”, 391; Smith, Funaki, and MacDonald, “Living, Breathing Settler-Colonialism: The Reification of Settler Norms in a Common University Space,” 142-143; Lees, Vélez, and Laman, “Recognition and Resistance of Settler Colonialism in Early Childhood Education: Perspectives and Implications for Black, Indigenous, and Teachers of Color.”, 1086-1087.

approaches are not radical enough to disrupt settler colonial structures; thus, land-based education confronts the current structures that are eliminating Indigenous people.<sup>105</sup> Land education focuses on prioritizing Indigenous values, sovereignty, relationships, and epistemologies to destabilize the dominant Western and Eurocentric schooling.<sup>106</sup> The standardization and neoliberal reforms in the education sector contribute to the ongoing structure of SC, which needs to be eradicated by advocating for a transformative rather than a transitional change.<sup>107</sup> Transitional change treats SC as a past event, overlooking its ongoing nature; it is not enough to address the structural issues for real radical change.<sup>108</sup> Besides ineffective reparations and apologies, truth commissions are limited to the process and heal trauma among Indigenous communities, but do not apply on a national scale.<sup>109</sup> Transformative change requires the recognition of Indigenous land rights and the right to self-determination to enable true liberation and decolonization.<sup>110</sup> Not only is land-based education a form of resistance, but also grassroots movements are effective in pressuring the state and public opinion on the ongoing injustices, resisting SC internally and also externally by advocating internationally.<sup>111</sup> This reinforces Kaunui's notions on the centralization of Indigenous resurgence and agency.<sup>112</sup>

The Uyghur struggle is also a form of resistance because their very resistance to the Chinese state is framed as a national threat and terrorism.<sup>113</sup> Historically, ethnic minorities like the Tibetans and the Uyghurs have been resisting religious and cultural suppression since the establishment of the CCP in 1949.<sup>114</sup> Since then, the resistance among Uyghurs has grown significantly with the increase of integration policies such as the Xinjiang Class.<sup>115</sup> Yet, Uyghur students continue to resist assimilation by speaking Uyghur outside class, maintaining Uyghur

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<sup>105</sup> Lees, Laman, and Calderón, “‘Why Didn’t I Know This?’: Land Education as an Antidote to Settler Colonialism in Early Childhood Teacher Education.”, 281-285

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Shankar, “Language and Race: Settler Colonial Consequences and Epistemic Disruptions.”, 388.

<sup>108</sup> Nagy, “Transformative Justice in a Settler Colonial Transition: Implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.”, 191.

<sup>109</sup> Ochs, Sara, A National Truth Commission for Native Americans (2021). Wisconsin Journal of Law, Gender & Society, 2021, University of Louisville School of Law Legal Studies Research Paper Series No. 2021-7, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3831280>

<sup>110</sup> Nagy, “Transformative Justice in a Settler Colonial Transition: Implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.”, 193.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>112</sup> Kaunui, “Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity.”

<sup>113</sup> Mahmut, “Controlling Religious Knowledge and Education for Countering Religious Extremism – Case Study of the Uyghur Muslims in China.”, 32.

<sup>114</sup> Brooks, “Settler Colonialism,” 6.

<sup>115</sup> Grose, “The Xinjiang Class: Education, Integration, and the Uyghurs.”, 103-105



social networks, and returning to Xinjiang to serve their people and not to China.<sup>116</sup> Not only in Xinjiang but also Uyghurs in the diaspora raise awareness of the colonial projection of Xinjiang by engaging in human rights campaigns and political advocacy.<sup>117</sup> Organizations such as the World Uyghur Congress work to mobilize international opinion by lobbying in international forums and establishing alliances with anti-colonial movements.<sup>118</sup> Uyghurs reject the framing of them as an “ethnic minority” and see themselves as “occupied people” and emphasizing the CCP’s cultural genocide.<sup>119</sup> Wang and Roche argue for urban place-making as an act of resisting the assimilation agenda by building community spaces, maintaining rural-urban ties, and resisting urbanization attempts in Xinjiang.<sup>120</sup> This approach has been applied in Tibet, which reframes minorities in China as active agents rather than passive subjects to the state.<sup>121</sup>

## Ongoing Debates

### Neoliberal Education

An important debate that arises from Western education systems perpetuating settler colonial logics is whether neoliberalism is separate from SC or a current form of it.<sup>122</sup> Cioè-Peña argues that educational institutions claim to embrace diversity and highlight inclusion within their marketing strategies for financial gain. Despite these claims, no real structural changes towards Indigenous sovereignty and social justice have occurred. This is because neoliberal values such as individualism, competition, and image correspond with settler colonial goals that reproduce SC under a new language. However, others argue that standardized testing, market-based models, and privatization are extensions of SC, not alternatives to it.<sup>123</sup> Universities operate within a

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Zainab Raza, “CHINA’S ‘POLITICAL RE-EDUCATION’ CAMPS OF XINJIANG’S UYGHUR MUSLIMS,” *Asian Affairs* 50, no. 4 (2019): 488–501, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03068374.2019.1672433>, 8-9.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>120</sup> Wang and Roche, “Urbanizing MinorityMinzu in the PRC: Insights From the Literature on Settler Colonialism,” 604.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Avery Smith, Hine Funaki, and Liana MacDonald, “Living, Breathing Settler-colonialism: The Reification of Settler Norms in a Common University Space,” *Higher Education Research & Development* 40, no. 1 (2021): 132–45, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1852190>; Lees, Vélez, and Laman, “Recognition and Resistance of Settler Colonialism in Early Childhood Education: Perspectives and Implications for Black, Indigenous, and Teachers of Color.”

<sup>123</sup> Lees, Laman, and Calderón, “‘Why Didn’t I Know This?’: Land Education as an Antidote to Settler Colonialism in Early Childhood Teacher Education.”; Lees, Vélez, and Laman, “Recognition and Resistance of Settler

market-driven logic, whereby they portray a positive, inclusive, post-colonial image, neglecting the uncomfortable truths of the violent colonial histories, referring to this process as “historical amnesia”.<sup>124</sup> Thus, universities are focused on promoting their images and protecting their reputation rather than focusing on effective decolonization. Shankar made a similar argument on how universities employ an “avoidance technique” by producing diversity speeches to cover the ongoing colonial power embedded in white supremacy.<sup>125</sup>

### **A Case of Colonialism or Settler Colonialism?**

There is an ongoing discussion on whether SC can be applied in Xinjiang, sparking debate among scholars on whether the Uyghur case is a colonial case marked by labor extraction or settler colonialism, where land is central.<sup>126</sup> Wang and Roche argue that only in specific instances is the CCP's endeavors a form of SC while operating within a colonial framework.<sup>127</sup> The state operates in distinct logics that requires more comparative framework to gain more insights on how settler colonialism operates across geopolitical contexts, which this thesis aims to research by comparing the Uyghur population with the Native population to trace the development of SC and identify similarities and differences to understand how SC operates in the contemporary era.<sup>128</sup> Brox & Bellér-Hann have framed Tibet and Xinjiang as “internal colonies” of China, acknowledging the colonial dimensions with aspects such as cultural hegemony and imperial incorporation, but are careful to label the ongoing case as a settler colonial one.<sup>129</sup> Other scholars have not addressed this debate as they have framed this case as a colonial, imperial one, overlooking the settler colonial logics in Global South contexts.<sup>130</sup>

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Colonialism in Early Childhood Education: Perspectives and Implications for Black, Indigenous, and Teachers of Color.”

<sup>124</sup> Smith, Funaki, and MacDonald, “Living, Breathing Settler-Colonialism: The Reification of Settler Norms in a Common University Space.”

<sup>125</sup> Shalini Shankar, “Language and Race: Settler Colonial Consequences and Epistemic Disruptions,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 52, no. 1 (2023): 381–97, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-010220-074541>.

<sup>126</sup> James Waller and Mariana Salazar Albornoz, “Crime and No Punishment? China’s Abuses Against the Uyghurs,” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 22, no. 1 (2021): 100–111, <https://doi.org/10.1353/gia.2021.0000>; Wang and Roche, “Urbanizing MinorityMinzu in the PRC: Insights From the Literature on Settler Colonialism,” 594.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.,8.

<sup>130</sup> Bennett, Natalie. “Collective Action Theory And The Uyghur Genocide: Analyzing Theoretical Insights And U.n. Policy Gaps In Cultural Genocide”, December 4, 2024.

[https://purl.lib.fsu.edu/diginole/honors\\_thesis\\_submission-04d882d6-65e4-4a6e-9123-612dc5f21add](https://purl.lib.fsu.edu/diginole/honors_thesis_submission-04d882d6-65e4-4a6e-9123-612dc5f21add); Jordan R. Ellis, Jordan R., "A Comparative Analysis of the People's Republic of China and Its Treatment of Uyghur Muslims and Nazi Germany and Its Treatment of the Jewish People" (2022). *Honors Undergraduate Theses*. 1131.

However, another study conducted by Jonathan Brooks critiqued Patrick Wolfe's definition of settler colonialism, stating that it occurs through the elimination of the natives for exploitation of land and its resources.<sup>131</sup> Wolfe's theory focuses on territory, which is essential for SC, but it is not enough to explain why the state sees Xinjiang's geopolitical location as a key hub for the Belt and Road Initiative, whereby Uyghurs are placed in detention facilities for forced labor.<sup>132</sup> Thus, in the Uyghurs' case, not only land but also labor play a significant role in the settler colonial agenda of China. The author suggests David Harvey's accumulation by dispossession to explain the mass Han migration in Xinjiang for the expansion of China's capitalist needs.<sup>133</sup>

### **Is it Genocide?**

A question emerging from the mass incarceration of Uyghur people is whether that can be considered a genocide.<sup>134</sup> Waller and Alborno argue that China's systemic repression of the Uyghurs meets the international legal standards of the Rome Statute, such as enslavement, imprisonment, torture, persecution, and forced sterilization.<sup>135</sup> Besides the forced sterilization among Uyghur women, other possible acts of genocide, such as killings, internment, and the separation of children, are difficult to prove.<sup>136</sup> However, many scholars like Finley and Adrian Zenz emphasized that the Chinese state is committing a biological genocide against the Uyghurs based on the definition of genocide according to the U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.<sup>137</sup> Additionally, there is debate on whether the destruction of mosques and other Uyghur cultural sites is an indicator of genocidal intent.<sup>138</sup> This raises the question of why cultural genocide is excluded from the 1948 UN Genocide Convention, arguing that cultural genocide is just as damaging as physical and biological genocide.<sup>139</sup> Scholars like Ellis have pointed out that many policymakers and media perceive mass killing as the defining

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<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/honorstheses/1131>

<sup>131</sup> Brooks, "Settler Colonialism," 10-11.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 12-15.

