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Chinese Governance Export in Central Asia

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Abstract

The People's Republic of China has been actively promoting its governance styles abroad. In Central Asia, these programs have increased rapidly both in terms of their frequency and scope. This paper documents 59 in-China training programs for Central Asian officials from 2007 to 2020, the majority of which concerned security management and involved Chinese technology and equipment transfers. It is evident that Central Asian governments are adopting surveillance practices that are based on Chinese security ideology. As Central Asian states absorb these governance models, a new set of security and human rights issues is emerging.

Keywords

cross-border governance – surveillance – security – human rights – technology

Introduction*

The 3,000-kilometer-long border China shares with the Central Asian states is a security priority to Beijing as it encircles a region, Xinjiang, with which Beijing has a long and difficult history. Central Asian states play a central role in Beijing's effort to sustain domestic control and regional resistance to Uyghur independence sympathizers. Furthermore, with an eye to Beijing's long-term goal of unification with Taiwan, a safe passage through the Central Asian landmass in terms of trade and energy security may be of strategic importance if

the Taiwan issue would provoke an international crisis. These security interests have prompted Chinese leaders to actively engage and deepen relations with Central Asian states. In the early 2010s, all Central Asian states have climbed up the ladder and concluded comprehensive strategic partnerships with China (全面战略伙伴关系). [CSP] is a category of cooperative agreements in China's network of partnerships.[1]

Over the course of thirty years of diplomatic relations with China, Central Asian states have adopted an increasing number of aspects of Chinese styles of governance. Chinese governance export is formally known as the Foreign Aid Training Project (援外培训项目). As an integral part of building strategic partnership with its allies, China has been actively promoting its governance styles abroad. In Central Asia, these programs have escalated rapidly both in terms of their frequency and scope.

First, this paper details the Chinese approach and motivations in exporting governance to Central Asia through funding training programs. From publicly available records, a dataset has been compiled of 59 in-China training programs for Central Asian officials from 2007 to 2020. Details of three security trainings are discussed in more detail. Second, this paper highlights examples of Central Asian adoption of the Chinese surveillance-led security approach. Lastly, this paper seeks to understand the impact of these programs on the security and human rights environment in Central Asian states.

Advocating Security Governance with Chinese Characteristics

In attempts to export Chinese governance practices, thousands of Central Asian officials and technocrats have been targeted by China in recent years. These programs are part of bilateral agreements on cooperation and are labelled explicitly as 'exchange of experience' (经验交流) and 'personnel training' (人员培训合作). To cite an example outside the security domain, when the first President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, visited Beijing in the summer of 2018, he signed a cooperation agreement on strengthening bilateral space cooperation, with an emphasis on experience exchange and personnel training (Xinhua, 2018). A few weeks later, the first Kazakh space engineer was sent to the Chinese Academy of Space Technology in the framework of this exchange program (China Academy of Space Technology, 2018).

However, the export of Chinese governance practices is most extensive in the field of security. Figure 1 below lists 59 government-led training programs from

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1   Comprehensive strategic partnership is the tier on the rank of China's diplomatic hierarchy; there are 18 of such tiers.

