

Submission by Professor Mobo Gao, Department of Asian Studies, School of Social Sciences, the University of Adelaide

Ref. Customs Amendment (Banning Goods Produced by Uyghur Forced Labour) Bill 2020

1. As a responsible citizen of Australia and an academic who has spent a life time in observing and analysing China¹ I submit that the Parliament should NOT pass the bill-- **Customs Amendment (Banning Goods Produced by Uyghur Forced Labour) Bill 2020** for the following reasons:
2. The evidence on which the bill is based is unsubstantiated.
3. In a speech as the Second Reading in Parliamentary Debates listed on its website https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/chamber/hansards/f2c5c3be-0fb8-4db1-9392-dba6ced55207/0160/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf, accessed on the 18th January 2021, the Speaker Patrick, Sen Rex states that, and I quote from the Second Reading

“More than one million people have been rounded up and put in internment camps across Xinjiang. Mass surveillance, restrictions on free movement, and widespread persecution of the Uyghur people have been confirmed beyond doubt.”

However, there is no evidence that such allegations are facts that have been confirmed beyond doubt.

The Speaker does say that, and I quote from the Second Reading

“The United States Government and the House of Representatives of the United States Congress have both acted in relation to the exploitation of detained Uyghur people.”

The Speaker also mentions similar action by Canada.

¹ Professor Mobo Gao was a graduate of Xiamen University before he did his Master and Doctorate degrees in Essex. Gao took up a lecturer’s job at Griffith University before he was appointed by the University of Tasmania to set up the Chinese department. Gao currently teaches Chinese studies at the Department of Asian Studies of the University of Adelaide. Gao’s publications include several books, and over a hundred book chapters/articles. Gao’s book Mandarin Chinese: An Introduction is a standard reference for learners of modern Chinese in English speaking countries. Two of his books Gao Village: A Portrait of Modern Life in Rural China (1999) and Gao Village Revisited: Life of the Rural People in Contemporary China (2018) are case studies of Gao Village where he came from. Other books include the Battle of China's Past: Mao and the Cultural Revolution (2008) and Remembering Socialist China 1949 – 1976 (2015) which are reassessments of the Mao era and the Cultural Revolution. His latest book Constructing China: Clashing Views of the People’s Republic (2018) examines how and why different categories of people have different views of China.

However, the fact that some foreign governments take such action in relation to the allegations does NOT by any logic or rationality means that such allegations are confirmed beyond doubt

4. The Speaker also lists ASPI reports and projects as evidence to show that the allegations are confirmed beyond doubt, and I quote from the Second Reading

“The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) has recently launched a data project mapping Xinjiang's detention system with 380 sites of suspected re-education camps, detention centres and prisons that have been built or expanded since 2017.”

However, we cannot take ASPI's reports or projects as credible without rigorous examination. In other words we cannot take what ASPI says about China as given because ASPI is not an independent think tank:

- It receives donations and support from foreign governments and American weapon industries
 - Some would argue that this state of affairs should be considered as foreign interference.
5. Practically, the pass of this bill will not serve Australia's national interest because
- Australia might be seen as not having independent foreign policies
 - Until and unless the crimes that China is alleged to have committed for which this bill are based on are confirmed beyond doubt there is a danger that the bill would be on the wrong side of history, just like the White Australia policy is.

Date 18th January 2021

Signature: Mobo Gao