<sup>134</sup> Waller and Alborno, "Crime and No Punishment? China's Abuses Against the Uyghurs."; Ellis, *Comparative Analysis*.

<sup>135</sup> Waller and Alborno, "Crime and No Punishment? China's Abuses Against the Uyghurs.", 100.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>137</sup> Zenz, *Mandatory Birth Control*, 1; Finley, "Tabula Rasa," 353.

<sup>138</sup> Waller and Alborno, "Crime and No Punishment? China's Abuses Against the Uyghurs.", 103; Ellis, *Comparative Analysis*, 25.

<sup>139</sup> Waller and Alborno, "Crime and No Punishment? China's Abuses Against the Uyghurs.", 104-107.

threshold to recognize genocide, often referencing the Holocaust and the machete massacres in Rwanda.<sup>140</sup> Thus, genocide cannot be defined based on one method because even if the intent to destroy a group, whether partially or fully, is the criterion.<sup>141</sup> Scholars call for genocide studies to be expanded comparatively for prevention and hold the international community accountable for the lack of response.<sup>142</sup> Bennet and Ellis agree on how the international community is contradicting such as UNESCO, protecting cultural heritage, while the UN Genocide Convention excludes cultural genocide.<sup>143</sup> Questions emerge on whether international organizations and legal definitions act as structural barriers to effectively respond to crimes against humanity, which have failed to address genocides in the past, risking inaction.<sup>144</sup>

The literature demonstrated how education is used as a key tool of settler colonial governance to control, assimilate, and remove Indigenous people. Through language standardization and surveillance, settler states impose settler values that seek to erase Indigenous ways of knowing and being. As a response, scholars have called to decolonize Western education and transition to land-based education embedded in Indigenous sovereignty and language revitalization. Also, scholars argue for expanding comparative genocide research and address the international community for their lack of accountability, questioning whether the current human rights frameworks are sufficient to confront the ongoing genocide in Xinjiang.

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<sup>140</sup> Ellis, *Comparative Analysis*, 34-38.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Finley, "Tabula Rasa."; Jonathan Brooks, "Settler Colonialism, Primitive Accumulation, and Biopolitics in Xinjiang, China," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3965577>; Nimrod Baranovitch, "The 'Bilingual Education' Policy in Xinjiang Revisited: New Evidence of Open Resistance And Active Support Among The Uyghur Elite," *Modern China* 48, no. 1 (2020): 134-66.; Waller and Albornoz, "Crime and No Punishment? China's Abuses Against the Uyghurs."; Ellis, *Comparative Analysis*.

<sup>143</sup> Ellis, *Comparative Analysis*, 38; Bennett, "Collective Action Theory".

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 3 - The United States: Education and Legal Erasure in the Settler Colonial Project

### Introduction

This chapter aims to answer the sub-question: What are the different methods of elimination in the U.S? Boarding schools like Carlisle aimed to “civilize” Native children through forced removal, cultural suppression, and physical and psychological punishment, revealing a system of domination. The chapter examines two autobiographical memoirs: *My People the Sioux* by Luther Standing Bear and *American Indian Stories* by Zitkala Ša , providing first-hand experiences in Indian boarding schools.<sup>145</sup> It also analyzes legislative acts, such as the Dawes Act (1887) and the Curtis Act (1898) along with a Estelle Reel’s standardized course study of settler education.<sup>146</sup> The chapter concludes by exploring contradictions within the settler colonial project, specifically, the discrepancy between the imposition of a civilizing rhetoric and the documented failures of federal Indian policies. It discusses Indigenous resistance and survival response to settler systems.

For both authors, education was a mechanism for disconnection and dissociation of Native identity from land, language, family, and self.<sup>147</sup> Zitkala-Ša’s account of her arrival at the Quaker-run boarding school is marked by violation and disorientation when she described how her long hair was being cut: “ I resisted by kicking and scratching wildly. In spite of myself, I was carried downstairs and tied fast in a chair.”<sup>148</sup> In her culture, cutting hair is considered a sacred act of mourning; shingled hair signified cowards.<sup>149</sup> She described how she lost her spirit exemplifying Wolfe’s logic of elimination, the colonial control of the Indigenous body to erase visible expressions of cultural identity and impose settler norms.<sup>150</sup> Similarly, Standing Bear recounts forced assignment of western names at Carlisle: “Soon we all had the names of white men sewed on our backs”.<sup>151</sup> This practice marks the stripping of Indigenous identity and marked the children as subjects of the settler state. Teachers sewed names onto shirts, and children were

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<sup>145</sup> Zitkala-Ša, *American Indian Stories*, 47–80; Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*.

<sup>146</sup> U.S. National Archives. “Dawes Act ; U.S. Congress. “Curtis Act”; Estelle Reel, A Course of Study”.

<sup>147</sup> Zitkala-Ša, *American Indian Stories*, 47–80; Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*.

<sup>148</sup> Zitkala-Ša, “The Cutting of My Hair.”

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native.”, 398.

<sup>151</sup> Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*, chap. 14.

required to respond to them.<sup>152</sup> Luther Standing Bear describes the ban on speaking Indigenous languages at Carlisle: “But our rules were that we were not to speak the Indian language under any consideration. And here was my father, and he could not talk English!”<sup>153</sup> The language ban disrupted the cultural and familial transmission of Indigenous people so severely that Standing Bear could not communicate with his father.<sup>154</sup> This exemplifies Wolfe’s view of settler colonialism as an ongoing structure, severing generational continuity.<sup>155</sup> Boarding schools claimed to to “educate” Native children, but in practice erased their worldviews, communities, and epistemologies, reflecting the “logic of elimination”. Zitkála-Šá highlights the theme of betrayal through false promises to lure Native children to boarding schools.<sup>156</sup> Missionaries promised “red apples” and modern attraction to entice children.<sup>157</sup> Children were promised rides on the “iron horse”: “You will have a ride on the iron horse if you go with these good people”.<sup>158</sup> Here, education was not a gift but a trap that was sweetened by the language of opportunity and civilization. Zitkála-Šá’s metaphor critiques the boarding school’s manipulative tactics, where promised care led to displacement and silencing.<sup>159</sup>

Despite the traumatic and violent experiences of their education, both authors use cultural memory as resistance. Zitkála-Šá frequently returns to her childhood memories of her community, where songs, stories, and ceremonies shaped her sense of self.<sup>160</sup> The childhood experiences serve as not just memories but an Indigenous archive to preserve and protect the knowledge and existence of Native communities against assimilationist strategies of settler colonialism.<sup>161</sup> Similarly, Standing Bear recollected how his father framed settler education as a tool for survival rather than surrender, telling Standing Bear to learn everything he needed to know about the Euro-American way of life.<sup>162</sup> Standing Bear’s father acknowledged the unavoidable domination of the settler society over the Native people and wanted his son to adapt

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native.”, 398.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Zitkala-Ša, *An Indian Teacher Among Indians*, “The Big Red Apples.”

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Zitkala-Ša, *An Indian Teacher Among Indians*, “Impressions of an Indian Childhood.”

<sup>161</sup> Kauanui, “Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity.”, para. 2

<sup>162</sup> Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*, “The Carlisle Band in New York”.

rather than assimilate to the settler culture because, in doing so, Standing Bear reclaimed agency in a system that was designed to deny it.<sup>163</sup>

### **Legal Policies as a Tool for Elimination**

The second theme delves into the legal policies that facilitated land theft and the dispossession of Native people. In his article "*Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native*," Wolfe characterizes settler colonialism primarily through the acquisition of Indigenous land as Indigenous people were seen as an obstacle to land access, which triggered various eliminatory strategies such as the Dawes Act.<sup>164</sup> The Dawes Act aimed to eliminate collective landholding by dividing reservations into individual allotments with surplus land sold to white settlers.<sup>165</sup> Section 1 stated: "to allot the lands in said reservation in severalty to any Indian located thereon".<sup>166</sup> "Severalty" within this context means "individually" attacking the collectiveness of land and replacing it with the settler norm of private property. Wolfe described this condition as a settler's bargain: "Have our world, but lose your Indigenous soul."; citizenship in this case was not meant for Indigenous rights, but it depended on abandoning tribal life.<sup>167</sup> The act also imposed state laws and criminal laws once Native people accepted the allotments, eliminating Indigenous governance and sovereignty. Yet, the allotment of lands didn't necessarily mean that Natives secured land, as it was stated in section 10 that the U.S had the right to take land back for public infrastructure, which meant that Indigenous land was never a guarantee but always subordinated to settler interests.<sup>168</sup> The Curtis Act (1898) serves as a reinforcement of the Dawes Act, which provides a historical continuation of increased settlement of white settlers on Native land.<sup>169</sup> An important aspect of the Curtis Act is the abolition of tribal courts and replacing them with U.S. federal courts: "...all tribal courts in Indian Territory shall be abolished..".<sup>170</sup> This aligns with Wolfe's idea on the elimination of Indigenous and political structures of governance, which is an example of "structural genocide".<sup>171</sup> The Acts racialize Indigeneity through legal definitions and

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<sup>163</sup> Kauanui, "Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity," para. 2

<sup>164</sup> Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," 399.

<sup>165</sup> U.S. National Archives. "Dawes Act".

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., sec 1.

<sup>167</sup> Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," 397.

<sup>168</sup> U.S. National Archives. "Dawes Act", sec 10.

<sup>169</sup> U.S. Congress. *Curtis Act*.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 504

<sup>171</sup> Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," 399.

blood quantum, designed to shrink Indigenous population and eliminate future Indigenous claims.<sup>172</sup>

### **Indigenous Resistance Under Assimilation**

The Meriam Report called for a complete transformation of the Indian education system, highlighting, the need for Native children to be brought up within their homes, qualified staff, and an inclusive curriculum that respects cultural differences among Native communities.<sup>173</sup> The report also highlighted the mismatch between the public schools' methods and the lived realities of Native children. The report reveals how elimination through education was entrenched in US federal Indian policy: "... it is necessary to remove the Indian child as far as possible from his home environment".<sup>174</sup> By removing Native children from family structures, the system disrupts the very channels through which Indigenous knowledge and identity are passed down, as theorized by Wolfe.<sup>175</sup> Another critique is the standardization of settler education, which was a mechanism for cultural erasure, overlooking the diversity within Indigenous tribes and resulting in normalized, disciplinary violence.<sup>176</sup> This is emphasized in *A Course of Study for the Indian Schools of the United States*, reflecting the core objective of boarding schools; assimilation.<sup>177</sup> Native children were trained as agricultural farmers and domestic workers to serve the settler economy instead of sustaining their communities.<sup>178</sup>

Resistance also came from Indigenous communities.<sup>179</sup> A letter from Sioux chiefs in the Carlisle correspondence, protested the boarding school system. "If our children die, we want to be near them, so we can bury them with our own hands".<sup>180</sup> This shows how federal policies disrupted Indigenous cultural and spiritual continuity.<sup>181</sup> Indigenous leaders weren't merely passive members but asserted the right to self-determined education.<sup>182</sup> "We want to speak straight to you, as men, and ask that our children be brought back".<sup>183</sup> The chief leaders

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 400.