Trainer	Trainee	Date	Duration
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek diplomats	2007 Janurary	
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek diplomats	2007 Janurary	
Ministry of Commerce	Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Tajik and Turkmen Geology and Minerals Departments	2009 September	20 days
Ministry of Commerce	Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek Ministry of Agriculture	2011 August	21 days
Ministry of Commerce	Turkmen Ministry of Education	2012 October	14 days
Ministry of Commerce	Turkmen Ministry of Agriculture	2013 May	13 days
Ministry of Commerce	Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek Ministry of Agriculture	2014 July	21 days
National Health Commission	Kyrgyz Ministry of Health	2014 March	
Ministry of Commerce	Kyrgyz Ministry of Economics	2014 November	21 days
Ministry of Commerce	Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbek Ministry of Finance	2014 September	21 days
International Liaison Department	Tajik Ministry of Foreign Affairs Information Department	2015 June	
Ministry of Commerce	Uzbek Ministry of Finance	2015 May	20 days
Ministry of Public Security	Tajik Ministry of Internal Affairs	2015 May	
Ministry of Justice	Tajik Ministry of Justice	2015 November	
Ministry of Justice	Kyrgyz Ministry of Justice	2016 April	7 days
Ministry of Commerce	Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek senior civil servants	2016 July	21 days
Supreme Procuratorate	Kyrgyz Prosecutor General's Office	2016 June	8 days
Ministry of Commerce	Tajik Customs	2016 October	
Chinese Academy of Governance	Kyrgyz senior civil servants	2016 September	4 days
Ministry of Commerce	Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Uzbek Ministry of Transport	2017 May	
Ministry of Commerce	Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbek Ministry of Transport	2017 May	
Ministry of Commerce	Kazakh Ministry of Economics	2017 November	
Ministry of Public Security	Kazakh Ministry of Internal Affairs Anti-extremism Department	2017 November	14 days
Ministry of Public Security	Tajik Ministry of Internal Affairs	2017 November	12 days
Ministry of Agriculture	Kazakh Ministry of Agriculture	2017 October	3 days
Ministry of Public Security	Uzbek Prosecutors	2017 October	
Ministry of Commerce	Tajik Ministry of Agriculture	2017 October	19 days
People's Liberation Army Military	Kazakh senior military prosecutors	2017 September	
Ministry of Commerce	Uzbek Ministry of Agriculture	2017 September	20 days
Ministry of Public Security	Tajik Ministry of Internal Affairs	2017 September	4 days
Ministry of Public Security	Uzbek Ministry of Internal Affairs Police Department	2018 April	30 days
Ministry of Commerce	Tajik senior civil servants	2018 August	
Ministry of Public Security	Kazakh Ministry of Internal Affairs Drug Control Department	2018 July	15 days
Ministry of Commerce	Uzbek senior civil servants	2018 July	
Supreme People's Court	Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek judges representatives	2018 June	10 days
Ministry of Public Security	Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek Ministry of Internal Affairs Drug Control Department	2018 Novemner	14 days
Ministry of Public Security	Uzbek Ministry of Internal Affairs	2018 October	15 days
Ministry of Public Security	Kazakh Ministry of the Interior Criminal Investigation Operations Department	2018 September	14 days
Ministry of Public Security	Uzbek Ministry of Internal Affairs Drug Control Department	2018 September	24 days
Ministry of Commerce	Tajik National School of Administration	2018 September	22 days
Supreme People's Court	Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbek judges representatives	2019 April	12 days
Ministry of Public Security	Kyrgyz Ministry of Internal Affairs Bishkek Department	2019 August	
Ministry of Public Security	Uzbek Ministry of Internal Affairs	2019 August	
Supreme People's Court	Tajik judges representatives	2019 August	14 days
Ministry of Commerce	Kyrgyz SME department	2019 December	
Ministry of Public Security	Uzbek Ministry of Internal Affairs Police Department	2019 December	14 days
Ministry of Public Security	Uzbek Ministry of Internal Affairs Tourist Police Department	2019 December	
Ministry of Public Security	Tajik Ministry of Internal Affairs	2019 July	10 days
Supreme Procuratorate	Uzbek Prosecutors	2019 May	6 days
National Audit Office	Tajik governmental audit officers	2019 November	10 days
Ministry of Commerce	Tajik senior civil servants	2019 November	20 days
Ministry of Public Security	Turkmen Ministry of Internal Affairs	2019 November	15 days
Chinese Customs	Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Tajik Customs representatives	2019 October	6 days
Ministry of Agriculture	Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek Ministry of Agriculture	2019 October	6 days
Ministry of Public Security	Kyrgyz State Committee for National Security	2019 September	9 days
Ministry of Public Security	Tajik Ministry of Internal Affairs	2019 September	14 days
Ministry of Commerce	Tajik Ministry of Agriculture	2019 September	
Ministry of Commerce	Tajik senior civil servants	2019 September	
Ministry of Public Security	Uzbek Ministry of Internal Affairs Police Department	2020 Janurary	

Source: Compiled by the author from publicly available records published by various governmental departments of the People's Republic of China.

FIGURE 1   In-China training programs for Central Asian officials from 2007 to 2020
            SOURCE: COMPILED BY THE AUTHOR FROM PUBLICLY AVAILABLE RECORDS
            PUBLISHED BY VARIOUS GOVERNMENTAL DEPARTMENTS OF THE PEOPLE'S
            REPUBLIC OF CHINA.

