

# Vocational Education and Training in Xinjiang

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## **Preface**

Terrorism and extremism are the common enemies of humanity, and the fight against terrorism and extremism is the shared responsibility of the international community. It is a fundamental task of any responsible government, acting on basic principles, to remove the malignant tumor of terrorism and extremism that threatens people's lives and security, to safeguard people's dignity and value, to protect their rights to life, health and development, and to ensure they enjoy a peaceful and harmonious social environment.

Over the years, to ensure public safety and wellbeing, the international community has spared no effort and made tremendous sacrifices in preventing and combating terrorism and extremism. Many countries and regions, in light of their own conditions, have developed effective measures and drawn valuable lessons from these efforts.

Xinjiang is a key battlefield in the fight against terrorism and extremism in China. For some time Xinjiang has been plagued by terrorism and religious extremism, which pose a serious threat to the lives of the people in the region. Addressing both the symptoms and root causes and integrating preventative measures and a forceful response, Xinjiang has established vocational education and training centers in accordance with the law to prevent the breeding and spread of terrorism and religious extremism, effectively curbing the frequent terrorist incidents and protecting the rights to life, health, and development of the people of all ethnic groups. Worthwhile results have been achieved.

## **I. Urgent Needs for Education and Training**

Terrorism and extremism have a long history in Xinjiang. From the early 20th century to the late 1940s, separatist and religious extremist forces, spreading “Pan-Turkism” and “Pan-Islamism”, attempted to create a theocratic state they called “East Turkistan” in Xinjiang. In an attempt to split China, such forces advocated religious extremism and carried out a series of terrorist activities. For years religious extremism continued to make inroads into Xinjiang, resulting in incidents of terrorism.

Since the 1990s the global spread and aggravation of terrorism and extremism has wrought havoc. Influenced by extremism, terrorist attacks and related incidents have caused heavy casualties and property damage in the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Russia, Turkey, Egypt, India, Indonesia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, and other countries and regions. World peace is under serious threat, and the future of humanity is overshadowed.

Between 1990 and the end of 2016 separatists, religious extremists and terrorists plotted and carried out several thousand acts of terrorism such as bombings, assassinations, poisoning, arson, assaults, and riots in Xinjiang. Many innocent people were killed and several hundred police officers died in the line of duty. The property losses incurred were enormous.

Terrorism and extremism germinate in a complex domestic and international environment. They are rooted in political, economic and cultural factors, and are not specific to particular countries, regions, ethnic groups, religions or social systems. The fight against terrorism and extremism is a global challenge. Over the years different countries and regions have adopted different measures of preventing and combating terrorism and extremism, based on their respective historical and cultural traditions,

their level of social and economic development, and the level of education and employability of their citizens.

For some time Xinjiang, especially Kashgar Prefecture, Hotan Prefecture, Aksu Prefecture and Kizilsu Kirgiz Autonomous Prefecture in the south, where religious extremism has had a long and widespread presence, suffered badly from frequent acts of terrorism. Large numbers of people were involved and even more were affected. The scale of the problem posed a serious challenge to China's efforts in fighting terrorism and extremism.

Exploiting people's religious beliefs, extremist forces spread religious extremism through Xinjiang's large religious population, among people who have limited means of communication outside their own communities, limited employment opportunities in farming and animal husbandry, limited sources of information, and limited knowledge of modern science. Deliberately distorting religious doctrines and canons, religious extremists have bound extremism to religion, to religious believers, and to society as a whole, and incited people to overthrow secular governments and establish theocratic states. They deny the concepts and achievements of modern secular civilization, inciting followers to "engage in a holy war and die for their beliefs in order to enter heaven", and injuring and killing those they describe as "pagans" and "renegades". Normal religious activities in Xinjiang have been seriously disrupted, and upstanding religious individuals have been ostracized, persecuted, or killed. For many religious believers, the mental shackles imposed by religious extremism have become unbearable, disturbing their normal life and work. Social and economic development in the region has also suffered as a result.