<sup>173</sup> Lewis Meriam, "The Problem of Indian".

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>175</sup> Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native.", 403.

<sup>176</sup> Estelle Reel, *A Course of Study*.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Spotted Tail et al., letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native.", 403.

<sup>182</sup> Kauanui, "Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity".

<sup>183</sup> Spotted Tail et al., letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.



represented themselves as active agents countering paternalistic views. Resistance also emerged from within the settler institution itself.<sup>184</sup> Due to Adela Rankin's protests of systemic abuses at the Carlisle School, she was dismissed by Richard Pratt highlighting the school's resistance to scrutiny.<sup>185</sup> "He refused everything I asked, forbade my entering the school-rooms again, and ordered me to leave".<sup>186</sup> This exemplifies the neutralization of threat to maintain the logic of elimination.

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<sup>184</sup> Adela Rankin, "Report of Abuse Towards".

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 4 - China: Surveillance, Assimilation, and the Technological Colonization of Uyghur Identity

### Introduction

The chapter aims to answer the sub-question: What are the different methods of elimination in China? The section highlights methods aim to eliminate and erase the Uyghur identity, drawing on the Wolfe's "logic of elimination".<sup>187</sup> The chapter will examine leaked police files from Xinjiang, which contain state policies and strategies to repress the Turkic muslims through direct violence and incarceration, alongside leaked protocols and drills of dealing with detainees in internment camps, which demonstrate the settler colonial restructuring of everyday life in Xinjiang.<sup>188</sup> The chapter will further examine the research report of Dr Adrian Zenz, documenting forced sterilization that meets the UN definition of genocide.<sup>189</sup> The chapter also focuses on Hoja's *"A Stone Is Most Precious Where It Belongs: A Memoir of Uyghur Exile, Hope, and Survival"*, a Uyghur journalist dealing with a repressive state.<sup>190</sup> It demonstrates the institutionalization of settler colonialism and Indigenous resistance preserving memories, knowledge and ways of life.

### The Criminalization of Religious Identity

"We absolutely cannot release the tiger back to the mountains," declared Chen Quanguo during a video management session on May 28, 2017.<sup>191</sup> He referred to Uyghur detainees framing religious identity as a security threat.<sup>192</sup> The statement captures China's bluntness towards the security policies in Xinjiang, where religious identity is framed as a security threat, and internment camps serve as a method for political transformation.<sup>193</sup> Quanguo was transferred from Tibet to Xinjiang in 2016, bringing harsh "Tibetan style" securitization policies such as mass surveillance, neighbourhood policing, and ideological control.<sup>194</sup> The speech, an internal

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<sup>187</sup> Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native".

<sup>188</sup> *Key Documents*, Xinjiang Police Files.

<sup>189</sup> Zenz, Adrian. "Sterilizations, IUDs, and Mandatory".

<sup>190</sup> Gulchehra Hoja, "A Stone Is Most Precious".

<sup>191</sup> Chen, Quanguo. "Secretary Chen Quanguo's Speech".

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> "Chen Quanguo in Xinjiang - Free Tibet."

recording transcribed in draft form, reveals state policies not intended for public view.<sup>195</sup> The draft was obtained and translated by the US-based Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation as part of the “Xinjiang Police Files” leak.<sup>196</sup> Intended for government officials and security forces, the document instructed strict enforcement of control measures during Ramadan, including religious activity, re-education camps, controlling mosques, and social stability.<sup>197</sup> The speech adopts a militaristic tone, emphasizing total control of the population and the elimination of perceived threats.<sup>198</sup> Meanwhile, in Western Xinjiang reported about increasing incarceration of Uyghurs being in re-education camps for periods as long as a year; an estimated one million Uyghurs and Kazakhs have since been detained and subjected to political indoctrination, torture and disappearances.<sup>199</sup>

Quango frames Uyghur identity through religion, portraying it as destabilizing and calling for the “transformation” of those who maintain that difference.<sup>200</sup> As Wolfe stated, “settler colonialism not only aims to eliminate Indigenous people but also their relationships to kin, land, and belief.”<sup>201</sup> In his 2017 speech, Quango highlighted “wild imams” as criminals, treating unregulated Islamic authority as a political threat to be eliminated.<sup>202</sup> This illustrates Wolfe’s point of elimination, targeting cultural and spiritual life, not only physical existence. Quango linked the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), as a “battle” requiring domestic stability: “We’ve fought a beautiful battle with the Belt and Road Initiative, during which we achieved the feat of no major incidents, medium incidents, and small incidents”.<sup>203</sup> “This year, we are fighting one battle at a time. The Belt and Road Initiative is one battle, and Ramadan is another. We must win”.<sup>204</sup> Quango repeatedly framed religious extremism or terrorism as threats to state stability that must be removed through surveillance, punishment, and ideological transformation. He also equated religious proselytization with radicalization, treating peaceful religious expression as a security threat.

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<sup>195</sup> Chen, Quanguo. “Secretary Chen Quanguo’s Speech”.

<sup>196</sup> *Key Documents*, Xinjiang Police Files.

<sup>197</sup> Chen, Quanguo. “Secretary Chen Quanguo’s Speech”.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Amnesty International, “Up To One Million.”

<sup>200</sup> Chen, Quanguo. “Secretary Chen Quanguo’s Speech”.

<sup>201</sup> Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism”, 399.

<sup>202</sup> Chen, Quanguo. “Secretary Chen Quanguo’s Speech”.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

A year later, Quango reinforced religious criminalization of the CCP, extremism and separatism as existential threats in June 2018.<sup>205</sup> Quango connected separatism with religious ideology, justifying de-extremism efforts to “cleanse out the source,” the removal of the Uyghurs, reflecting Wolfe’s “logic of elimination”.<sup>206</sup> Quango encouraged education in Mandarin, law, and vocational skills to replace Uyghur religious identity. He cited Shirzat Bawadun, accused of treason and declared: “We, the Communist Party, believe in Marxism-Leninism, and we are materialists, but from a religious perspective, religion also talks about karma...don’t you think you deserve to suffer retribution?”.<sup>207</sup> Quango strategically invoked religious language despite the Party’s stance as materialists, using to shame and justify the punishment.

## **Surveillance and State Control**

### **Religious control**

The Chinese government exerts control over Uyghur life through surveillance, cultural suppression, and assimilation, institutionalizing settler colonialism.<sup>208</sup> In his Ramadan speech, Chen Quango discussed the full saturation of surveillance across the Xinjiang society by stating: “We must ensure that there are no gaps, no blank spaces, no blind spots,” dominating not only land, but everyday life.<sup>209</sup> This is made explicit when Quango demanded a “physical presence in all mosques”, inserting state control in sacred places and transforming spiritual practices into securitized activities.<sup>210</sup> Leaked images of Uyghurs praying under surveillance cameras, showing how mosques have been transformed into sites of state control.<sup>211</sup> Photos of confiscated Qur’ans, prayer rugs, and headscarves demonstrate how religious expression is criminalized and treated as extremism.<sup>212</sup> Sacred items are portrayed as threats to national security, enabling the removal of religious symbols incompatible with the settler system. As Hoja recounts, since the 1950s, after East Turkestan was declared the “Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region,” political and cultural

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<sup>205</sup> Chen Quanguo, “Speech by Secretary Chen”.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Chen, Quanguo. “Secretary Chen Quanguo’s Speech”.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Images of Detainees. *Xinjiang Police Files*.

<sup>212</sup> Images of Security Drills and Police Work, *Xinjiang Police Files*.

autonomy was almost nonexistent.<sup>213</sup> The Han Chinese propaganda depicted the region as “wild west” with its people as “backwards” in need of “civilization”.<sup>214</sup> After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the prejudice intensified.<sup>215</sup> Acts of faith, such as praying in the mosque, growing a beard, or wearing a headscarf, were associated with terrorism, justifying mass and surveillance.<sup>216</sup>

### **Internment Control**

A leaked 2018 document revealed a security plan to transfer 505 detainees from Xinjiang’s Industrial City Education and Training Center in Xinjiang to a County party school.<sup>217</sup> Intended for internal security staff, the plan was made to minimize risks of escape, self-harm, and resistance, ensuring secrecy and order. Produced during the system’s operational peak, reflecting the transitioning towards normalization of long-term internment. The document demonstrates the state’s settler colonial control through militarized and bureaucratic technologies of discipline: “Prepare 430 sets of handcuffs, shackles, and hoods in advance, all the trainees who need to be transferred must wear all three...at least two security guards, or one cadre and one security guard, are responsible for escorting each trainee,” Detainees were cells and ID numbers, treated as objects of the state, erasing their voice and agency.<sup>218</sup> Wolfe described this as “statistical extermination,” the slow erasure of identity by removing the conditions of its survival: language, faith, family, and routine.<sup>219</sup> Referring to detainees as “trainees” disguises forced assimilation as education, aligning with Wolfe’s concept of “positive assimilation,” erasure of identity through non violent means.<sup>220</sup>

### **Ideological Control**

Beyond internment, the Chinese state control extends into Uyghur’ bodies, thoughts, and communication.<sup>221</sup> In her memoir, Hoja recounted how during the Cultural Revolution, Han authorities imposed settler norms. Uyghur women were forced to cut their long, prized hair, a

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<sup>213</sup> Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, ‘Prologue’.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Security Plan," *Xinjiang Police Files*.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism”, 400.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 399.