2007 to 2020, extracted from publicly available Chinese-language records. Still, this probably captures only a small fraction of the training programs provided by China to Central Asian officials, because courses that could not be clearly identified as government-led were omitted from this compilation. Most of the

training programs documented in the table received on average a delegation of 20 officials from a single Central Asian state. Amongst training programs that involved participation from more than one Central Asian state, individual delegations have been reduced to an average of five officials to maintain small group sizes. Based on these data, the documented training programs in this paper cover roughly around 1200 Central Asian officials. However, in 2013 to 2018 alone, as local media reported, over 750 Kyrgyz government officials have been trained in China (KABAR, 2018). The figure is even larger for Uzbek government officials; at least a couple of thousand have undergone training programs in China in the past few years (Embassy of the People's Republic of China to Uzbekistan, 2019).

Of these 59 publicly available training records, 24 were conducted in the area of security, 22 in the area of trade, nine in the area of legal affairs, and four others in the area of health, agriculture and auditing. Most activities featured lectures by Chinese officials and visits to projects relevant to the themes of the courses. The lectures are focused first on highlighting the Chinese Communist Party's achievements, such as state-planned economic development, the eradication of poverty and the maintenance of peaceful relations with foreign countries. After these introductory topics the courses focus on specific areas (see Figure 2).

Training programs in security are larger in scope than in other areas. Central Asia's upper echelon security officers, as well as the rank and file, have joined these Chinese programs. The courses cover a wide range of security topics, such as combating cross-border terrorism, drug trafficking, transnational crime, cyber security, transport policing and disaster management. In Figure 2 training details are described from three programs held in late 2019. Beyond general lectures on the tenets of Chinese security management, the trainings touched on dozens of Chinese security practices and involved combat stimulations and field trips (Dalian Maritime University, 2017; Criminal Investigation Police University of China, 2018).

Many more training programs, in security and beyond, are being prepared for Central Asian officials as Chinese-Central Asian relations grow closer. China's governance export abroad is driven by political and economic motivations and informed by domestic and international circumstances.

First, the Chinese Communist Party is seeking to legitimize its governance style through seeking international support for its policies. This has led to a proactive approach and invitations to other countries, particular in the Asian neighborhood, to adopt China's governance styles.

Second, many of these training programs have a commercial dimension as well. Particularly the export of Chinese tech-led security management helps

Topics	Criminal investigation technologies	Cyber security	Anti-drug
Delegated trainer	Criminal Investigation Police University of China	People's Public Security University of China	Criminal Investigation Police University of China
Training specifics	This course introduces China's national conditions and achievements since the 40th anniversary of reform and opening up. Focusing on the area of security, through special lectures, seminars, visits to actual combat units, field inspections of operations and others, this course introduces foreign officials to China's judicial system and China's practical security management. Such as crime scene investigations, case handling procedures, intelligence-led police affairs, China's anti-drug work, forensics technology, China's terrorist threat situation. A number of professional and technical courses will be offered on topics such as counter-terrorism measures, large-scale event security, survelliance-led investigation technology, document inspection technology, credit card crime countermeasures, material evidence inspection technology, application of DNA technology in investigation work and others, to enhance understanding of China's crime science and their national achievements.	This course strengthen comprehensive understanding of China, status quo and prospects of the world with China's development. This course introduces China's overall police work, security consept and national security strategy. Focusing on the area of cyber security, through special lectures, seminars, visits to special units, field inspections of operations and others, this course offer professional and technical training on the application of information-led methods in crime investigation, China's cyber crime trends and combat strategies, application of big data analysis in public security, fight against telecommunication fraud and new cyber crimes, police information network security construction and others.	This course introduces China's national conditions and achievements since the 40th anniversary of reform and opening up. Focusing on the area of security, through special lectures, seminars, visits to actual combat units, field inspections of operations and others, this course offers professional training on China's anti-drug work, international cooperation in anti-drugs, drug situation in China, drug chemical inspection, drug case investigation, drug use prevention, national anti-drug trafficking tactics and others.
Field visits	1."Pearl of Peace" international law enforcement exchange and cooperation unit police practice training cente 2. Command center of the Shanghai Public Security Bureau 3. Shanghai the Bund and Yu Garden police station 4. Shanghai "Safe China" Initiaitve constructions 5. Beijing Research Institute No.1 of the Ministry of Public Security 6. Beijing China Electronics Import and Export 7. Beijing Police Museum	Various units in Shanghai and Wuhan.	1."Pearl of Peace" international law enforcement exchange and cooperation unit police practice training cente 2. Command center of the Shanghai Public Security Bureau 3. Shanghai Public Security Bureau Anti-Drug Work Office 4. Beijing Research Institute No.1 of the Ministry of Public Security 5. Beijing China Electronics Import and Export 6. Beijing Police Museum

Source: Compiled by the author from publicly available records published by the Ministry of Public Security of the People's Republic of China.