To strengthen their psychological control over religious believers, extremist forces have incited people to boycott the standard spoken and written Chinese language and reject modern science. They act in accordance with fabricated "religious law" and "domestic discipline", and defy the Constitution and state laws. They spread word about a "next life where one's fate is predestined", and deceive religious believers into rejecting the kind of vocational skills training by which they can improve their economic conditions and their capacity for self-development. A large part of the population could not read and write in the standard spoken and written Chinese language, and they had no basic knowledge of the law.

Influenced and controlled by religious extremism, many people have engaged in – or have been instigated, coerced or enticed to engage in – terrorist and extremist activities, but they have not committed serious crimes or inflicted actual harm. It is hard for some people who have been convicted of terrorist or extremist crimes to abandon extremist views, as their minds have been poisoned to the extent of losing reason and the ability to think sensibly about their lives and the law. Without

necessary intervention measures it will not be possible for them to cast off the shackles of religious extremism, get back to normal life, and improve their prospects for a better future.

Faced with this severe and complex problem, Xinjiang has upheld the principle of addressing both the symptoms and root causes in its fight against terrorism and extremism, by striking hard at serious terrorist crimes, which are limited in number, and by educating and rehabilitating people influenced by religious extremism and involved in minor violations of the law. In accordance with the law it has established a group of vocational centers to offer systematic education and training in response to a set of urgent needs: to curb frequent terrorist incidents, to eradicate the breeding ground for religious extremism, to help trainees acquire a better education and vocational skills, find employment, and increase their incomes, and most of all, to safeguard social stability and long-term peace in Xinjiang.

## **II. Law-Based Education and Training**

Education and training in Xinjiang is practiced in line with the spirit and requirements of the rule of law in China. It also reflects the ideas and principles of counter-terrorism and deradicalization as practiced by the international community.

In recent years, in line with the National Security Law of the People's Republic of China, Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China, Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China, Counterterrorism Law of the People's Republic of China, and Regulations on Religious Affairs, Xinjiang has enacted and revised, in accordance with legal procedures, two local regulations – the Measures of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Implementing the Counter-terrorism Law of the People's Republic of China, and the Regulations of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Deradicalization.

Chinese law distinguishes between unlawful and criminal acts, and prescribes different law enforcement and judicial bodies and different processes for handling the two kinds of acts. Depending on the specific circumstances, some offenders or criminals are subjected to punishment by administrative organs, including public security organs, in accordance with the law. Some, after their cases have been investigated by public security organs and transferred, are examined by procuratorial organs and there is a decision not to prosecute. Some are tried, convicted and sentenced by judicial organs in accordance with the law after procuratorial organs have initiated public prosecution.

Specifically, in cases of unlawful and criminal acts of terrorism and extremism, not all offenders or criminals should be prosecuted by procuratorial organs and convicted and sentenced by judicial organs. Depending on the circumstances of the offence and the willingness of the parties to acknowledge their guilt, some cases can be handled by public security and other administrative organs, and in others the procuratorial organs can decide not to pursue the case. These different approaches and procedures reflect the principle of balancing compassion and severity in the national criminal law, and the idea of reforming offenders through education and rehabilitation. In order to implement the principle of addressing both the symptoms and root causes, state laws and local regulations have stipulated measures intended to help people involved in terrorist and extremist activities to find employment and reintegrate into society through education.

In accordance with the Counter-terrorism Law of the People's Republic of China, the Measures of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Implementing the Counter-terrorism Law of the People's Republic of China, the Regulations of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Deradicalization, and other laws and regulations, vocational education and training centers have been established in Xinjiang. At present, the trainees at the centers fall into three categories:

1. People who were incited, coerced or induced into participating in terrorist or extremist activities, or people who participated in terrorist or extremist activities in circumstances that were not serious enough to constitute a crime;

2. People who were incited, coerced or induced into participating in terrorist or extremist activities, or people who participated in terrorist or extremist activities that posed a real danger but did not cause actual harm, whose subjective culpability was not deep, who acknowledged their offences and were contrite about their past actions and thus do not need to be sentenced to or can be exempted from punishment, and who have demonstrated the willingness to receive training;