<sup>221</sup> Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, ‘Prologue’.

bodily form of forced assimilation.<sup>222</sup> Learning Mandarin was required among Uyghur children, as fluency was linked , politicizing language as a tool of settler control. During the Cultural Revolution, the state labeled uneducated Ughurs as “trustworthy,” reflecting intellectual erasure and invalidation of Uyghur expertise. Hoja’s highly educated mother was reassigned as a “barefoot doctor” role in a remote village.<sup>223</sup>

### **Technologies of control**

Leaked internal protocols reveal strictly regulated daily practices for detainees from medical check-up to phone calls to emergency responses treating Uyghurs as security risks rather than citizens.<sup>224</sup> Hoja describes mass surveillance in Ürümqi, facial recognition cameras line telephone poles to intimidate the population.<sup>225</sup> Daily tasks like grocery shopping and buying gas at require invasive searches and ID checks, unlike the Han citizens, who use separate, unchecked lines.<sup>226</sup> A 2018 leak of 2884 photographs of Uyghur detainees from Xinjiang police networks illustrates the surveillance regime.<sup>227</sup> The images linked with metadata on age and sex were used for identification, surveillance, and facial recognition.<sup>228</sup> Detainees range from 15 to 73, with some images photographed in “tiger chairs,” during interrogation.<sup>229</sup> In 2018 Quango’s praised the combination of human, physical, and technological defense systems under the Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP), central to mass profiling and detention of “suspicious” Uyghurs.<sup>230</sup>

### **Spatial Transformation and Displacement**

Wolfe defines settler colonialism as the displacement of Indigenous, exemplified by the destruction of “mahallas,” traditional Uyghur communities.<sup>231</sup> Mahallas, built with mud bricks around courtyards, fostered neighbourly interactions, communal life, and religious practice

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Xinjiang Police Files, “Education and Training Center”; Xinjiang Police Files, “System for Vocational”; Xinjiang Police Files, “Incident Response Plan”.

<sup>225</sup> Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, ‘Prologue’.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Xinjiang Police Files, “Images of Detainees”.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Chen Quanguo, “Speech by Secretary Chen.

<sup>231</sup> Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism”, 399; Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, ‘Growing Up in the Uyghur Homeland’.

through local mosques and markets.<sup>232</sup> In the 1980s, mahallas were razed and replaced by Han-style blocks that lacked the communal intimacy, displacing Uyghurs to the outskirts of Ürümqi, reinforcing Wolfe's logic of elimination.<sup>233</sup> After the CCP's takeover in 1949, migration of Han citizens accelerated. In the 1950s, Han soldiers were sent to establish a paramilitary presence and form the "Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps," which exploited natural resources and displaced Uyghurs.<sup>234</sup> As a result, the Uyghur population dropped drastically by 50%, reinforcing Wolfe's emphasis on agriculture of permanent settlement, enabling Han population growth.<sup>235</sup> State-led modernization was an intentional political project to displace Uyghurs through Han-dominated urban planning. The spatial transformation ruptured Uyghur social fabric; shared meals, intergenerational care, and collective memory, replaced by Han settlement.<sup>236</sup> As Hoja observes, the result is "two separate worlds", proving how settler colonialism does not seek coexistence but creates parallel structures that marginalize and surveil Indigenous people.<sup>237</sup>

### **Demographic Engineering and Ethnic Domination**

The CCP uses religious oppression, biometric control, and re-education camps to gradually erase Uyghur identity without mass killings.<sup>238</sup> Adrian Zenz's 2020 report, documents the CCP's population control measures meet the UN definition of genocide, particularly "imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group".<sup>239</sup> Zenz presents evidence of coercive control sterilizations and forced IUD insertions through statistical analysis, government documents, and Uyghur testimonies.<sup>240</sup> Since 2017, the CCP has imposed birth prevention measures targeting 80% of women of childbearing age in rural southern Xinjiang, including Kashgar, Hotan, Kizilsu, and Aksu.<sup>241</sup> Measures include mandatory IUD check-ups, family visits, and sterilization targets (14-34% ) in some counties.<sup>242</sup> In Hotan City, 14,872 sterilizations were

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<sup>232</sup> Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, 'Growing Up in the Uyghur Homeland'.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid; Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism", 388.

<sup>236</sup> Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, 'Growing Up in the Uyghur Homeland'.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Zenz, Adrian. "Sterilizations, IUDs, and Mandatory", 1.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 1-21.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 7-21.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 16.

performed; Guma County planned 8,064.<sup>243</sup> The project's title *Free Technical Family Planning Services to Farmers and Pastoralists*, strategically covers the coercion.<sup>244</sup> Uyghur women reported forced sterilizations under threat of internment.<sup>245</sup> Zumrat Dawut was sterilized after release from camp; Mihrigil Tursun was injected with unknown drugs causing sterilization; Rakhima Senbay was forced to accept an IUD, before detention.<sup>246</sup> The birth prevention campaign was well funded, (16.7 million) and enforced through county quotas.<sup>247</sup> In Qiemo County, women exceeding the permitted birth quota by two or more children were subjected to long-term birth control procedures and internment in "vocational training" programs.<sup>248</sup> These policies enact Wolfe's statistical extermination narrowing Uyghur identity across generations.<sup>249</sup> Unlike blood quantum models, China relies on behavioral, ideological, and biometric profiling for assimilating and eliminating Uyghurs.<sup>250</sup>

## Uyghur Resistance

*A Stone Is Most Precious Where It Belongs* (2023) by Gulchehera Hoja is a personal and political memoir of a Uyghur journalist exposing China's repression.<sup>251</sup> The memoir explores Uyghur identity and culture, systematic repression, exile, and social injustice. This chapter draws from the prologue and the first chapter which highlight Uyghur resistance.<sup>252</sup> Hoja reminisces how "muqam" music, performed by her grandfather, Zikri al-Pattar, preserved Uyghur cultural memory under repression.<sup>253</sup> Dancing to muqam connected her to this lineage and became a form of embodied resistance. Performing in Beijing, Hoja realized, Uyghur art was limited within state-approved boundaries, that fetishized Uyghur identity while denying political autonomy: "There's no freedom in art here".<sup>254</sup> After witnessing her grandfather's legacy appropriated for Han consumption, she rejected propagandized roles, shifting from being a cultural ambassador

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 1- 15.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>249</sup> Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism", 400.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*.

<sup>252</sup> Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, 'Prologue, Growing Up in the Uyghur Homeland'.

<sup>253</sup> Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, "Prologue".

<sup>254</sup> Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, 'Growing Up in the Uyghur Homeland'



to a cultural resistor.<sup>255</sup> In history class, when a teacher claimed that the Uyghurs were descendants of Mongolians, Hoja's protest was met with a warning, an example of how knowledge is policed by the state.<sup>256</sup> Yet her teacher's private comment: "But you must never forget the precious lessons of your father. Remember that," showed how Indigenous knowledge persists through family transmission.<sup>257</sup> As an ongoing structure, settler colonialism seeks to replace indigenous through "civilization" and "modernization."<sup>258</sup> Hoja's memoir serves as a counter-narrative, preserving collective memory of Uyghurs and resisting China's settler colonial framework.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism", 400.

<sup>259</sup> Kauanui, "Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity".

## Chapter 5 - Comparative Reflections: Settler Strategies Across Empires

### Introduction

This chapter aims to answer the the third sub-question: How are settler colonial strategies of the U.S. and China historically and culturally distinct to explain differences in settler colonial strategies? and how do Indigenous and Uyghur forms of resistance reveal the limitations within settler colonial structures? Wolfe's "logic of elimination" describes settler colonialism as the displacement and erasure of Indigenous people through physical violence, cultural assimilation, and legal frameworks.<sup>260</sup> Settler colonialism is an ongoing structure embedded in social, economic, and political institutions.<sup>261</sup> This chapter compares Indian boarding schools in the U.S. (1879 -1918), and the CCP's "re-education" camps (since 2014), assimilation systems. The chapter presents a transnational comparison between Western and non-Western contexts, demonstrating that settler colonialism is an ongoing global phenomenon. The chapter identifies five main themes that will serve as the basis for analyzing similarities and differences: assimilation through education, legal and bureaucratic tools of elimination, spatial and demographic control, demographic engineering, and resistance and Indigenous agency.

### Assimilation Through Education

Education operates as a settler weapon to transform and eliminate Indigenous people under the guise of modernization and civilization.<sup>262</sup> U.S. Indian boarding schools aimed to assimilate Native children into settler society, promoting qualities deemed as "civilized" by the U.S. government.<sup>263</sup> Memoirs by Luther Standing Bear and Zitkala Sa reveal how boarding schools alienated Native identity through hair cutting, forced names, and language bans, not disciplinary tactics but to erase Indigenous memory.<sup>264</sup> Targeting young children, off-reservation boarding schools created physical and cultural distance, making it difficult to stay connected to Indigenous

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<sup>260</sup> Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism", 387-400.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Zitkala-Ša, *American Indian Stories*, 47–80; Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*; Chen, Quanguo.

"Secretary Chen Quanguo's Speech "; Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo.

<sup>263</sup> Zitkala-Ša, *American Indian Stories*, 47–80; Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

roots. U.S assimilation operated through “blood quantum”, reducing future generations, enabling the breakdown of familial structures and communal life.<sup>265</sup> Boarding schools reflected Progressive Era ideals of “improvement”.<sup>266</sup> Vocational training, self-sufficiency, Christian morality, patriotism, and are emphasized in Estelle Reel’s standardized curriculum (1901) to justify cultural assimilation.<sup>267</sup>

China employs similar strategies of isolation and re-education strategies to suppress Uyghur identity within a modern authoritarian framework.<sup>268</sup> Uyghur detainees are forced to pledge loyalty to the state, sing patriotic songs, learn Mandarin, Chinese law, vocational skills, renounce Islam to sever religious and cultural identity.<sup>269</sup> Like the U.S. practices, China views Uyghurs as an underdeveloped group that needs to be modernized and civilized into settler subjects.<sup>270</sup> Educational integration policies such as the “Xinjiang Class,” designed to instill Han values, faced resistance as Timothy A. Grose’s documented.<sup>271</sup> As Wolfe notes, assimilation absorbs individuals into settler society while eliminating the collective, a key goal of CCP policies towards Uyghurs.<sup>272</sup> Similar to U.S. boarding schools, China’s “re-education camps,” use bureaucratic and educational tools to forcibly assimilate Uyghurs.<sup>273</sup> Leaked Xinjiang police files reveal protocols that treat detainees as state subjects for political transformation according to settler-Han standards.<sup>274</sup> The internment camps serve as settler institutions to erase Uyghur Indigeneity. As Hoja stresses, Uyghurs are ethnically distinct, with Indo-European ancestry, not Han-Chinese.<sup>275</sup> The state seeks to manipulate history, claiming Uyghurs are part of Chinese national identity to justify forced assimilation.

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<sup>265</sup> Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism”, 400.

<sup>266</sup> Estelle Reel, *A Course of Study*.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Chen, Quanguo. “Secretary Chen Quanguo’s Speech”; Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo; Scilla Alecci, “ICC Complaint Alleging Uighur Genocide Cites China Cables as Evidence - ICIJ,” *International Consortium of Investigative Journalists*, November 24, 2020, <https://www.icij.org/investigations/china-cables/icc-complaint-alleging-uighur-genocide-cites-china-cables-as-evidence/>.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Chen, Quanguo. “Secretary Chen Quanguo’s Speech.”