FIGURE 2   Details of In-China security training programs for Central Asian officials

to support the growth of China's tech companies. A true win-win for both Chinese tech companies and the Chinese government, as tech exports are subsidized while data feeds support optimization and dependency patterns that generate profit sustainably for Chinese tech companies. From its first Internet connection to becoming a global digital leader in forty years, China has been making use of this tight-knit relationship to facilitate the expansion of its tech influence.

Third, training programs in security strengthen China's own security capacity. By first improving Central Asia's security capacity, China secures a

stable regional environment—a factor it believes to be tied to the security of Xinjiang. Chinese scholars and policy advisors perceive the threats to the security of Xinjiang as an external, religious one. The presence of Islamic extremists across China's western borders is often mentioned in Chinese academic journal and think tank articles as the most imminent threat to Central Asia and Xinjiang. The geographical proximity and high human mobility between Central Asia and Xinjiang increase the opportunities for Islam-related instability, according to these experts. These security training programs, then, are meant to address such contingencies. Furthermore, these training programs enhance consensus between Chinese and Central Asian security officials. As one Central Asian security official, who underwent training in China, noted: the training and equipment provided by China has given China the ability to track its ethnic Dungan and Uyghur minorities across the border.[2]

Central Asian Adoption of Chinese Security Management

The role of Chinese technology and equipment has been prominent in all security training programs provided to Central Asian officials. Chinese arms transfers in the form of donations, outside China's own arms exports control mechanisms from 2002, are pervasive in Central Asia. The first batches came in as early as 2010, and by 2020 all Central Asian armed forces have incorporated Chinese equipment, as displayed during military exercises (Yau, 2019a). Meanwhile in other security domains, Chinese software engineers have been involved in security management in Central Asian capitals, which have adopted Huawei's 'Smart City' systems equipped with hundreds of Chinese-made surveillance cameras, using facial and number plate recognition technologies (Yau, 2019b).

As China emerges as an 'internal security' provider for Central Asia, beyond exporting equipment it also rolls out its security ideology of surveillance. China's full transition into a hyper-digitalized society will make its security management technology more sophisticated and attractive for other countries, particularly in Central Asia where Chinese companies have already developed basic digital infrastructures. As early-movers, Chinese tech companies such as Huawei and ZTE have built core telecommunication infrastructures in all Central Asian states, serving as bridgeheads for the installation of 'Smart City' systems and other future applications. This dependency pattern is profound as

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2   Author refrained from disclosing nationalities of Central Asian security officials interviewed for this research to protect their identities.

Central Asian states underinvest in their own technological capacity, particularly in the telecommunication sector.

As early as 2008, during the Beijing Summer Olympics, one Central Asian security official observed during a tour how China had incorporated the use of technology in security management. To encourage the adoption of tech-driven security management, Chinese officials were reportedly happy to supply equipment and consultants for free. In Uzbekistan, Chinese officials even emphasized that incorporation of Chinese systems not only improved the country's security environment, but also served as a precondition for future Chinese foreign investment (Yau, 2019c).

China's security ideology of surveillance resonates well with Central Asian leaders as they can be effectively used to attain political goals. In Tajikistan, Chinese cameras have been installed inside mosques, and as the Tajik authorities move to impose tighter control over Islamic teaching, these cameras are likely to be used to ensure government-approved lessons, the same way Chinese officials use them across the border in Xinjiang. At a meeting on Kazakhstan's future development in late 2019, Kazakh President Tokayev praised China's successes in this field. Pointing to Hikvision, a leading Chinese company in surveillance technology, he said that the Chinese company's techniques 'have gone far ahead, they deeply digitalized all major cities. You click on the screen, the data on the person comes out, including literally everything. When he graduated from university, where he goes in his free time, and so on… We need to go in this direction' (Kursiv, 2019). During the summer of 2021, Kazakhstan was rolling out its first Huawei-backed 5G installations in the capital Nur-Sultan to facilitate a fully Chinese surveillance program (InBusiness, 2021).