3. People who were convicted and received prison sentence for terrorist or extremist crimes and after serving their sentences, have been assessed as still posing a potential threat to society, and who have been ordered by people's courts in accordance with the law to receive education at the centers. In accordance with Articles 29 and 30 of the Counter-terrorism Law, people in the first and third categories will be given assistance and education or receive job-related education at the centers. With regard to people in the second category, a small number of them should be punished severely, while the majority should be rehabilitated in accordance with the policy of balancing compassion and severity. Confession, repentance, and willingness to receive training are preconditions for leniency, and these people will receive education to help

reform their ways after they have been exempted from prosecution in accordance with the law.

The specific procedures for carrying out education and training in Xinjiang require that relevant authorities determine the nature and circumstances of the acts and deal with the above three categories in accordance with the laws and regulations, such as the Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure Law, and Counter-terrorism Law. The first category should first be handled by public security organs, and then given assistance and education by vocational education and training centers. The second category should first be investigated by public security organs, and if the procuratorial organs, after reviewing the cases, have made the decision not to institute legal proceedings, they should then be given assistance and education by education and training centers. The third category, after being assessed before their release from prison and found to pose an ongoing risk to society, shall be placed at such centers to receive education to help them reintegrate into society in accordance with the decision of people's courts.

The vocational education and training centers shall provide the people mentioned above with residential vocational training free of charge, and issue certificates of completion when the trainees reach the expected criteria. After graduation, the trainees can choose their own jobs, or employment can be arranged for them with the assistance of relevant authorities.

The education and training efforts in Xinjiang are also in line with the basic principles clearly defined in the relevant international conventions and initiatives. As a responsible member of the international community, China supports the United Nations in playing a leading and coordinating role in international cooperation against terrorism. China upholds the UN Charter and other principles and norms of international law. It has supported a series of resolutions on combating terrorism adopted by the UN Security Council, and contributed to the full implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. China has joined a number of international counter-terrorism conventions, including the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, and International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages. Under the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), China and the other countries involved have signed the following documents: the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, Cooperation Between SCO Member States on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, SCO Convention on Combating Terrorism, SCO Convention on Combating Extremism, SCO Cooperation Programme on Fighting Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism for 2019-2021, and SCO Plan of Action for Cooperation with the Islamic

Republic of Afghanistan on Fighting Terrorism, Drug Trafficking and Organized Crimes.

The United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism notes that poverty, unemployment, the absence of alternative employment opportunities, and low levels of education, are the background causes of violent extremism, along with the distortion and exploitation by violent extremist groups of religious beliefs, ethnic differences and political ideologies. The Plan of Action says that to counter violent extremism, we have to broaden our responses, engage earlier, and address the drivers of violent extremism. We need to complement actions to counter violent extremism with preventive measures. The Plan of Action proposes to align national development policies with the Sustainable Development Goals, end poverty in all its forms, ensure quality education, and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; to encourage individuals to leave violent extremist groups by developing programs that place an emphasis on providing them with educational and economic opportunities; and to support young people in gaining access to continued learning and vocational resources, and in incubating their entrepreneurial talent. The education and training efforts of Xinjiang manifest China's implementation of international counter-terrorism and deradicalization initiatives and measures.

### **III. Content of Education and Training**

In order to effectively contain and systematically remedy the dissemination of religious extremism and frequent terrorist incidents, Xinjiang has set up vocational education and training centers in some prefectures and counties.

These centers are education and training institutions in nature. To meet the needs of fighting terrorism and extremism, these centers deliver a curriculum that includes standard spoken and written Chinese, understanding of the law, vocational skills, and deradicalization.