<sup>271</sup> Grose, “The Xinjiang Class,” 97.

<sup>272</sup> Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism”, 387.

<sup>273</sup> Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo; Xinjiang police Files.

<sup>274</sup> Xinjiang Police Files. “Education and Training Center”; Xinjiang Police Files, “System for Vocational”; Xinjiang Police Files, “Incident Response Plan”; Xinjiang Police Files, “Images of Detainees”; Images of Security Drills and Police Work, *Xinjiang Police Files*.

<sup>275</sup> Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, “Prologue”.

The main difference between the U.S. boarding schools and China's re-education is that the CCP emphasizes a zero-tolerance policy of the Uyghur detainees, as Chen Quanguo stated: "we must not let them out," which demonstrates the severity of the Uyghur's indoctrination.<sup>276</sup> In contrast, Native children could graduate after three years, as Standing Bear recalled choosing either to return to his reservation or remain in the settler system.<sup>277</sup> Carlisle's releases served strategic purposes by showing "successful" assimilation and recruit more Native children which legitimized the school's mission. In practice, not all Uyghurs were detained indefinitely; the international outcry, especially in 2018 to 2019, pressured China to stage selective releases.<sup>278</sup> Detainees were used as "reformed", speaking Mandarin and praising the CCP, to deflect international criticism.<sup>279</sup> Yet, release does not equal freedom: former detainees remain under surveillance and forced labor, reinforcing settler colonial logic of eliminating resistance.<sup>280</sup>

### Legal and Bureaucratic Tools of Elimination

The U.S. and China legitimize assimilation through legal frameworks that enable land theft, displacement, and cultural erasure framed as protection and civil rights.<sup>281</sup> In the U.S. the Dawes and Curtis Acts demolished Native communal life, imposed individualization which led to mass displacement.<sup>282</sup> The Curtis Act destroyed tribal courts, which replaced Indigenous governance with U.S. legal courts, reinforcing Wolfe's logic of elimination.<sup>283</sup> Similarly, China dismantled Uyghur collective structures like the mahallas and defined citizenship based on ideological compliance.<sup>284</sup> The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) confirmed the rapid expansion of detention facilities in Xinjiang between 2016 and 2019, transforming

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<sup>276</sup> Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo.

<sup>277</sup> Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*, "The Carlisle Band in New York".

<sup>278</sup> Alecci, "The Faces of China's Detention Camps in Xinjiang - ICIJ."; By Joel Gunter, "China Has Created a Dystopian Hellscape in Xinjiang, Amnesty Report Says," June 10, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-57386625>; "Chinese Persecution of the Uyghurs - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum," n.d., <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries/china/chinese-persecution-of-the-uyghurs>.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo; ; Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo; Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, "Prologue".

<sup>281</sup> U.S. National Archives. "Dawes Act; U.S. Congress. *Curtis Act*; Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo; ; Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo;

<sup>282</sup> U.S. National Archives. "Dawes Act

<sup>283</sup> U.S. Congress. *Curtis Act*.

<sup>284</sup> Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, 'Prologue, Growing Up in the Uyghur Homeland'.

underdeveloped areas into large secure compounds.<sup>285</sup> Xinjiang's layered detention systems ranges from low-security re-education centers to high-security prisons and forced labor camps as satellite imagery reveals.<sup>286</sup> The leaked protocols demonstrate the militarized nature of the internment system, emphasizing discipline, control, suppression of dissent.<sup>287</sup> China employs mass surveillance and biometric tracking through the Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP) praised by Chen Quanguo in 2018 as a national counterterrorism instrument.<sup>288</sup> The IJOP converts religious practices into signs of extremism justifying internment.<sup>289</sup> The system collects biometric data, phone records, and neighborhood report to determine risk levels and policing. Leaked images further reveal Uyghur detainees interrogated while their IJOP profiles are displayed on screens.<sup>290</sup> The confiscation of religious materials shows the criminalization of Uyghur.<sup>291</sup> This is a form of digital colonization where Indigenous presence is not eliminated by physical removal but by algorithmic control, highlighting the evolution of settler colonialism.

In both the U.S. and China, settler state frame Indigenous peoples as threats, using rhetoric to justify domination and erasure.<sup>292</sup> In the U.S., Native Americans were labeled "savages" to rationalize boarding schools, allotment policies, and cultural genocide.<sup>293</sup> In China, Uyghurs are labeled as "terrorists" and "extremists" with their religious and cultural practices as radicalization.<sup>294</sup> This framing legitimizes mass internment camps, euphemistically called "vocational training centers," with detainees labeled "trainees" masking coercion.<sup>295</sup> Despite different rhetoric, civilization versus counterterrorism, the settler colonial logic is the same. Both states frame Indigenous identity as a problem to be solved, whereby settler futurity needs to be secured through elimination of Indigenous presence.

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<sup>285</sup> Robinson, Eric. "Investigating the Growth of Detention Facilities in Xinjiang (Xinjiang Nighttime, Part 1)." Tearline. n.d. Accessed June 10, 2025.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Security Plan," *Xinjiang Police Files*; Xinjiang Police Files. "Education and Training Center"; Xinjiang Police Files, "System for Vocational"; Xinjiang Police Files, "Incident Response Plan"; Xinjiang Police Files, "Images of Detainees"; Images of Security Drills and Police Work, *Xinjiang Police Files*.

<sup>288</sup> Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Xinjiang Police Files, "Images of Detainees.

<sup>291</sup> Images of Security Drills and Police Work, *Xinjiang Police Files*.

<sup>292</sup> Slaubaugh, "American Indian Residential Boarding Schools," 13; Keiteyana I. Parks, "Indigenous Boarding Schools in the United States and Canada," 46; Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo; Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo.

<sup>293</sup> Slaubaugh, "American Indian Residential Boarding Schools," 13; Keiteyana I. Parks, "Indigenous Boarding Schools in the United States and Canada.

<sup>294</sup> Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo; Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

## Spatial and Demographic Transformation

Territory is central in Wolfe's theory of Settler colonialism which seeks to replace Indigenous people to possess land.<sup>296</sup> In the U.S., Manifest Destiny justified settler expansion where white settlers had a divine mission to civilize non-Europeans, enabling dispossession through Dawes and Curtis Acts.<sup>297</sup> Similarly, China asserts state control over Uyghur land through development schemes like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) framed displacement as modernization.<sup>298</sup> Brooks argues how the BRI drives China's settler colonial expansion and securitization in Xinjiang, where control over Uyghur populations is seen as essential for economic growth.<sup>299</sup> Quango emphasized "stability" in Xinjiang is key to China's infrastructure ambitions.<sup>300</sup> Since 1949, the Han-Chinese settlement increased from 7.7% to 40%, driven by the Great Western Development strategy.<sup>301</sup> The destruction of the "mahallas", as Hoja discussed, displaced Uyghurs and the communal way of life, turning them into a minority in Ürümqi.<sup>302</sup> The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, exploits thirty percent of land and resources, causing environmental damage to Uyghur herders and farmers.<sup>303</sup> This reinforces, Xinjiang's mineral wealth and logistical value, making it a central target for capitalist expansion.<sup>304</sup> Brooks critiques Wolfe's exploitation vs elimination binary, arguing that both coexist in Xinjiang.<sup>305</sup> After the Uyghur uprising in 2009, Uyghurs were reframed from "separatists" to "terrorists" intensifying the persecution.<sup>306</sup> While Wolfe's definition explains structural elimination, it fails to explain the repression tied to the BRI and forced labor. According to Brooks, Marxist approaches like "primitive accumulation" and David Harvey's "accumulation by dispossession" offer additional insight and proves that exploitation and elimination can occur simultaneously in Xinjiang.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism", 387-400.

<sup>297</sup> Slaubaugh, "American Indian Residential Boarding Schools," 13; Keiteyana I. Parks, "Indigenous Boarding Schools in the United States and Canada; U.S. National Archives. "Dawes Act; U.S. Congress. *Curtis Act*.

<sup>298</sup> Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo.

<sup>299</sup> Jonathan Brooks, "Settler Colonialism., 10-11.

<sup>300</sup> Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo.

<sup>301</sup> Jonathan Brooks, "Settler Colonialism., 6.

<sup>302</sup> Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, 'Prologue'.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Jonathan Brooks, "Settler Colonialism., 10-11.

<sup>305</sup> Jonathan Brooks, "Settler Colonialism., 10-21.

<sup>306</sup> Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, 'Prologue'.

<sup>307</sup> Jonathan Brooks, "Settler Colonialism., 10-11.

## Physical and Cultural Genocide

According to Wolfe, Settler colonialism is inherently eliminatory but not always genocidal.<sup>308</sup> Elimination can occur through assimilation, child abduction, religious conversion, land seizure, and cultural erasure.<sup>309</sup> He also emphasized that cultural genocide, which undermines a group's ability to reproduce socially, culturally, or biologically meets the UN's definition of genocide.<sup>310</sup> The U.S. boarding schools functioned as cultural genocide which Luther Standing Bear being forcibly dressed in Euro-American clothing and having his hair cut erasing his Sioux identity.<sup>311</sup> Zitkala-Sa recounted her traumatic experience of her long hair being cut, erasing her Dakota identity.<sup>312</sup> In China, campaigns like the "Four Olds", similarly destroyed Uyghur identity.<sup>313</sup> The deeply invasive rule targeted Uyghur women, like Hoja's mother, who was forced to cut her hair during the Cultural Revolution.<sup>314</sup>

Besides a cultural genocide, the Chinese state imposes birth prevention policies, including forced sterilizations and non-consensual IUD insertions, to change Xinjiang's demographics.<sup>315</sup> Zenz's research and the leaked documents conclude that these policies meet the criteria for genocide according to the UN Genocide Convention.<sup>316</sup> While Julia Stern argues that the systematic persecution of Uyghur Muslims in China's Xinjiang region is a crime against humanity and genocide under international law, David Tobin describes what is happening in Xinjiang as genocidal processes aimed at the "social death" of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims.<sup>317</sup> Similarly, Joanne Finley argues the campaign is both a cultural and demographic genocide.<sup>318</sup> In the U.S., mass sterilizations of Native American women took place by the Indian

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<sup>308</sup> Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism", 388.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., 398.

<sup>311</sup> Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*, First Days at Carlisle".

<sup>312</sup> Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories*, "The School Days of an Indian Girl,".

<sup>313</sup> Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, 'Prologue'.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Zenz, *Mandatory Birth Control*, 1; Stern, "Genocide in China"; David Tobin, "Genocidal Processes: Social Death in Xinjiang," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45, no. 16 (2021): 93–121, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2021.2001556>; Finley, "Tabula Rasa", 353.