The transfers of Chinese security practices are becoming apparent. These Chinese tools, developed to suppress civil society in China, are exported to Central Asia for similar purposes. Enforcement capacity and police violence have increased in Kazakhstan in the past few years, with dozens of preventive detentions of protest leaders and participants, and censorship of civil society voices (Azattyq, 2021; Apple Daily, 2020; Vlast, 2020; Currenttime, 2019). These practices revealed new Kazakh capabilities to track persons of interest by means of digital and physical surveillance. The Kazakh police managed to get hold of locations of potential protesters and carried out preventive detentions, while also effectively censoring the organizers' social media accounts.

Security and Human Rights Impact on Central Asian States

As Central Asian states willingly absorb China's governance export in the region, a new set of security and human rights problems is emerging. First, the in-China training programs for Central Asian security officials are allowing China to attain its wider goals and build consensus and communication mechanisms. These programs offer an extensive outreach of China's security model and intentions, communicating clearly how Central Asian security officials can accommodate China's needs as the region grow closer to its Eastern neighbor.

China's tracking capacity of Chinese ethnic minorities in Central Asian has been improved by these training programs. Before the Kyrgyzstan-China extradition treaty was officially signed in 2012, Kyrgyz security officials have in different ways illegally handed Uyghurs over to China (Azattyk, 2012). Even though these cases occurred in remote areas, the relatively free Kyrgyz media were able to cover a couple of these instances, but it is very likely more have occurred. In Kyrgyzstan, ethnic Uyghurs who crossed the border illegally have no ways of getting access to the State Migration Service to request asylum. Military border guards have in several cases immediately transferred these individuals to the Kyrgyz security service GKNB instead, who quickly handed them over to the Chinese authorities (Azattyk, 2015). According to Kyrgyz legislation, military border guards are supposed to hand these individuals over to the Ministry of Migration first. As a Central Asian security official who underwent training in China noted, these border guards are abiding by a security agreement signed with China, which has never been made public. In 2016, an Uyghur businessman working and living in Osh, the largest city in south Kyrgyzstan, was abducted and taken across the border by members of the GKNB after Chinese officials in China requested his arrest (Azattyk, 2016). A number of these cases demonstrate the extent of cooperation between Kyrgyz military border guards, GKBN and Chinese officials—a strong relationship that had been shaped during training programs in China.

Thus far, China's increased capacity to influence Central Asian countries is aimed at managing the ethnic minorities from the Xinjiang region. However, as anti-China sentiments are growing in the region, China is concerned about the sustainability of its large investments in the energy and mining sectors in these countries. According to an independent opinion poll conducted by Central Asia Barometer, anti-China sentiments are on the rise in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan (Trilling, 2020). Beyond high-level complaints to Central Asian leaders about these anti-China tendencies, Chinese officials have at the same time been working to expand the presence and capacity of

Chinese private security companies in the region (Yau, 2019d; Yau & van der Kley, 2020).

Now that China has largely managed to stabilise the security environment in Xinjiang by suppressing the Uyghur independence movement, its security concerns are increasingly directed at its Central Asian neighbors. This applies both to political instability in these countries and to the above-mentioned anti-Chinese sentiments. Between 2018 and 2020, there have been over forty recorded protests against 'Chinese expansion' in the region, and this has become an issue that requires Beijing's attention (Umarov, 2021). On the other hand, regarding regional instability, recent developments in Afghanistan have added to these concerns and prompted China to step up its role as a mediating party.

By adopting Chinese digital technology Central Asian states have put themselves in a vulnerable position via-à-vis China. It is widely rumoured that tech companies such as Huawei and ZTE cooperate with Chinese state intelligence agencies and will pass on sensitive information. When Chinese infrastructure becomes more pervasive in these countries, questions about data collection and storage, and how this relates to Chinese security purposes, are still left unanswered. For instance, in Kyrgyzstan access to real-time information on population movements is in effect being blindly entrusted to a company with known ties to China's military establishment (Yau, 2019c). These practices may have serious longer-term consequences for the societies concerned.