To remedy their lack of proficiency in spoken and written Chinese, tailored language programs are provided to trainees. The education and training centers have solid constitutional and legal authority to conduct such programs. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional Ethnic Autonomy and the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language protect the freedom of all ethnic groups to use and develop their own spoken and written languages. At the same time, the Constitution and the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language specify that the state promotes the nationwide



use of Putonghua, that all citizens have the right to learn and use the standard spoken and written Chinese language, and that the state provides citizens with the conditions to enable them to do so.

The education and training centers fully guarantee citizens' right to learn and use standard spoken and written Chinese conferred by the Constitution, and provide trainees with the facilities required for their studies. They employ qualified teachers, using textbooks compiled especially for the trainees, teaching in the same way as in regular schools in order to rapidly improve their ability in the use of standard spoken and written Chinese. Improving the trainees' command of standard spoken and written Chinese helps them to learn about science and technology, acquire vocational skills, seek work in other locations, communicate with other ethnic groups, and adapt better to life in modern society, subject to the condition that their right to use their own ethnic spoken and written languages is respected. There is no intention to deprive or limit the trainees' right to use and develop their own ethnic languages.

To remedy a lack of understanding of the law, the education and training centers present legal courses, which is taken as the key link to strengthen national, civic and legal awareness. Judges, procurators and lawyers are invited to give lectures on laws and regulations, including the Constitution, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional Ethnic Autonomy, Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China, General Provisions of the Civil Law of the People's Republic of China, Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China, Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests, Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Minors, Labor Law of the People's Republic of China, Labor Contract Law of the People's Republic of China, Education Law of the People's Republic of China, Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China, Counter-terrorism Law of the People's Republic of China, Public Security Administration Punishments Law of the People's Republic of China, Regulations of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Deradicalization, Measures of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Implementing the Counter-terrorism Law of the People's Republic of China, and Regulations of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Religious Affairs.

Through their studies, the trainees have developed a better understanding of their civil rights and obligations, a realization that they have the same entitlement to these rights and obligations as others, and an acceptance that they must abide by the Constitution and laws and act in accordance with the rights and obligations they confer.

To remedy lack of occupational skills and employment difficulties, vocational skills training programs are provided. The education and training centers regard

vocational skills as an important channel to improve the trainees' employability. Based on local demand and employment opportunities, the courses they present include garment making, food processing, assembly of electronic products, typesetting and printing, hairdressing and beauty services, e-commerce, auto maintenance and repair, interior design and decoration, livestock breeding, pomiculture, therapeutic massage, household services, handicrafts, flower arrangement, rug weaving, painting, and the performing arts such as music and dance. Eligible trainees who are willing to learn are offered training in more than one skill to ensure they are employable in the jobs market upon completing their study at the centers. The education and training centers combine course learning with practical training to improve the trainees' operational skills. Practical training is conducted in classes rather than through employment in factories or enterprises, or obligatory labor.

As trainees have fallen under the influence and control of religious extremism to a greater or lesser extent, the centers integrate deradicalization into the whole process of education and training. Through step-by-step teaching of laws and regulations, policies on ethnic and religious affairs, and religious knowledge, and by exposing the damage caused by terrorism and religious extremism, the centers give trainees a full and accurate understanding of the national policy of freedom of religious belief. In order to rehabilitate the trainees, these courses teach the trainees to distinguish between lawful and unlawful religious activities, understand how religious extremism runs counter to religious doctrine, and realize the evil nature and serious harm of terrorism and religious extremism so that they can eventually break free from the influence and control of terrorism and religious extremism. Education and training at the centers never interferes in the trainees' freedom of religious belief and the centers have never made any attempts to have the trainees change their religious beliefs.

## **IV. Protection of Trainees' Basic Rights**

It is a basic principle, enshrined in the Constitution of China, prescribed by its laws, and demonstrated by the efforts of the Chinese government, to respect and protect human rights. The education and training in Xinjiang is a social governance measure taken by the government, in accordance with the law, to protect the lives and basic civil rights of citizens. In organizing the training programs, the education and training centers strictly follow the provisions of the Constitution and the law to prevent any violation of the basic rights of trainees.

