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## THE PRESSURE ON CHINA

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By George Friedman

The Chinese Peoples Liberation Army has begun minor operations to try to quell the unrest in Hong Kong. This is a step that the Chinese hoped to avoid. For one thing, they wanted to portray the unrest as minor, not requiring their intervention. For another, they did not want issues raised about Chinese human rights violations, which inevitably emerge in such interventions. At a time when China is trying to portray itself as the global alternative to the United States, it doesnt want other countries, particularly those in Europe, noticing human rights abuses.

This strategy took another huge blow with the leak over the weekend of government documents describing in detail a broad Chinese assault that has been underway for several years on the ethnic minority Uighur community in the western province of Xinjiang. The documents gave detailed accounts of massive detention camps for retraining purposes and the separation of families on a scale that is startling even for China. Beijing clearly wants to break the back of Islam in the province.

Chinese detention of Uighurs is not new. We have been hearing about this for over a year. What is startling is the leak of documents so sensitive that they validate claims of mistreatment that the Chinese long denied, for obvious reasons. This raises a key question: Who released the documents? They might have been leaked by Chinese officials, appalled at what is going on in Xinjiang. They might have been released by the Chinese government as a warning to other dissident groups. They may have been released by senior members of the Chinese government who have become disillusioned by President Xi Jinping, hoping to force him out.

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