China's involvement in enhancing the digital capacity of Central Asian countries' security sector has also allowed China to obtain sensitive information about its citizens abroad. In theory, China has the capacity to obtain this information on its own because the relevant core technologies for doing so are usually not shared. The ability of China to bypass its local partners and obtain sensitive intelligence in a Central Asian country can have negative consequences if this ability is also used to influence domestic politics. Several cases have already emerged in which Chinese nationals have been associated with financial support to pro-China Central Asian politicians (Umarov, 2021). In any case, China is likely engaged in collecting data from Central Asian states to monitor Islamic organizations that may influence the situation in Xinjiang.

In the longer term, Central Asian countries' reliance on Chinese technologies in their digitalization developments may have various consequences. Regarding human rights, for instance, Central Asian officials have come to idolize the Chinese authoritarian model of governance as successful and appealing. Through in-China training programs, Central Asian officials have been fed an overwhelmingly positive Chinese narrative in security management, which is likely to boost further cooperation in this field. As one Central Asian trainee

remarked: 'I have seen Ürümqi in 2013 and 2018, and in just five years they have built an urban, modern city as we see in other European countries… of course, the political and security situation has changed there, the checkpoints are packed with soldiers everywhere around Ürümqi, but I understand the Chinese, they had to do it because of terrorist threats… I think the Uyghurs got what they deserved'.

The Chinese model of governance places extreme emphasis on an omnipresent state in all aspects of Chinese life. Political freedom is sacrificed for the better life that the Chinese Communist Party promises to its citizens. Propaganda overtakes the right to information, and security agencies curb the freedom of speech and movement of those who question the Party's legitimacy. Domestically, digital surveillance is used to consolidate authority, and as an instrument of indoctrination in Party ideologies.

As China strengthens its own capacity in this respect, more such practices will be offered to and adopted by Central Asian states. As a result, the human rights situation in Central Asia will deteriorate. All Central Asian states are ranked by Freedom House among the fifty worst human rights offenders (Freedom House, 2021). Political freedom in Central Asia is decreasing at a rapid rate as the room for political participation keeps narrowing

. The space for independent media is increasingly restricted across the region, with rising numbers of journalists being arrested. Largely unbeknownst to Central Asian societies, their security officers are being trained in China to facilitate these autocratic forms of government.

These practices will pose new human rights challenges in the region. Beyond more surveillance and censorship tools, China is exporting its entire model of governance. The ultimate goal of digital and physical surveillance is to ensure indoctrination as a first step towards coercive social control, a security strategy the Chinese Communist Party has termed 'stability maintenance' (维稳). Along the way, civil society, ethnic and religious minorities are being oppressed.

What began as a traffic monitoring system in China quickly turned into a much broader political surveillance tool with facial recognition technologies constantly gathering information from all kinds of public spaces. This seems to become a path for Central Asian countries to embark on, particularly those who already display the strongest autocratic tendencies.

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have already signed up to conducting a small-scale feasibility test for China's social credit system (Yau, 2019e). The infrastructure needed for the introduction of 5G will provide the necessary technological and connective enablers to support an enhanced digitized security management initiative. Social credit systems are attractive instruments for Central

Asian governments who want to strengthen their grip on society. As one Central Asian legal official, who was trained in China, noted: 'I was impressed to see how China is applying new technologies in the court system that allow the decision-making process to become less subjective… I agree that facial recognition system and social credit systems are both sensitive issues, and as a legal officer I have some human rights concerns, especially when we don't fully understand the technology… but still I think these technologies are necessary to ensure discipline, order and security; otherwise, there is no progress'.

Conclusion

As China positions itself to become the most significant actor in the region, the future of Central Asia's security and human rights environment is facing new challenges. It is evident that, through Chinese training programs, Central Asian officials are being exposed to and are subsequently adopting Chinese models of governance. Central Asian governments have, to a large extent, entrusted the layout of their tech-driven security management to China. As China shares more practices in this field, it is also providing the tools to allow its neighbors to align themselves to Chinese autocratic governance models. Some of these Central Asian states appear to be only too willing to adopt this Chinese security management framework, which will have profound implications for the region's human rights landscape. In this respect, a point of no return already seems to have been reached.

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