<sup>316</sup> Zenz, *Mandatory Birth Control*, 6.

<sup>317</sup> Stern, Julia (2021) "Genocide in China: Uighur Re-education Camps and International Response," *Immigration and Human Rights Law Review*: Vol. 3 : Iss. 1 , Article 2. Available at: <https://scholarship.law.uc.edu/ihr/vol3/iss1/2>; Tobin, "Genocidal Processes", 93.

<sup>318</sup> Finley, "Tabula Rasa", 353.

Health Service between the 1960s and 1970.<sup>319</sup> Although this falls outside the scope of the thesis paper, it reflects how biological genocide worked simultaneously with cultural erasure, harming Native sovereignty.

The Indian boarding schools and re-education camps reflect parallel structures of cultural genocide. In boarding schools, children were systematically alienated from their Indigenous identities via boarding schools through Anglo-European education. In China, the camps impose Han culture and surveillance. In terms of biological genocide, both Indigenous populations have been targeted through mass sterilizations led by the settler state. Additionally, both groups have been subjected to exploitative labor systems with Native boarding schools prioritizing manual labor and Uyghurs providing labor to serve the economic goals of the Chinese state.

### **Indigenous and Uyghur Indigeneity**

Kauanui reinforces Wolfe's settler colonialism as structural problem but acknowledges the resistance of Indigenous people.<sup>320</sup> Zitkala-Sa, Luther Standing Bear, and Hoja's memoirs highlight the agency and voices of their people despite the ongoing elimination.<sup>321</sup> The Indigenous and Uyghur memoirs highlight the trauma of the states' repression among ethnic minorities which demonstrates how fear and terror of the settler colonial systems persist through childhood, family, and memory.<sup>322</sup> Hoja recalled how the Chinese state destroyed education, cultural, communal, and family ties in China.<sup>323</sup> She exemplifies this by how the state killed her great-grandfather because he wanted Uyghur independence and free education.<sup>324</sup> Similarly, Luther Standing Bear recounted children speaking the Lakota language and how the school would prohibit them from having a meal which instilled fear of their own language.<sup>325</sup> Zitkala-Sa described how giving up on her Native language made her feel like a coward.<sup>326</sup> All these examples provide documentation of the structural violence by settler states.

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<sup>319</sup> Akbari, Mirabel. 2021. "Forced Sterilization of Indigenous Women: : An Act of Genocide or Policing Women's Bodies?". *York University Criminological Review* 3 (1).

<https://csri.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/default/article/view/113>, 14-18.

<sup>320</sup> Kauanui, "Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity", para 1.

<sup>321</sup> Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories*, 47-80; Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*; Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, "Growing up in the Uyghur Homeland".

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*, "First Days at Carlisle".

<sup>326</sup> Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories*, "The Big Red Apples".



Yet, Indigenous and Uyghur resistance persist from different perspectives; Hoja recalled her grandmother's assertion of the Uyghur identity through education and algebra teaching.<sup>327</sup> Hoja's teacher also warned her to not conform to the state's settler narrative.<sup>328</sup> These exemplify how Uyghur indigeneity continues through family and institutions through both state-driven (top-down) resistance and grassroots (bottom-up) agency. Similarly, Zitkala-Sa's mother warned Zitkala-Sa against missionaries who recruited Native children to attend boarding schools; "Their words are sweet, but, my child, their deeds are bitter".<sup>329</sup> Standing Bear recounted his family's hesitance being forcibly removed to attend Carlisle school.<sup>330</sup> He also recalled how some boys at the school attempted to escape and when they were brought back, they were punished by being tied up for a whole day without any food.<sup>331</sup> This exemplifies agency within Indigenous communities but also Adela Rankin's protest letter to Theodore Roosevelt, showed resistance from a top-down process.<sup>332</sup> This does not contradict Kauanui's theory on enduring indigeneity but extends the theory to other types of resistance which are not necessarily Indigenous led.<sup>333</sup> The top-down resistance demonstrates a nuanced analysis of how assimilationist institutions functioned, providing instances of how some individuals from the settler culture did not conform to the consequences emerging from assimilation such as physical and psychological abuses. Specifically U.S. boarding schools, many upheld the belief that Indigenous children need to be "civilized", however, some resisted the outcome of these institutions in practice like Adela Rankin.

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<sup>327</sup> Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, "Growing up in the Uyghur Homeland".

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories*, "The Big Red Apples".

<sup>330</sup> Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*, "Going East".

<sup>331</sup> Ibid., "School Life: The Last of the Head Chiefs".

<sup>332</sup> Rankin, "Report of Abuse Towards Students,"

<sup>333</sup> Kauanui, "Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity".

## Chapter 6: Discussion

Before discussing and evaluating the main findings, the research question addresses different methods of assimilation focusing on the Carlisle school in the U.S. (1879-1918) and the Konasheher re-education camp in China (since 2014). This chapter aims to connect and reflect on Wolfe's theory, discussing the "logic of elimination" and Kaunui's theory on "enduring Indigeneity", implications and limitations that emerged from the analysis in chapters 3,4, and 5.<sup>334</sup> The chapter starts with a synthesis of the main findings, connecting it with existing studies from chapter 2. The following sections discuss the implications of the main findings and will end with acknowledging the limitations and recommending future research.

### Convergences: assimilation through language and data

A striking convergence between the United States and China lies in the systematic disruption of Indigenous culture, kinship, and identity.<sup>335</sup> Both states imposed strategies of elimination such as language suppression, and imposition of Western clothes and names.<sup>336</sup> In the U.S., Zitkala Sa and Luther Standing Bear's memoirs provided first-hand experiences on the assimilation of boarding schools; Native language bans, cutting of hair, imposing Western clothing and names and learning standardized Western curriculum.<sup>337</sup> The standardization and conformity of school routines in boarding schools facilitated the assimilation process.<sup>338</sup> In China, re-education camps impose Han-Chinese education such as singing patriotic songs, pledging state loyalty and learning Mandarin.<sup>339</sup> The camps ensure that detainees are completely alienated from their Uyghur identity by treating the detainees as criminals, wearing prison-like clothes, complying with protocols to control daily practices like calling relatives and going to medical appointments.<sup>340</sup> Documents of the confiscation of religious and cultural items, security

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<sup>334</sup> Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism", 388 ; Kaunui, "Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity".

<sup>335</sup> Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories*, 47–80; Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid; Estelle Reel, "A Course of Study".

<sup>338</sup> Estelle Reel, "A Course of Study".

<sup>339</sup> Security Plan," *Xinjiang Police Files*; Xinjiang Police Files. "Education and Training Center"; Xinjiang Police Files, "System for Vocational"; Xinjiang Police Files, "Incident Response Plan"; Xinjiang Police Files, "Images of Detainees"; Images of Security Drills and Police Work, *Xinjiang Police Files*

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

and emergency plans exemplify the CCP's mechanism of conforming Uyghurs to the Han-led state.<sup>341</sup>

The assimilation mechanisms through educational institutions in China and the U.S. align with existing studies on how education is not neutral but is intended to eliminate Indigenous epistemologies.<sup>342</sup> Lees, Laman, and Calderón explain how settler colonialism is reproduced through education to maintain a settler colonial structure, reinforcing Wolfe's theory of ongoing elimination.<sup>343</sup> Moreover, the Common School Movement since the 1830s is part of a broader settler colonial project in which the Indian boarding schools functioned to consolidate whiteness and accelerate assimilation.<sup>344</sup> Settler states like the U.S. operate through racialized governance which explain the racialization of Indigenous populations and how language is racialized through education.<sup>345</sup> This also aligns with Cioè-Peña's study on why language is a key tool for assimilating Indigenous groups.<sup>346</sup> Colonial languages such as British - English and Castilian - Spanish reflect settler colonial histories that were instilled upon Indigenous groups to assimilate, pathologize and exclude them from the settler society.<sup>347</sup> Iyengar builds on this by focusing on how race and language reproduce each other in the U.S; whiteness is associated with civilization, human and multilingualism, Indigenous with non-human, primitive, and slated for elimination, Blackness with non-human and seen as property.<sup>348</sup> These language ideologies reinforce hierarchies of what is considered valuable and acceptable in settler states.<sup>349</sup> Scholars call for the decolonization of language, disrupting white epistemology, and the revitalization of Indigenous language.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Security Plan," *Xinjiang Police Files*; Xinjiang Police Files. "Education and Training Center"; Xinjiang Police Files, "System for Vocational"; Xinjiang Police Files, "Incident Response Plan"; Images of Security Drills and Police Work, *Xinjiang Police Files*.

<sup>342</sup> Haven Bills and Sonja Klinsky, "The Resilience of Settler" 969–86; Sophie Rudolph and Archie Thomas, "Education, Racial Justice,"; Anna Lees, Tasha Tropp Laman, and Dolores Calderón, "Why Didn't I Know This?": 279–90; María Cioè-Peña, "The Master's Tools", 25–33; Malathi Michelle Iyengar, "Not Mere Abstraction; Shankar, "Language and Race".

<sup>343</sup> Anna Lees, Tasha Tropp Laman, and Dolores Calderón, "Why Didn't I Know This?," 280.

<sup>344</sup> Iyengar, "Not Mere Abstractions", 33.

<sup>345</sup> Sophie Rudolph and Archie Thomas, "Education, Racial Justice," 110.

<sup>346</sup> María Cioè-Peña, "The Master's Tools", 26–28.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

<sup>348</sup> Iyengar, "Not Mere Abstractions", 41.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Haven Bills and Sonja Klinsky, "The Resilience of Settler" 969–86; Sophie Rudolph and Archie Thomas, "Education, Racial Justice,"; Anna Lees, Tasha Tropp Laman, and Dolores Calderón, "Why Didn't I Know This?": 279–90; María Cioè-Peña, "The Master's Tools", 25–33; Malathi Michelle Iyengar, "Not Mere Abstraction; Avery Smith, Hine Funaki, and Liana MacDonald, "Living, Breathing Settler-colonialism: The Reification of Settler Norms in a Common University Space,".

