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Economic dependence: the extent of China's transnational repression of Uyghurs in democratic states

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**Universiteit
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Master Thesis

**Economic dependence: the extent of China's transnational repression of
Uyghurs in democratic states**

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Abstract

Transnational repression by authoritarian regimes represents a direct threat to fundamental freedoms, state sovereignty and democracy. China's transnational repression is unparalleled, particularly against the Uyghur minority. While China's mechanisms of TR have been largely investigated, the causes determining its extent have not been properly addressed. This thesis investigates the cause determining the extent of China's TR of Uyghurs in democratic states. The hypothesis is based on economic dependence as explanatory variable for the difference in China's extent of TR. In order to validate the hypothesis, a most-similar design is carried out. Two democratic states – the Netherlands and Belgium – are compared, since they differ in the number of TR cases of Uyghurs and are similar on other possible explanatory variables: TR measures and diaspora activism. Results from event-based, socioeconomic and administrative data, and interviews confirm the hypothesis on economic dependence as cause of China's extent of TR in democratic states. However, diaspora activism is also identified as explanatory variable.

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Introduction

In recent years the literature on transnational repression has increased, with academics investigating how authoritarian governments in Syria, China, Eritrea and Iran have repressed their populations overseas (Jardine et al., 2021). China has the most sophisticated, extensive and worldwide campaign of transnational repression. In fact, its global scope is unparalleled. According to Freedom House's conservative inventory, since 2014 China has been the source of attacks in at least 36 host countries, considerably more than any other country. The campaign has a substantial impact on freedom and rights of Chinese and exiled minority groups abroad. China mostly represses Tibetans, Mongolians, Hong Kong democracy advocates, citizens of Taiwan, human rights defenders, journalists, and others who criticize the CCP (Freedom House, 2021). One particular minority group is being increasingly repressed abroad: the Uyghur community. Xi Jinping directed the CCP to step up its operations against alleged "terrorism, infiltration, and separatism" in the Uyghur-majority region of Xinjiang in 2014. In 2016, Chinese officials began rounding up Uyghurs and other Muslims in the region for "re-education" camps. At the same time, authorities tightened restrictions on mobility, seizing the passports of Uyghurs across the region and barring them from leaving. Some of them managed to migrate to the West or nearby countries but China's repression continues (Schenkkan & Linzer, 2022).

Existing research on China's TR primarily analyses the wide range of mechanisms used. The main methods are direct threats such as assassination and physical intimidation, long distance threats including coercion-by-proxy, digital threats and spyware. Mobility controls such as passport revocation and co-optation of other

countries – including detention and Interpol abuse – are also used (Freedom House, 2021). It is noticeable that episodes of TR have been mainly investigated within authoritarian host states such as Egypt, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, the UAE and Uzbekistan. Scholars have argued how China is able to penetrate to a great extent within authoritarian host states (Gorokhovskaia & Linzer, 2022). However, data provided by the Oxus Society on the levels of TR show how China is able to penetrate in democratic host states as well. In addition, the extent of China's TR is different within democratic countries (The Oxus Society, n.d.). The significant question which arises is why there are differences on the extent of China's TR within democratic host states despite being similar on many aspects.

The causes determining the extent of TR have been analysed by scholars. Economic dependence of host states on China and TR measures determine the extent of TR, according to Gorokhovskaia & Linzer (2022). Another possible independent variable is diaspora activism which impacts the extent of TR according to Moss (2020) and Michaelsen (2020). By analysing these arguments, my research objective is to investigate the cause determining the extent of China's TR of Uyghurs within democratic host states. The hypothesis identifies economic dependence of democratic states on China as main cause. It is significant to study the relationship between economic dependence and extent of China's TR to better understand the influence that economy has over human rights protection. Being aware of the interconnection between economic dependence and TR may allow governments to both select targeted solutions for the protection of individuals, preserve state sovereignty and democracy. For the above mentioned reasons, my research question is as follows:

RQ: To what extent does economic dependence determine China's TR of Uyghurs in democratic host states?

Literature review

Transnational repression can be defined as governments reaching across borders to silence dissent among diasporas and exiles through assassinations, illegal deportations, abductions, digital threats, Interpol abuse and family intimidation (Freedom House, 2021). Existing research primarily analysed the methods of TR used by China. The CCP employs diplomatic personnel at embassies and consulates that are overseen by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China and the CCP United Front Work Department (UFWD). The United Front system is the work of CCP agencies that strive to co-opt and influence "representative figures" and groups both inside and outside of China (Freedom House, 2021). "Overseas Police Service Stations" are frequently deployed, with local "Chinese Overseas Home Associations". These operations disregard formal bilateral police and judicial collaboration and violate international law. They may also violate the territorial integrity of third-country participants in establishing a parallel policing organization employing illegal techniques (Safeguard Defenders, 2022). Coercion-by-proxy is defined as exerting pressure on the family members of exiles, companions, or acquaintances who stay in the country of origin. It is mainly utilized when the state faces difficulties in directly repressing its adversaries abroad. The cost of repression is lower since family members live within Chinese borders and it does not require violating the sovereignty of another state. These actions include detention, assault, and torture. Other mechanisms include covert methods, such as harassment, digital surveillance and intimidation (Adamson & Tsourapas, 2020).