Education and training is not a measure to limit or circumscribe the freedom of the person. Rather it is an important measure to help trainees to break free from ideas

of terrorism and religious extremism. It is an attempt to help the trainees to emancipate their minds, improve themselves and their future prospects.

The law of China prohibits any discrimination based on region, ethnicity, religion and other grounds. This is implemented strictly in Xinjiang. The only criterion for education at the centers is whether the trainee has been convicted of unlawful or criminal acts involving terrorism and religious extremism. It has nothing to do with their region, ethnicity or religion.

The personal freedom of trainees at the education and training centers is protected in accordance with the law. The centers guarantee that trainees' personal dignity is inviolable, and prevent any insult or abuse in any manner. They employ a residential education model which allows trainees to go back home on a regular basis and ask for leave to attend personal affairs. The trainees also enjoy the freedom of correspondence.

The customs of all ethnic groups and the right to use their spoken and written languages are fully protected at the centers. The regulations, curriculum, and menus at the centers all use local ethnic languages as well as standard Chinese. The customs of all ethnic groups are fully respected and protected, and a variety of nutritious Muslim food is provided free of charge.

The education and training centers respect the trainees' freedom of religious belief. The Regulations on Religious Affairs prohibit preaching religion, holding religious activities, establishing religious organizations, and setting up religious activity sites in schools and educational institutions other than religious institutions. The centers practice separation of education and religion in management, which means trainees should not organize or take part in religious activities there, but they can decide on their own whether to do so on a legal basis when they get home.

The education and training centers employ bilingual teachers, instructors, doctors and logistics and managerial staff to ensure that the trainees can study and lead a normal life. They have well-equipped facilities – central heating in winter, air conditioners and electric fans in summer, TVs in the dormitory, and bathrooms. They also have free 24-hour medical facilities available to trainees, capable of treating minor ailments. In the case of major and acute illnesses, trainees will be sent to hospital.

The education and training centers fully respect the spiritual and cultural needs of trainees. A wealth of regular recreational activities are held at their indoor and outdoor sports and cultural venues. They have reading rooms for trainees to read and study, legal counseling rooms to address their problems and difficulties concerning legal affairs, and mental counseling rooms to provide relevant services and care for their

mental health. All trainees are included in public pension and medical insurance schemes, and are entitled to free health examination.

In order to relieve them of family worries, the authorities at all levels of Xinjiang treat trainees' families on an equal footing in terms of preferential policies in social security, education, medical service, and poverty elimination, and help their families and relatives to address problems in work, daily life, employment, education and medical services, thus allowing them to focus more attention on their education and training.

## **V. Remarkable Results in Education and Training**

Education and training in Xinjiang has succeeded to an enormous extent in eliminating the soil and conditions in which terrorism and religious extremism breed, rehabilitating those who have committed unlawful or criminal acts, and protected basic civil rights. The number of people participating in education and training at the centers is not fixed; some are coming in while others are going out. However, as education and training has played its role, most trainees have reached the required standards and graduated.

– The comprehensive quality of trainees has improved. Their understanding of the rule of law has risen, and there is a general recognition that citizens must abide by the Constitution and other laws of the country. The ability of trainees to speak and write in standard Chinese has improved. Many trainees begin the course unable to use the national common language, but by the time they have completed their studies at the centers they are able to understand, communicate, read and write in Chinese. Through vocational skills training and study, most of them have mastered practical skills and their employability has increased. Many of the trainees who have completed their studies in education and training centers have gone on to find employment in factories or enterprises. Some have started their own businesses, and some have continued their studies in secondary and higher vocational schools in order to improve their prospects further.

– Religious extremism has been effectively eliminated. Through education, the vast majority of trainees can recognize the nature and harm of terrorism and religious extremism, and free themselves from the control these phenomena exert over their minds. The trainees have a much better awareness of the interests of the nation, their civic duties, and the rule of law, and their ability to distinguish between right and

wrong has significantly improved. Most of the trainees are able to recognize that religious extremism is a perversion of their religion, and their ability to resist its penetration has notably increased.