Besides language, surveillance emerged as a recent form of assimilation in the 21st century, demonstrating how settler colonialism manifests in digital form.<sup>351</sup> China's deployment of the IJOP which uses biometric data to track and collect data of Uyghurs, shows how data is weaponized and deeply penetrated in Xinjiang.<sup>352</sup> Cameras and sophisticated facial recognition software is implemented across all areas in Xinjiang to instill fear and keep the Uyghur population intimidated.<sup>353</sup> Military and checkpoints are set up to perform ID checks specifically for Uyghurs, reinforcing China's authoritarianism regime.<sup>354</sup> The leaked photographs of Uyghurs exemplify the advanced technology of the CCP whereby Uyghurs are unlawfully interrogated and detained, depicting data files for each detainee.<sup>355</sup> As Smith et al. argue, how whiteness operates as a white normative creating "white spaces" where settlers feel a sense of belonging and "non-white spaces" that make Indigenous people feel out of place and hypervisible.<sup>356</sup> Applying surveillance in the context of China, Xinjiang becomes a "white space" where Han settlers feel at home and desired while Uyghurs are excluded, inferior and invisible, demonstrating how public spaces are not neutral but shaped by settler comfort.<sup>357</sup>

Another convergence is also how both settler states use rhetoric to frame and justify their settler colonial strategies.<sup>358</sup> In the U.S. the discourse surrounding assimilation was operating through Manifest Destiny which the government and missionaries felt the divine obligation to "civilize" and "educate" Native Americans.<sup>359</sup> Also, the progressive ideals during the 19th and 20th centuries of development and self-sufficiency masked the violent assimilation of Native tribes leading to their displacement and destruction of their communal life.<sup>360</sup> Zitkala-Sa emphasized this by recalling how missionaries lured children by introducing unfamiliar western attractions such as riding on an "iron horse" and eating "red apples".<sup>361</sup> This sparked curiosity among Native children but also created a false image of the reality of Indian boarding schools. Similarly, China

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<sup>351</sup> Wang and Roche, "Urbanizing Minority Minzuin"; Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo; Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, "Growing up in the Uyghur Homeland".

<sup>352</sup> Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo.

<sup>353</sup> Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*, "Growing up in the Uyghur Homeland".

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

<sup>355</sup> Images of Security Drills and Police Work, *Xinjiang Police Files*.

<sup>356</sup> Smith, Funaki, and MacDonald, "Living, Breathing Settler-Colonialism.", 133.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

<sup>358</sup> Slaubaugh, "American Indian Residential Boarding Schools.", 17-22; Keiteyana I. Parks, "Indigenous Boarding Schools in the United States and Canada.", 4.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> Estelle Reel, *A Course of Study*.

<sup>361</sup> Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories*, "The Big Red Apples,".

uses “vocational training” to cover the atrocities taking place in re-education camps.<sup>362</sup> Framing detainees as “trainees” demonstrates how settler states perceive Indigenous groups as “a work in progress” and a project that needs to be changed, developed or transformed. These framings are criticized by scholars such as Smith et al. and Rudolph and Thomas explaining how such rhetoric is reproduced through education creating false narratives of “inclusion” and “diversity” masking ongoing cultural erasure of Indigenous groups.<sup>363</sup> The U.S. boarding schools led to the establishment of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions focusing on “healing” discourses but does not effectively reclaim land rights and disrupt settler colonial structures.<sup>364</sup> Instead, the inclusion and diversity discourses are used to enhance universities’ image to recruit students and increase revenue, reinforcing neoliberalism.<sup>365</sup> The same is applied for China’s discourse focusing on “harmony” and “unity” by framing detainees as trainees and detention facilities as vocational centers.<sup>366</sup> This type of framing is significant concerning how settler states justify their actions using benevolent language to mask elimination, specifically, in international discourse and diplomacy.

### **Divergences: political structure, temporal location, global perception**

The divergences in assimilation between the U.S. and China lies in the political climate, temporal location and their international representations of Indigenous and Uyghur people, respectively. In the U.S., assimilation occurred through the enactment of the Dawes and Curtis Acts focusing on allotment of lands and the destruction of Indigenous courts, implementing tax systems and U.S. federal courts.<sup>367</sup> These acts were supposedly legal and democratic, however, these terms are not accurate during the 19th and 20th centuries. The U.S. government during this period consisted of white settlers who unlawfully imposed their settler governance which is rooted in the physical and cultural elimination of Native tribes.<sup>368</sup> Thus, the Dawes and Curtis Acts cannot be

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<sup>362</sup> Chen, Quanguo. "Secretary Chen Quanguo's Speech"; Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo.

<sup>363</sup> Smith, Funaki, and MacDonald, “Living, Breathing Settler-Colonialism.”, 133; Rudolph and Thomas, “Education, Racial Justice.”, 110.

<sup>364</sup> Slaubaugh, "American Indian Residential Boarding", 24-25; Ochs, Sara, “A National Truth Commission”, 34-35; Nagy, “Transformative Justice”.

<sup>365</sup> Avery Smith, Hine Funaki, and Liana MacDonald, “Living, Breathing Settler-colonialism; Lees, Vélez, and Laman, “Recognition and Resistance”.

<sup>366</sup> Security Plan, "Xinjiang Police Files; Xinjiang Police Files.

<sup>367</sup> U.S. National Archives. “Dawes Act ; U.S. Congress. “Curtis Act”.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

considered as lawful legislations as they served settler colonial goals of the U.S. state.<sup>369</sup> In China, the settler regime is marked by authoritarianism with the illegal occupation by the CCP of the Xinjiang region since 1949.<sup>370</sup> The Chinese state is a party state which means that only one single political party controls the state with all forms of oppositions outlawed.<sup>371</sup> This is evident in the leaked speeches of Chen Quanguo who operated as a Party secretary for the CCP, enforcing political and ideological conformity intended for government officials.<sup>372</sup> Notably, he warns in his speeches how sympathizers of Uyghurs including Uyghur officials will be persecuted if the “strike hard” campaigns are not properly executed, reinforcing the dominant party system.<sup>373</sup>

Another key divergence lies on how each settler colonial project is perceived and politicized internationally, raising questions of media coverage, international accountability, and selective framing of Indigenous oppression.<sup>374</sup> The United States continues to frame settler colonial violence against Native Americans as a historical injustice rather than ongoing structure.<sup>375</sup> As Slaughter argues, transitional justice efforts in the U.S. remain largely symbolic.<sup>376</sup> While Canada has implemented a national Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the U.S. lacks a TRC, which is limited to local efforts such as the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare.<sup>377</sup> The Truth and Healing Commission bill proposed in 2021 remains inactive which reflects the government’s reluctance of effectively addressing the U.S.’ settler colonial legacy.<sup>378</sup> The U.S.’ limited attempts reflects transitional change which aligns with existing studies on how institutions produces capitalist and white supremacist values.<sup>379</sup> These institutions maintain settler dominance by white actors who refuse to take accountability for perpetuating settler

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> Trine Brox and Ildikó Bellér-Hann, “On The Fringes of “.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> Chen, Quanguo. “Secretary Chen Quanguo’s Speech “; Chen Quanguo, Speech by Secretary Chen Quanguo.

<sup>373</sup> Chen, Quanguo. “Secretary Chen Quanguo’s Speech.

<sup>374</sup> James Waller and Mariana Salazar Albornoz, “Crime and No Punishment?”, 100–111; Wang and Roche, “Urbanizing Minority Minzu”; Bennett, Natalie. “Collective Action Theory”; Ellis, Jordan R., “A Comparative Analysis”; Slaughter, “American Indian Residential Boarding”, 24–25; Ochs, Sara, “A National Truth Commission”, 34–35; Nagy, “Transformative Justice”.

<sup>375</sup> Ochs, Sara, “A National Truth Commission”, 34–35; Nagy, “Transformative Justice”.

<sup>376</sup> Slaughter, “American Indian Residential Boarding Schools.

<sup>377</sup> Ochs, Sara, “A National Truth Commission”, 34–35.

<sup>378</sup> Slaughter, “American Indian Residential Boarding Schools.

<sup>379</sup> Haven Bills and Sonja Klinsky, “The Resilience of Settler” 969–86.; Sophie Rudolph and Archie Thomas, “Education, Racial Justice,”; Anna Lees, Tasha Tropp Laman, and Dolores Calderón, “‘Why Didn’t I Know This?’: 279–90; María Cioè-Peña, “The Master’s Tools”, 25–33; Malathi Michelle Iyengar, “Not Mere Abstraction; Avery Smith, Hine Funaki, and Liana MacDonald, “Living, Breathing Settler-colonialism: The Reification of Settler Norms in a Common University Space,”.

structures which limits the state's efforts to work towards transformative instead of transitional justice.<sup>380</sup> Transformative justice requires full disruption and decolonization of education embedded in Indigenous sovereignty and epistemologies, reinforcing Kauanui's and Fung's critiques of Settler Colonial Studies.<sup>381</sup>

The media representation of China's repression of Uyghurs reached peak in 2016 and 2017, yet, the politically charged case has come to a stall since then.<sup>382</sup> Megan Mooney argued how the international community failed to respond to China due to strategic complicity which involves the world's involvement with the BRI infrastructure project and political alliances.<sup>383</sup> The United Nations and NGO's remain limited in their power to raise awareness due to restrictions in access of the re-education camps and their dependence on state cooperation.<sup>384</sup> Adrian Gallagher discussed how "naming" and "shaming" can provoke backlash, suggesting that there is a need for non-Western actors to advocate pragmatically.<sup>385</sup> Connecting the lack of international response with the ongoing debate of whether Xinjiang is undergoing a genocide, can potentially explain multilateral institutions' reluctance to acknowledge the biological and cultural genocide and hold China accountable.<sup>386</sup> Genocide scholars criticize the exclusion of cultural genocide from the UN Genocide Convention, which raises questions on whether settler colonialism is enabled through international communities and whether they form the structural barriers of addressing crimes against humanity.<sup>387</sup>

## Theoretical Reflections

Wolfe's "logic of elimination" was foundational in understanding how settler colonialism operates as an ongoing structure to analyze assimilationist institutions across geopolitical and temporal contexts.<sup>388</sup> However, several limitations emerge from his theory's "logic of elimination", primarily Wolfe's lack of application regarding Global South contexts which this

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<sup>380</sup> Nagy, "Transformative Justice".

<sup>381</sup> Kauanui, "Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity"; Fung, "Another Study of Whiteness?", 120-121.

<sup>382</sup> Alecci, "The Faces of China's"; Joel Gunter, "China Has Created", Amnesty Report.

<sup>383</sup> Mooney, Megan. "Our Collective Failure: Why the International Community Has Not Intervened to Protect China's Uighur Muslims." *International Research and Review* 11, no. 1 (2021), 45.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid., 53-60.

<sup>385</sup> Adrian Gallagher, "To Name and Shame or Not, and if so, How? A Pragmatic Analysis of Naming and Shaming the Chinese Government Over Mass Atrocity Crimes Against the Uyghurs and Other Muslim Minorities in Xinjiang," *Journal of Global Security Studies* 6, no. 4 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogab013>.

<sup>386</sup> Bennett, "Collective Action Theory".