Another tactic is the conclusion of extradition treaties and legal agreements. Moreover, China employs multilateral organizations, such as Interpol, to disseminate arrest requests in the form of Red Notices or less formal diffusions. Lastly, the Chinese government represses diasporas through its own international organizations, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The members of the SCO must mutually acknowledge terrorist acts, all broadly defined in accordance with Chinese internal law, regardless of whether laws of their own country would classify them as such (Jardine et al., 2021).

While the mechanisms of China's TR have been largely discussed, the causes determining the extent of transnational repression in democratic host states have not been properly investigated. Economic dependence, TR measures and diaspora activism are identified as causes determining the extent of TR.

Economic dependence determines China's extent of TR of Uyghurs in Turkey (Gorokhovskaia & Linzer, 2022). Gorokhovskaia & Linzer (2022) demonstrate how Turkey – as an authoritarian host state – measures a high number of cases of TR due to its economic dependence on China and Turkmenistan. Because of common cultural, religious, and linguistic traditions, Turkey has historically been an enticing destination for Uyghurs and Turkmen. The government of Turkey increasingly pressured Uyghurs and Turkmen into silence as its economic relationship with China and Turkmenistan grew closer. China's economic investment in Turkey has grown significantly since 2016, particularly after the Belt and Road Initiative. Detaining Uyghurs serves Turkish president Erdoğan's foreign policy goals of maintaining and building economic ties with China. China penetrates to a greater extent to repress minorities within authoritarian regimes than in democratic countries (Gorokhovskaia & Linzer, 2022). In

fact, incidents of transnational repression in Turkey accounted for one-quarter of all incidents recorded by Freedom House in 2021 (Freedom House, 2021). Ankara and Beijing signed an extradition agreement in 2017 that could enable the repatriation of Uyghurs charged with terrorism. Exiled dissidents from Turkmenistan, one of the world's least free countries, were likewise less safe in Turkey. The increased repression on the small Turkmen diaspora coincided with Ankara's efforts to improve trade collaboration with the government of Turkmenistan. This includes a bid to persuade Turkmenistan to join the Turkic Council ahead of the summit meeting in Istanbul in 2021. It is significant to highlight that most authoritarian regimes are perpetrators of TR, therefore, it is undoubtedly true that their economic dependence on China will only increase the extent of transnational repression within their borders (Gorokhovskaia & Linzer 2022). However, this argument takes into account authoritarian host states exclusively. Therefore, it is interesting to analyse if the foreign policy goals of closer economic ties of democratic states with China increase the extent of TR.

TR measures determine the extent of TR of authoritarian regimes. TR measures are defined as political and legal efforts to counteract TR, including policies and multilateral agreements (Gorokhovskaia & Linzer, 2022). Gorokhovskaia & Linzer (2022) provide a contrasting argument to their theory on economic dependence as independent variable. They argue that host countries which do not have adequate measures to counter repression are likely to be more subject to TR. Based on the analysis of nine host states, their research demonstrates how TR measures make authoritarian regimes less vulnerable to attack. Some governments have started to think about how to better integrate individual human security with national security. For instance, Canada recognizes that certain diaspora communities may be more vulnerable

to extraterritorial violence. Other countries raised awareness on transnational repression among law enforcement and security officials by training officers and collecting data. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of the United States has developed mechanisms to classify certain recorded crimes – including harassment, assault, threats, and stalking – as cases of TR (Gorokhovskaia & Linzer, 2022). Moreover, protection for asylum seekers and awareness within migration processes decreases the extent of TR. In Sweden, Germany, and Canada, migration agencies have access to accurate and up-to-date information on countries of origin when assessing applications for asylum. Another key tool for limiting the extent of TR is the use of targeted sanctions within foreign policy. The United States’ Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act and Executive Order 13818 allow the US government to apply targeted sanctions – such as visa bans and asset freezes – against individuals engaged in human rights abuses. Canada, UK, Germany and Sweden have also imposed targeted sanctions and expelled diplomats in response to acts of TR (Gorokhovskaia & Linzer, 2022). Nevertheless, the authors do not investigate the effectiveness and the exact impact of measures on the extent of TR. Understanding how effective these measures are not only improves the validity of the argument but also provides insights to policy makers on how to challenge TR.