– The social atmosphere has taken a marked turn for the better. In the course of the trainees' studies and daily life, the education and training centers carefully guide them to change their mentalities, and promote mutual respect for folkways among all ethnic groups while encouraging adaptation to the requirements of modern society in terms of food, clothing, housing, transport, weddings, funerals, etiquette and customs. The centers also vigorously spread the concept of modern civilization, so that trainees can divest themselves of outdated conventions and customs. Thanks to these efforts, Xinjiang has witnessed a marked change in the social environment in recent years. A healthy atmosphere is spreading, while evil influences are declining. Citizens now consciously resist religious extremism, and the trend in society is now to pursue knowledge of modern science and technology and a cultured way of life.

– The overall situation in society continues to be stable. No terrorist incidents have occurred in Xinjiang for nearly three years since the education and training started. As the infiltration of religious extremism has been curbed, public order and security have returned to society, where equality, solidarity and harmony among ethnic groups and religions have prevailed, and people are enjoying peace and stability. In 2018, tourism in Xinjiang grew rapidly: Tourists from inside and outside China totaled over 150 million, a year-on-year increase of 40 percent; foreign tourists numbered 2.6 million, a year-on-year increase of nearly 12 percent. From January to June 2019, nearly 76 million tourists visited Xinjiang, an increase of 46 percent over the same period in 2018.

– Education and training has won general support. The trainees gain a thorough understanding of the true nature and perils of terrorism and religious extremism. They thank education and training for turning them back from the way to terrorist crimes and helping them break free from the spiritual shackles of religious extremism. Education and training has effectively safeguarded social stability and harmony in Xinjiang, protected the basic human rights of citizens to the maximum extent, and won the support of all ethnic groups. The personal feeling of many people is that the positive developments in Xinjiang have been hard won, and without education and training there would have been little peace and tranquility today.

– The international community has made positive comments on Xinjiang's efforts. Education and training has aroused the general interest of the international community. Since the end of December 2018, nearly 1,000 people have visited Xinjiang. They include foreign diplomatic envoys to China, UN officials, Geneva-based senior diplomats of various countries, as well as more than 40 groups

(or delegations) of people from political parties, civil society organizations, news media, and religious organizations of various countries. Through field trips, many have realized the truth and understood the urgency, necessity, legitimacy and rationality of carrying out education and training. They have all recognized that violent and inhumane terrorist activities in the autonomous region, provoked by religious extremism, were causing outrage. Through rehabilitating trainees poisoned by terrorist and religious extremist ideas, education and training has made an important contribution to international efforts to fight terrorism and extremism, and generated valuable experience that is of great reference value. At its 46th session, the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation adopted a resolution commending China's efforts in providing care to its Muslim citizens.

A number of foreign journalists who have conducted interviews in the education and training centers have published stories that reflect the true role of the centers and express their understanding, approval and support for the education and training programs in Xinjiang.

“China respects ethnic minorities and their religious beliefs,” says a report in Saudi Arabia's newspaper *Al Riyadh* entitled “Xinjiang: Gateway to China on the Belt and Road” published on May 15, 2019. “The Chinese government at all levels and its departments have formulated a series of policies and regulations to respect and accommodate the dietary habits, clothing, festivals, weddings and funerals of ethnic minorities.” “In Xinjiang, all ethnic groups have the right to maintain or change their own lifestyles or customs, which is China's consistent policy.”

On May 15, 2019, Egypt's *Al-Ahram Al-Masa'* newspaper published an article entitled “China Uses Training and Re-education to Deal with Extremism”. It states: “Countries around the world adopt a variety of preventive measures against terrorism and extremism in accordance with their actual conditions. The measures taken against extremist ideas by the Chinese government in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region can provide useful experience... Xinjiang has set up education and training centers to train young people influenced by the extremist ideas of terrorist organizations, to provide them with the opportunity to reintegrate into society, get back on track, and steer clear of the claws of terrorism.”