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native", 387.

paper has argued in the introduction chapter.<sup>389</sup> Thus, the paper contributes to the field of Settler Colonial Studies by expanding Wolfe's theory to address settler colonial mechanisms emerging from social, political and economic aspects unique to China and therefore shaping settler colonialism differently than in Global North contexts. Besides Wolfe's Eurocentric lens, other limitations will be discussed in this section.

The first limitation is Wolfe's theory fails to account for China's capitalist plans of modernization through the BRI and the Great Western Development Strategy which rely on the exploitation of labor.<sup>390</sup> The study has demonstrated throughout the analysis in chapters 4 and 5 that China's economic growth plays an important factor in understanding the displacement of Uyghurs and their mass incarceration in detention centers where levels of activity of forced labor is shown through nighttime satellite imagery.<sup>391</sup> Thus, while China demonstrates settler colonial mechanisms through assimilation, the CCP also engages in colonialism rooted in the extraction of labor which Wolfe's theory was not able to explain.<sup>392</sup> Jonathan Brooks reinforced this by suggesting Marxist approaches such as David Harvey's accumulation by dispossession.<sup>393</sup> Harvey's theory explains how capitalism extracts value from society by displacing groups to pave way for the privatization of land, commodification of labor, and nature.<sup>394</sup> Harvey's theory provides a better application of analyzing the CCP's Great Western Development Strategy and the BRI, targeting Xinjiang as a geopolitical region and the displacement of Uyghurs for economic motives.<sup>395</sup> Thus, Harvey's and Wolfe's theories can complement each other for a better analysis of the political and historical developments in China and these dimensions can fully explain the Uyghur case.

Another limitation is Wolfe's theory is centralized around conquering territory which have been applicable in historical settler colonial cases such as the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand.<sup>396</sup> However, in contemporary settler colonial cases marked by neoliberalism and capitalism, Wolfe overlooks class divisions among Uyghur communities to explain how some are

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<sup>389</sup> Ibid., 387-400.

<sup>390</sup> Evan Robinson, "Investigating the Growth"; Jonathan Brooks, "Settler Colonialism, Primitive Accumulation".

<sup>391</sup> Evan Robinson, "Investigating the Growth".

<sup>392</sup> Jonathan Brooks, "Settler Colonialism, Primitive Accumulation", 16-21.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid.

<sup>394</sup> David Harvey, "The 'New Imperialism': Accumulation by Dispossession," *Actuel Marx*, no. 1 (2004): 71-90, [https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E\\_AMX\\_035\\_0071--the-new-imperialism-accumulation-by-disp.htm](https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_AMX_035_0071--the-new-imperialism-accumulation-by-disp.htm).

<sup>395</sup> Ibid.

<sup>396</sup> Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native", 387- 400.



excluded from higher education and employment operating alongside repression.<sup>397</sup> The theory does not take into account the socio-economic dimensions which put Uyghurs at a disadvantage compared to the Han group in Xinjiang, providing a better understanding of labor and class discrepancies within the region.<sup>398</sup> This reinforces Brox & Bellér-Hann framing of Xinjiang as an internal colony of China which involves imperialism as the main driver of China's ethnic repression.<sup>399</sup> Wang and Ruche discuss this by only applying settler colonialism to specific instances of the CCP's operations in Xinjiang.<sup>400</sup> This connects back to the question on whether Xinjiang is a case of colonialism or settler colonialism, which in this study the analysis demonstrates both types are applicable as the CCP engages assimilation practices in "re-education" camps and extractive labor in detention facilities.<sup>401</sup> Moreover, Wolfe reinforces the Settler vs. Native binary which explains settler colonialism in the U.S. productively where colonial power dynamics and demographic divisions between Natives and settlers were relatively stark and structured.<sup>402</sup> However this binary becomes more difficult when it is applied to China, where the state's relationship with Uyghurs and ethnic minorities is shaped by a more complex interplay of ethnic diversity, political ideology, and colonial governance.

## Limitations

While this thesis offers rich insights into mechanisms of settler colonialism across geopolitical contexts, there are limitations that should be recognized. Regarding methodology, the research relied on conducting a close reading of the primary sources which has benefits as well as weaknesses. Close reading is beneficial to analyze patterns and themes which provides deep textual insight. It is also quite flexible and can be applied to analyze different sources like letters, legal texts, and memoirs. Yet, for this research question it was insufficient because the research question is broad and presented a broad analysis of patterns, trends, comparisons with institutions. It is better to be used as a complementary method rather than a standalone approach for analyzing socio-political issues. The paper acknowledges the differences in temporal

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<sup>397</sup> Cioè-Peña, "The Master's Tools"; Grose, "The Xinjiang Class." 97.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

<sup>399</sup> Wang and Roche, "Urbanizing Minority Minzuin", 594.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid., Trine Brox and Ildikó Bellér-Hann, "On The Fringes".

<sup>402</sup> Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native", 387-409.

locations which only focuses on certain time frames which can exclude other historical or political events that might have been relevant.

The study does draw on sources not necessarily within scope of research (1879-1918) like the Meriam report (1928) but it provides a better historical context to understand Indigenous resistance as a theme.<sup>403</sup> The discrepancy in data availability specifically from China's Konasheher re-education camp was difficult to access due to transparency issues which may affect the comprehensiveness of the analysis. Access to China's primary sources was only available from leaked sources and secondary scholarship which creates an imbalance of data availability compared to the rich archival material from the Carlisle Indian School digital center.<sup>404</sup> Also Hoja's memoir was difficult to access resulting in only analyzing the prologue and chapter 1 of her book.<sup>405</sup> While a lot of historical and cultural context was provided, the analysis for Uyghur resistance remains limited. Thus, the conclusion provides valuable insight into expanding Wolfe's theory to China and analyze the "logic of elimination" in the contemporary era but should be interpreted with caution specifically in China's case.

### **Future Recommendations**

For future research, comparative case studies across Global South contexts should be analyzed in Settler Colonial Studies to contribute to the Eurocentrism of the field.<sup>406</sup> More non-Western and Indigenous scholars need to be involved in the knowledge production of Indigenous and Settler Colonial Studies, bridging the gap between white and Indigenous scholars within academic institutions.<sup>407</sup> There is a lack of research examining China within a settler colonial framework, especially with the main findings presenting a new settler colonial mechanism: surveillance. This can provide further insights into how the state employs its advanced technology to further its colonial agenda. Also the ongoing debate about China's colonial and settler colonial tendencies

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<sup>403</sup> Lewis Meriam, "The Problem of Indian".

<sup>404</sup> Xinjiang Police Files; Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center. "Welcome."

<sup>405</sup> Hoja, *A Stone Is Most Precious*.

<sup>406</sup> Kauanui, "Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity"; Fung, "Another Study of Whiteness?"; Haven Bills and Sonja Klinsky, "The Resilience of Settler" 969–86;; Sophie Rudolph and Archie Thomas, "Education, Racial Justice,"; Anna Lees, Tasha Tropp Laman, and Dolores Calderón, "'Why Didn't I Know This?': 279–90; María Cioè-Peña, "The Master's Tools", 25–33; Malathi Michelle Iyengar, "Not Mere Abstraction; Shankar, "Language and Race".

<sup>407</sup> Kauanui, "Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity"; Fung, "Another Study of Whiteness?"; Sophie Rudolph and Archie Thomas, "Education, Racial Justice,"; Anna Lees, Tasha Tropp Laman, and Dolores Calderón, "'Why Didn't I Know This?'.

can be further explored by conducting comparative analysis with other case studies to gain insight into what extent the CCP engages in both types of colonization.<sup>408</sup> Drawing from Kaunui's theoretical framework, Settler Colonial Studies need to focus on disrupting the settler colonial structures by implementing Indigenous-led frameworks and applying them in existing case studies to broaden Indigenous epistemology, and reinforce Indigenous agency and sovereignty.<sup>409</sup> Additionally, research should be conducted on the lack of accountability and contradictions of the international community particularly the exclusion of cultural genocide from the UN Genocide Convention to address ongoing settler colonial cases in underrepresented places like Greenland.<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> Wang and Roche, "Urbanizing MinorityMinzuin" ; Trine Brox and Ildikó Bellér-Hann, "On The Fringes".

<sup>409</sup> Kauanui, "Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity"; Anna Lees, Tasha Tropp Laman, and Dolores Calderón, "'Why Didn't I Know This?'".

<sup>410</sup> Ellis, "Comparative Analysis", 38; Bennett, "Collective Action Theory".

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

The thesis paper addressed the different methods of assimilation zooming in on the Carlisle Indian Industrial school (1879-1918) and the Konasheher re-education camp (since 2014). Drawing from Patrick Wolfe's two key elements of settler colonialism: "logic of elimination" and settler colonialism as an ongoing structure. The thesis conducted a comparative case study analysis using close reading of primary sources for the U.S. such as Carlisle letters, the Meriam report, legal documents, Indigenous memoirs. China's primary sources included leaked police files of security plans, protocols, state speeches, photographs, satellite imagery, and a Uyghur memoir. The main findings identify the physical, legal and cultural assimilation occurring in U.S' Indian boardings schools and China's re-education camps. The elimination of Indigenous identity through language bans, name changes, Western clothing, and standardization of Western education resulted in Indigenous displacement, disruption of communal life, and physical and psychological trauma. The U.S. government aimed to assimilate Indigenous people as part of a broader strategy to expand territory and attract more settlers.

The findings further reveal the political and ideological indoctrination of Uyghurs through re-education camps by pledging state loyalty, praising patriotism through songs and confiscation of religious items. Through China's deployment of the advanced technology of the IJOP, biometric data is collected and recorded in scoring systems enabling the criminalization of Uyghur. Thus, the study not only identifies legal, cultural, physical assimilation but also embraces a digital form which facilitates the CCP's settler colonial strategies to displace Uyghurs in Xinjiang and pave the way for larger plans to transform Xinjiang into a urbanized, Han-populated city. The CCP's strategies lie in the economic motives of developing China through the BRI and consolidating the state party's power in the Western region of the nation and ultimately eradicating Xinjiang's geopolitical autonomy for national unity.

Additionally, the thesis centers around Indigenous and Uyghur resistance to counter the dominant narrative within Settler Colonial Studies of Indigenous populations being passive. By foregrounding daily practices of resistance, cultural continuation, and intergenerational knowledge transmission, the thesis presents Indigenous as well as Uyghur agency and sovereignty. The paper expands Wolfe's theory to Global South contexts like China and suggests future research on emerging scholarship that centers global and relational understanding of the ongoing dispossession and elimination of ethnic minorities. By conducting a comparative case

study across geopolitical contexts, the paper traced the evolution of settler colonialism, drawing structural parallels and different manifestations of settler colonialism through assimilationist institutions.

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