Diaspora activism might also determine the extent of China’s TR in democratic states. Diaspora activism is defined as a group of “any émigré, exile, refugee, or emigrant advocating for social, economic, and political change in their country of origin” (Moss, 2020). Moss (2020) and Michaelsen (2020) provide two arguments on diaspora activism. They both argue that authoritarian states repress to a great extent in those countries where diaspora activism is prominent. Authoritarian regimes mainly

repress activists in order to disseminate fear, mistrust and a sense of isolation among diaspora members. In this way, they might prevent people from speaking out and engaging activism. Therefore, while diaspora activism has the potential to flourish in democracies, transnational repression can suppress the ability for an anti-regime community to work as a force for change (Moss, 2020). The other argument affirms that the extent of TR is greater in countries where activism is prominent because activists represent a bigger threat than citizens (Moss, 2020 & Michaelsen, 2020). Targeting activists is a priority because their actions go against the objectives of origin states. In fact, many activists continue to campaign for human rights and political reform from overseas. Michaelsen (2020) demonstrates this argument by investigating forms of TR used against activists in Egypt, Syria, and Iran. Activists might raise public attention, gain support for civil society and opposition in the country, or disseminate alternative news and opinion both at home and abroad (Moss, 2020 & Michaelsen, 2020). However, these arguments do not explain what is the tipping point for authoritarian regimes to repress activists. It is significant to understand when diaspora activists represent a menace in order to determine the extent of TR and protect diaspora members who speak out.

Theories of TR and theoretical expectations

In order to investigate the cause determining China's extent of TR of Uyghurs in democratic host states, the following theories have been analysed.

TR measures is identified as cause determining the extent of TR. TR measures are defined as political and legal efforts to counteract TR including policies and multilateral agreements (Gorokhovskaia & Linzer, 2022). According to Gorokhovskaia & Linzer's

theory (2022), host countries which do not have adequate measures to counter repression are likely to be more subject to TR. The reason is that perpetrators of transnational repression have taken advantage of the unpreparedness of the domestic institutions of host countries. The presence of specific elements – addressing TR – within security, foreign and/or migration policies determine the extent of TR. Those determinants within security policy are: *the presence of inclusive national security frameworks, awareness among law enforcement and intelligence personnel, and proactive protection for targeted individuals*. In relation to migration policy, *permanent forms of protection for refugees and consideration of TR within asylum review processes* might establish the extent of TR. Furthermore, levels of TR are determined by *mechanisms for holding both individuals and governments accountable* which might be included in foreign policies. Lastly, in order to guarantee the long-term security of diasporas, *multilateral campaigns* are just as crucial as individual government initiatives to strengthen domestic defences. However, TR measures only lessen the extent of TR. Since transnational repression is both a symptom and a cause of the expansion of authoritarian authority internationally, TR measures are only partial fixes (Gorokhovskaia & Linzer, 2022).

A contrasting theory sees diaspora activism as possible cause determining the extent of TR. Moss's theory (2020) affirms that the extent of TR is great in those countries where diaspora activism is prominent. Authoritarian regimes mainly repress activists to erect a barrier to engaging lawful activism, in order to silent minorities. While some are willing to risk or bear these consequences, activists note that many of their co-nationals are afraid of retaliation. Both Moss (2020) and Michaelsen (2020) argue that the extent of TR depends on the involvement of activists since they represent

a bigger threat than citizens. Specifically, some actions by activists have been conceptualized as threats to authoritarian states. These activities include raising awareness about regime atrocities, aiding dissidents on the ground, organizing protests and pursuing justice. Moreover, requesting that host-country governments press origin states on matters of rights and reform and empowering diaspora communities are menaces as well (Moss, 2020 & Michaelsen, 2020). In doing so, activists serve as vital relays in global advocacy networks, expose human rights crimes, and circumvent the information controls of their home regime. Diaspora activists are in a strategic position to leverage important information against regimes since they have close ties to their home country as well as contacts in international organizations, media, and policy circles (Michaelsen, 2020). According to these two theories, determining whether diaspora activism is prominent allows to understand the extent of TR.

A contrasting theory identifies economic dependence as cause determining the extent of China's TR in Turkey. Following Gorokhovskaia & Linzer's theory (2022), China represses to a great extent in those authoritarian host states which are economically dependent on it. As their case study of Turkey confirms, authoritarian states increasingly operate as agents of other repressive governments, attempting to silence dissent in order to maintain and build economic ties. *Economic investments* and *trade growth* are the two main concepts of this theory. The case study shows how China's economic investments in Turkey led to a major repression of Uyghurs within the country. Acts of TR fulfil President Erdoğan's foreign policy objective of maintaining its economic investment with China. The concept of *trade growth* is shown through other examples such as Saudi Arabia. Erdoğan decided to improve his historically poor relations with the Saudi leadership through acts of transnational

repression. The reason was related to Turkey's worsening economic situation and its need for finding a new trade partner. These decisions sent a clear message that economic partnerships were being prioritized over human rights (Gorokhovskaia & Linzer, 2022).