A report from Turkey's DHA says: “The centers provide human-based management and services for the trainees. There is no maltreatment or restrictions on personal freedom. The trainees are happy to study and live there. What I saw and felt during the visit was very different from the negative propaganda of the US and other Western countries, and I felt their double standards simply rude and unreasonable.”

US magazine *International Focus* published Val Thompson's “A Journey to the Autonomous Region of Xinjiang, China” in its May 2019 issue: “A visit to Kashgar

Vocation Skills Educational and Training Center, which I found well organized with young people, was mostly of the UYGHUR ethnicity. The young people, men and women, were, or could be, victims of extremist teaching, now were learning a vocational skill and being taught a better way of life... They were well fed, and they had good sleeping conditions... I interviewed several of them; they seemed very happy; and they were treated well by their supervisors. For those who want to believe these young people may have been coerced, I say you can't fake happiness; and happiness is exactly what I saw."

On July 5, 2019, *The Straits Times* of Singapore published an article entitled "Inside Those Uighur Re-education Camps" written by Ravi Velloor, associate editor of the newspaper. The article gives a vivid account of the true situation in Xinjiang's education and training centers and explains how a number of trainees have changed. "From an administrative point of view, the measures have been effective without question," says the article. Velloor learned from his contact with the trainees that many of them "had undergone a measure of self-radicalisation after downloading extremist videos from the Internet on their smartphones". Velloor felt that the training centers "had the air of a boarding school". "In the housing blocks being built for the poorer sections, in the hospitals where people can access medical services, including moxibustion, in the thriving bazaars where the locals ply their trade, and in the cities of Xinjiang where people enjoy ethnic song and dance performances", he was impressed that the Chinese government was not suppressing local culture and that the Uygurs and many other minorities were never subject to the one-child policy.

## **VI. Experience in Countering Extremism**

Over the years, in response to the threats posed by terrorism and extremism, and in order to prevent them from breeding and expanding, and to guarantee individual safety and social stability, many countries have explored measures based on their own conditions, and gained experience in effectively combating terrorism and extremism.

- Some countries have established "deradicalization centers" to educate victims of extremist teachings and reverse their thinking. These centers rehabilitate the trainees through individual or collective sports activities and psychological counseling, and discussions on religion and secularity, and enable them to re-assimilate into society through skills and vocational training.
- Some countries have set up education and transformation centers. They divide extremists into three categories: those who recognize their error, latent criminals, and active criminals, and try to remove them from extremist influences with the assistance

of their families and communities, together with measures like psychological intervention and economic aid.

- Some countries educate and transform terrorists and potential terrorists in both prisons and communities, and deradicalize those involved in terrorist-related offences through the process of identification, assessment, rehabilitation, reeducation, return to society and follow-up.

- Some countries denounce the erroneous interpretation of Islamic doctrine by extremists, encourage religious inclusiveness, advocate “moderate Islam”, and set up education centers to transform those influenced by extremist thinking in two phases – centralized control and return to society.

- Some countries have launched transformation and disengagement programs, compelling individuals with terrorist connections and suspected terrorist returnees to participate in training, and setting up isolation centers for extremists to prevent them from spreading extreme views to other detainees.

- Some countries have taken measures in communities to intervene in the spread of extremism at its earliest stages, and mobilized society to prevent terrorist and extremist activities by taking timely action against any inclination on the part of young people to join extremist organizations.

Xinjiang’s practice of educating and rehabilitating the victims of terrorist and religious extremist teachings through vocational education and training centers is similar to efforts by other countries and regions, with the same goals of dealing with the problem at source and protecting people’s basic human rights.

Xinjiang’s vocational education and training programs have achieved notable results, and contributed experience to international actions against terrorism and extremism.

- Fighting extremism in accordance with local conditions. In its vocational education and training, Xinjiang has learned from experience of other countries, and striven to achieve real results in line with the actual conditions of the autonomous region. In countering terrorism and extremism, Xinjiang draws on the experience of other countries, and provides people influenced by terrorist and religious extremist teachings with education in standard spoken and written Chinese, an understanding of the law, and training in vocational skills. These efforts have eradicated extremist thoughts, delivered widely recognized results, helped to safeguard social stability in the region, and protected the environment for the healthy development of religions.