The above mentioned theories on TR measures and diaspora activism lack of significant elements to investigate the cause determining China's extent of TR of Uyghurs in democratic host states. As I argued before, the effectiveness of TR measures has not been studied, therefore, it is difficult to establish the impact of TR measures on China's extent. The same applies to diaspora activism as independent variable. As previously argued, the theory on diaspora activism does not analyse what is the tipping point for authoritarian regimes to repress activists. Thus, it is difficult to determine whether the extent of China's TR is caused by high or low levels of involvement of Uyghur activists. Instead, the theory provided by Gorokhovskaia & Linzer (2022) on economic dependence might be applied to investigate the extent of TR in democratic host states. Nevertheless, this argument is problematical since it takes into account authoritarian host states exclusively. For this reason, the argument has been revised by comparing two democratic states that show different levels of TR and strengthened by adding rational choice and Armstrong's theories to the analysis. Armstrong (1981) suggests that one nation can have the power to induce other nations to undertake – or not – responses that they would not otherwise pursue, due to their economic dependence on the former. Applying this theory, China has the economic power to induce democratic countries to limit their actions against TR. This economic pressure is likely to yield the desired results for the dominant nation. As he argues, the relationship between economic dependence and political behaviour depends on the *costs of counter*

acts (Armstrong, 1981). Rational choice theory can provide further insights on the concept of costs of counter acts. States might be motivated by benefits and costs of acts (Scott, 2000). In this case, the costs of acts are high due to possible economic repercussions that host states might encounter.

In summary, economic dependence might determine differences on China's extent of TR within democratic states. States that are more economically dependent on China might not act against TR as much as countries that are less economically dependent. There are two reasons behind this argument based on the above mentioned theories. Firstly, those host states have national objectives of maintaining and building economic relationships – through *economic investments* and *trade growth* – with agents of TR (Gorokhovskaia & Linzer, 2022). Secondly, they have higher *costs of acting* due to possible economic repercussions (Armstrong, 1981). Since economically dependent host states do not act against TR, China is able to repress Uyghurs to a great extent. Based on this argument and theories, my hypothesis is as follows:

H: Economic dependence determines the extent of China's TR of Uyghurs in democratic host states.

Research design

Research method

This thesis will engage with Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD). According to this design, very similar cases differing in their dependent variable are compared. The added value of this design is that it is more feasible for the researcher to identify the independent variable that determines whether the dependent variable is present or not (Steinmetz, 2021). Even if this approach runs the risk of having too many variables and too few cases, it is better suited to dealing with complexity and real-world politics (Barakso et al. 2013).

Operationalization

In this research project, the extent of China's TR in democratic host states is the dependent variable. Economic dependence is the main independent variable based on the hypothesis. A more thoroughly investigation of the independent variables TR measures and diaspora activism has been carried out since characteristics that distinguish the countries and might explain the difference in the dependent variable can be identified.

Economic dependence of democratic host states on China is based on Gorokhovskaia & Linzer's (2022) concepts of *economic investments* and *trade growth*. These concepts measure the need for host states to maintain and build economic

relationships, as result of their economic dependence on China. *Economic investments* is measured by using FDI of China and the countries of interest as indicator. *Trade growth* is measured by analysing trade rates growth with China in the last two decades. Furthermore, Armstrong's indicators of economic dependence are used to determine the *costs of counter acts*. The concept provided by Armstrong (1981) on the costs of counter acts depends on the *trade dependence index*. The trade dependence index relies on the following conditions (1) *a high magnitude of a nation's investment controlled by another nation*; (2) *the inability to find easy substitutes for a commodity or a trading partner*; and (3) *the intense demand for a commodity* (Armstrong, 1981).

TR measures is analysed as a contrasting explanatory variable to the hypothesis. TR measures determine the extent of TR when policies and multilateral campaigns of countries entail specific elements (Gorokhovskaia & Linzer, 2022). These indicators are: *the presence of inclusive national security frameworks, awareness among law enforcement and intelligence personnel, and proactive protection for targeted individuals* (security policy). *Permanent forms of protection for refugees and consideration of transnational repression within asylum review processes* (migration policy). Lastly, *mechanisms for holding both individuals and governments accountable for TR and multilateral campaigns* (foreign policy) (Gorokhovskaia & Linzer, 2022).

Diaspora activism is used as another contrasting explanatory variable to the hypothesis. As mentioned before, Moss (2020) and Michaelsen's (2020) concept on diaspora activism lacks of elements. For this reason, the level of involvement of diaspora activism is measured by adding five indicators to the analysis, ranked from the lowest level of involvement to the highest. (1) *Receiving information*: diaspora members passively receive information about efforts in their host and home countries.

(2) *Passive information gathering*: diaspora members contribute information to interested parties, often governments in their host and home countries. (3) *Consultation*: members of diasporas are consulted by actors, including governments, to inform policy or practice. (4) *Collaboration*: diaspora members share duties, either by assigning work to other actors or by planning and/or implementing solutions collaboratively with governments or organizations. (5) *Self-mobilization*: diaspora members retain full ownership and accountability for initiatives (Migration Data Portal, 2020).

Case selection

Before proceeding with the case selection method, potential limitations are reported. First of all, data availability on China's TR of Uyghurs is limited. The selection is based exclusively on data provided by the Oxus Society which documents occurrences of China's TR of Uyghurs outside the Chinese territory (The Oxus Society, n.d.). Other databases have been consulted, however, they did not provide enough data for the analysis. Secondly, the Oxus Society database is built on TR episodes that have been reported by Uyghurs. However, both from empirical research and results coming from interviews, it is noticeable that Uyghurs tend to not report episodes of repression because of possible threats. Therefore, the number of TR incidents provided in the analysis might be biased.

According to the MSSD, the two selected cases have to differ in the extent of China's TR of Uyghurs. Secondly, they need be similar on other explanatory variables: number of Uyghurs living in the host state, TR measures and diaspora activism.

In order to select cases, the universe of cases composed by democratic countries which have experienced events of TR of Uyghurs has been explored. Since information regarding cases of TR in each country of interest per year are very limited, data are analysed in 2020. According to the data provided by the Oxus Society, the following democratic countries¹ have recorded cases of TR in 2020: USA (16 incidents), UK (1), Netherlands (59), Norway (2), Sweden (1), Belgium (21), Germany (2), Australia (1). Since the two cases have to differ in the extent of China's TR of Uyghurs, all these countries might be selected.

Secondly, cases need be similar in the number of Uyghur inhabitants. The USA is home to an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 Uyghurs (Uyghur American Association) whereas 400 live in the UK (The Times, 2022). In Norway, there are 2000 Uyghurs while in Germany 1,000 (World Uyghur Congress) Lastly, 3,000 live in Sweden while approximately 2,700 in the NL and 3,000 in Belgium (Salam Uyghur, 2021). The only three cases which differ in the extent of China's TR of Uyghurs and are similar on the number of Uyghurs living in each country are Sweden, the Netherlands and Belgium.

Thirdly, cases need to be similar on the other two explanatory variables: TR measures and diaspora activism. Considering TR measures, Sweden differ from the Netherlands and Belgium. In fact, Sweden is one of the few countries that adopted TR measures within its national policies whereas the Netherlands and Belgium did not. For instance, the Swedish security framework explicitly acknowledges the threat that foreign states pose to particular diasporas (Freedom House, 2022). Moreover, in 2019, Sweden started to grant refugee status to all Uyghur asylum-seekers from China, prompting calls for other Western governments to follow suit (Uyghur Human Rights

¹ Countries are defined as free democracies according to the 2020-report by Freedom House (2020) and democracy index by the University of Wurzburg (2020).

Project, n.d.). Since Sweden has different TR measures from the other two countries analyzed, it cannot be selected as case study.

Instead, Belgium and the Netherlands are similar both on TR measures and diaspora activism. Both countries did not adopt and implement any specific element against TR within policies or multilateral agreements before 2021. In 2021, both countries adopted similar TR measures. More specifically, The Belgian Foreign Relations Committee approved a motion in 2021, identifying China's acts as crimes against humanity and warning of a "severe risk" of genocide (Uyghur Human Rights Project, 2021). On the same year, the Netherlands read a joint statement on the human rights situation in China on behalf of 47 nations (including Belgium) during the UN Human Rights Council's 50th session (Government of the Netherlands, 2022). Considering diaspora activism, the Netherlands and Belgium are characterized by similar Uyghur communities advocating for social, economic, and political change. Some of them are involved in national NGOs such as the Dutch Uyghur Human Rights Foundation and Uyghur Belgian Association. Furthermore, national NGOs of both countries are affiliated with international ones which strengthen the empowerment of Uyghur communities (World Uyghur Congress, n.d.). These organizations share the same values and objectives (DUHRF and Belgian Uyghur Association, n.d.).