- Putting prevention first while taking firm action on terrorism and extremism. In its fight against terrorism and extremism, Xinjiang has consistently adopted the policy of addressing both the symptoms and root causes. On the one hand, Xinjiang strikes hard at terrorist and extremist forces, and on the other hand, it gives prevention a high



priority, sparing no effort to educate and rehabilitate the large number of people who have committed only minor offences under the influence of terrorism and religious extremism. Xinjiang adopts an approach of rehabilitation rather than punishment and compassion rather than rejection to free them of religious extremist thinking. It teaches them laws and standard spoken and written Chinese, so that they can become educated individuals with vocational skills – useful individuals and individuals of value to society.

– Promoting the rule of law. It is an essential requirement of developing socialism with Chinese characteristics to build a socialist country governed by the rule of law. In the process of promoting vocational education and training and eliminating the environment for breeding terrorism and religious extremism, Xinjiang promotes the rule of law, upholds the authority of the Constitution and laws, adopts appropriate legal thinking and measures to deal with problems, and confines all its efforts within the legal framework. The deradicalization work of the vocational education and training centers is always based on facts and laws, without targeting any specific region, ethnic group or religion.

– Respecting and protecting human rights. The vocational education and training efforts in Xinjiang protect people’s basic human rights, and at the same time rehabilitate as far as possible those who have committed unlawful or criminal offences under the influence of religious extremist teachings. The centers place the trainees first, manage them in line with regulations like schools, provide people-centered services, strictly prohibit any form of humiliation or mistreatment, and guarantee their personal freedom. In the centers, the trainees receive high-quality education and training in diverse skills, and their right to education is fully safeguarded.

– The government must take on the responsibility and achieve tangible results. It is the bounden duty of a responsible government to protect its people’s lives, health, property, and other basic rights, and provide a safe, stable and harmonious living environment. Governments at all levels in Xinjiang, bearing their responsibility to the people in mind, are engaged in a host of patient, careful and extremely hard efforts to educate and rehabilitate victims of terrorist and religious extremist teachings. Success in vocational education and training promotes justice, safeguards people’s dignity and presents a positive image of government.

## **Conclusion**

Practice has proved that vocational education and training in Xinjiang can effectively eradicate the conditions that enable terrorism and religious extremism to breed and spread; it can protect the rights to life, health and development of the various ethnic groups of the region. It ensures social stability in Xinjiang and regional security and stability. The practice conforms to the basic principles of international efforts in countering terrorism and extremism, and accords with the fundamental interests and needs of the peoples all around the world.

The goal of Xinjiang's efforts in vocational education and training is to eliminate the sources of terrorism and religious extremism. This is an action that aims to respect and protect human rights. Some people, for reasons of ideological prejudice or other ulterior motives, are doing all they can to blacken the reputation of Xinjiang's vocational education and training centers. Their censure of Xinjiang's huge effort in countering terrorism and extremism will be firmly rejected by the Xinjiang people. A number of countries, organizations and individuals apply double standards in their approach to terrorism and extremism, which will in effect shield and incite terrorism and extremism. Such acts go against international morality and human conscience, and are scorned by all just people of goodwill.

Terrorism and extremism have caused widespread human suffering, posing an intractable challenge to the whole world. Assuming the responsibility of responding to this great challenge, governments at all levels in Xinjiang have learned from the experience and practices of other countries and initiated their own efforts. Through measures such as vocational education and training it has achieved important victories in countering terrorism and extremism. This deserves the understanding and respect of the international community.

Xinjiang still has much to do in the fight against terrorism and extremism, and improvements can be made in this regard. In the context of local conditions, and complying with the spirit of documents such as the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, Xinjiang will put prevention first while taking resolute action against terrorism and extremism. We will make unremitting efforts to improve vocational education and training, protect the people's basic rights, and ensure long-term social stability and security in Xinjiang.