For the reasons above reported, the Netherlands and Belgium are the two selected cases. These countries represent instances of democratic countries characterized by low (Belgium) and high (the Netherlands) levels of China's TR. In order to validate my hypothesis, the Netherlands and Belgium need to differ in the independent variable of interest: economic dependence.

Data collection method

In this study, a mixed method analysis is carried out. By combining two methods, it is possible to gain from both the specific, contextualized insights of qualitative data as well as the generalizable, externally valid insights of quantitative data (George, 2021).

Secondary and primary sources are collected. Event-based data are mainly used to investigate TR measures and diaspora activism. This type of data are mostly measured through the analysis of reports from governments, international organizations and NGOs and journal articles. Moreover, some data concerning diaspora activism are collected through Instagram and Twitter. Secondly, socioeconomic and administrative data are collected in order to investigate the level of economic dependence on China. Lastly, data based on opinions of people who have knowledge on China's TR of Uyghurs have been analysed through interviews. Each interviewee is representative of a category of people dealing with China's TR of Uyghurs. Three categories have been identified: advocacy groups, academic researchers and representatives of NGOs dealing with the Uyghur crisis (OHCHR, 2013). Online and face-to-face semi-structured interviews which entail open-ended questions have been carried out to elicit the opinions of this representative sample. Data on the personal information of interviewees and list of questions asked during interviews are reported in appendix I and II respectively.

Data analysis

The analysis is composed by an examination of each independent variable, discussed separately. TR measures and diaspora activism are included in the analysis to mostly indicate that the two selected countries are very similar and therefore suitable for the chosen research design.

Economic dependence

The hypothesis is based on economic dependence determining the extent of China's TR of Uyghurs within democratic countries, following Gorokhovskaia & Linzer (2022) and Armstrong's (1987) theories. Host states that are more economically dependent on China than others have national objectives of maintaining and building economic relationships with the latter. As interviewee I suggests: "Some countries are friendly to China because they want to keep their economic relationships with it." The argument is based on the concepts of need for *economic investments* and *trade growth* with China (Gorokhovskaia & Linzer, 2022).

Economic investments as a concept is measured by analysing the outflow of FDI between China and the two countries of interest. In 2020, the outflow of Chinese FDI to the Netherlands reached approximately \$4.94 billion (Textor, 2020). Whereas, the stock of direct investments from China to Belgium amounted to around \$500.6 million (Textor, 2021). The outflow of the Netherlands' FDI accounts for 900% more than the one of Belgium. Moreover, interviewee III confirmed the importance of foreign investments between the Netherlands and China, highlighting the high *costs of counter acts*: "The Dutch government knew about this but acknowledging their accountability

would have brought consequences in relation to their foreign investments.” To conclude, the Netherlands and Belgium greatly differ on the outflow of FDI with China.

Trade growth as a concept is measured through the trade rates growth of the Netherlands and Belgium with China in the last two decades. This indicator has been analysed by looking at the increase in exports from China to both countries. If these imports are primarily productive assets, such as machinery and equipment, they are significant to the nation since these latter increase the production of the economy over time (Kramer, 2022). China’s exports to the Netherlands have grown at an annual rate of 12.9% during the past 25 years. In 2020, The Netherlands mainly imported broadcasting equipment, computers and office machine parts which are productive assets. During the last 21 years, the exports from China to Belgium have increased at an annual rate of 9.03%. In 2020, Belgium mainly imported other cloth articles, light fixtures and broadcasting equipment which is the only productive asset (OEC, 2020). The Netherlands’ rate of export growth accounts for almost 4% more than Belgium, therefore, the two countries differ on *trade growth* with China. Data on trade rate growth show how the Netherlands has more resources from China than Belgium. The impact of *trade growth* on the extent of TR is also suggested by interviewee II: “There is more transnational repression where China has more resources, where it is more present.”

The concept of *trade growth* and more generally Gorokhovskaia & Linzer’s theory on economic dependence are also confirmed by responses from interviews. Interviewees highlighted the need of economically dependent host states on China to maintain and build economic relationships through trade with the latter. As interviewee III argues: “It was in the government’s interest to not act, China is the greatest asset

comes to economic growth,” and interviewee V continues: “Western countries try to treat China with democracy but we are becoming more and more dependent on China through trade.”

The concept on *costs of counter acts* due to economic dependence on China is measured through a *trade dependence index* based on Armstrong’s indicators. The trade dependence index relies on: (1) *a high magnitude of a nation's investment controlled by another nation*; (2) *the inability to find easy substitutes for a commodity or a trading partner*; and (3) *the intense demand for a commodity*. The costs of counter acts are high if the trade dependence index is elevated (Armstrong, 1981). Two factors must be considered in a trade dependence index. Firstly, the economic dependence on a dominant nation can emerge only if foreign trade is vital to the economy of that country. Secondly, the dominant nation has to account for a considerable amount of trade of that country (Armstrong, 1981). The following analysis is carried out on the basis of the data provided by OEC Netherlands-China and Belgium-China Trade (OEC, 2020).

1. Indicator of foreign trade importance: $x_i = \frac{a_i}{GNP_i}$

where: a_i = the value of total exports of the Netherlands and total imports of the Netherlands.

GNP_i = the GNP of the Netherlands.

X_i = the percentage of exports and imports as a part of economic production of the Netherlands.

$$X_i = 1.59\%$$

2. Indicator of the amount of total trade conducted with dominant nation: $Y_{ij} = \frac{a_{ij}}{a_i}$

where: a_i = the value of the total exports and imports of the Netherlands

a_{ij} = the value of total exports and imports of China from the Netherlands

Y_{ij} = the percentage of impact of exports and imports to China upon total exports of the Netherlands.

$$Y_{ij} = 0.06\%$$

Combining both indicators through multiplication yields:

$$\mathbf{3. \text{ Index of Trade Magnitude: } TM = X_i * Y_{ij} = 0.09}$$

“A concentration index is implemented to designate the costs involved in substituting commodities and/or trading partners. The exports of one nation to another can be expressed as percentages of its total exports. A concentration index is obtained by forming the sum of the squared percentages and by taking the square root of this sum. The number of trading partners included in the concentration measure is held constant. Only the five largest export partners are included in the formula” (Armstrong, 1981).

$$\mathbf{4. \text{ Trade Partner Concentration (TPC): } \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i^2}}$$

where X_i = the exports of nation A to nation B as a percentage of total exports of nation A.

$$\mathbf{TPC = 26.50}$$

The same index is appropriate for measuring commodity concentration.

Where: X_i = the exports of commodity (x) as a percentage of total commodity exports.

$$\mathbf{5. \text{ Commodity Concentration (CC) = 8.60}}$$

**Netherlands' trade dependence on China (NTD) = Trade Magnitude (TM) *
Commodity Concentration (CC) * Trade Partner Concentration (TPC) = 20.51%**

The same economic statistics analysis has been applied to Belgium with the following result: **Belgium's trade dependence on China (DTD) = 16.99%**

The analysis confirms that the *costs of counter acts* of both countries are high since their *trade dependence index* is elevated. However, the Netherlands' trade dependence index is almost 4% more than the Belgium's one. Moreover, interviewee III confirmed that the *costs of counter acts* in the case of making China accountable are high for the Netherlands: "China rules economically...the Dutch government thinks that it is better to maintain and not risk its economy." The economic consequences of countering China's TR were highlighted multiple times by different interviewees. As interviewee I states: "Sanctioning economically China is going to be an issue for the national interests of countries," and interviewee IV continues: "Acknowledging their accountability would have brought to some consequences with a large economic partner."

Furthermore, during interviews, the argument of prioritization of economic partnerships over human rights based on Gorokhovskaia & Linzer's theory was highlighted. The concept of economic entanglements making respect of democratic values difficult to exercise was confirmed by interviewee IV: "Economic entanglements with China have negatively have made us less willing to protect and uphold our ideals" and continues "some nations minimized any worries about Beijing's human rights violations for the sake of immediate financial gain." Interviewee V's response supports the argument that nations try to balance trade benefits and respect of human rights:

“Even in the West, there are still some old generation politicians that try to balance human rights and finance.” For the sake of immediate financial benefits, respect for human rights comes second (Gorokhovskaia & Linzer, 2022).

As the data analysis shows, the Netherlands and Belgium differ on their level of economic dependence on China. Specifically, the theory on economic dependence was confirmed by differences on the level of *trade rate growth*, *FDI* and *trade dependence index*. Since a MSSD is applied, the difference on economic dependence explains the difference on the extent of China’s TR. The data analysis confirms the hypothesis that economic dependence determines the extent of China’s TR in EU countries.

TR measures

TR measures are included in the analysis to mostly indicate that the two selected countries are similar on other explanatory variables. Therefore, TR measures is analysed to avoid case selection bias. For this reason, it is not examined as much as the main independent variable.

TR measures determine the extent of TR since host states that do not make political and legal efforts to counter repression are likely to be more subject to TR. The presence of specific elements within security, migration and/or foreign policies and multilateral campaigns determine the extent of TR. These elements make authoritarian regimes less vulnerable to attack² (Moss, 2020 & Michaelsen, 2020). The national measures of the Netherlands and Belgium against transnational repression and the Uyghur’s crisis are limited and similar. Interviewees I and II confirmed the similarity:

² The complete list of elements determining the extent of China’s TR are reported at pag. 16.

“Years ago the Dutch government laughed at our organization...they did not take it serious,” “Belgium has not applied concrete policies against transnational repression.”

The security and migration policies of both countries are not characterized by specific elements against TR. Considering security policy, for instance, both countries do not provide *proactive protection for targeted individuals*. As interviewee III refers to the Netherlands: “The police did not help 80 Uyghurs who reported cases of TR...those police file reports were eliminated...because they already knew that asking China to help them out would have not worked,” and to Belgium: “There is no investigation on cases of TR in Belgium because there are not enough data.” Moreover, within the migration policies of both countries there is no *consideration of TR within asylum review processes* (Government of the Netherlands, n.d. & Fedasil, 2022). As interviewee V validates: “A higher level of integration for Uyghurs in the Netherlands is needed.” Instead, both countries have some limited measures against TR within their foreign policies such as *mechanisms for holding both individuals and governments accountable for TR and multilateral campaigns*. As interviewee I argues, efforts to implement multilateral campaigns are limited: “The world is responded to it individually, we need collective resolution,” and interviewee II continues “Belgium tried to work with other countries and it is willing to act if evidence are provided.” In 2019, on behalf of 39 nations, German Ambassador Heusgen issued a statement to the United Nations calling on China to respect human rights, particularly in Xinjiang and Tibet. This statement was supported by the Netherlands and Belgium (Putz, 2020). Both countries also signed the 2019-letter to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights asking China to stop its "mass arbitrary detentions and related abuses" (Westcott & Shelley, 2019). As members of the EU, both countries were part of

European mechanisms and campaigns to hold China accountable in 2020 and before. In 2019, the European Parliament adopted a resolution, the so-called China Cables, on the situation of the Uyghurs in China (European Parliament, 2022). In 2020, the EU enacted a 'Magnitsky Act' to impose targeted sanctions on severe human rights violators. This law can be used to sanction Chinese government officials who commit atrocities (DW, 2020). In the same year, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on forced labour referring to the situation of Uyghurs (Uyghur Human Rights Project, 2020).

Since the analysis is focused on the extent of TR in 2020 for the abovementioned reasons, the similarity on measures of 2021 cannot be taken into account. However, some of the *mechanisms and campaigns* adopted as TR measures are still reported in order to show how Belgium and the Netherlands tend to follow a similar pattern. In 2021, the Belgian Foreign Relations Committee approved a motion which identifies China's acts as crimes against humanity (Gerin, 2021). In the same year, the Netherlands read a joint statement on the human rights situation in China on behalf of 47 nations (including Belgium) during the UN Human Rights Council's 50th session (Government of the Netherlands, 2022).

Data analysis confirmed the similarity of the Netherlands and Belgium on TR measures. Therefore, according to the MSSD adopted, TR measures do not determine the extent of China's TR within democratic host states.

Diaspora activism

Diaspora activism is mainly analysed to indicate that the two selected countries are similar on other explanatory variables. However, data analysis shows how diaspora activism might actually determine the extent of China's TR. During interviews, this variable was often mentioned as possible cause. As interviewee II argues: "There are several reasons that might determine the extent of China's TR...like how active Uyghurs are," and interviewee III follows: "China must keep its international reputation so it mainly represses Uyghurs that speak out." According to interviewee V, "China mainly threatens activists."

When diaspora activism is prominent, the extent of TR is greater (Moss, 2020 & Michaelsen, 2020). The concept on the prominence of activism affirms that the extent of TR increases when activists spread awareness about regime abuses, assist dissidents working on the ground, launch protests and pursue justice. Furthermore, the extent of TR grows when activists demand that their host-country governments pressure origin states on issues of rights and reform and empower diaspora communities (Moss, 2020 & Michaelsen, 2020). As interviewee V says, activists play a significant role in empowering communities: "Especially the younger generation is more united...we have future responsibilities."

As I argued above, both studies do not analyse the tipping point establishing when diaspora activism becomes prominent. For this reasons, indicators on the level of involvement of activism have been added, from the lowest form of involvement to the highest. (1) *Receiving information*, (2) *passive information gathering*, (3) *consultation*,

(4) *collaboration*, and (5) *self-mobilization*.³ Examples of activism have been analysed in both countries in order to determine whether activism is prominent through these indicators.

Instances of Uyghurs' activism in Belgium relating to *passive information gathering* have been found and analysed. In other words, activists contribute information to interested parties (Migration Data Portal, 2020). In 2020, the Belgian Uyghur Association wrote a letter to the Ambassador of Indonesia in Brussels condemning the deportation of four Uyghurs from Indonesia to China and urging the Indonesian government to take attention on the Uyghurs' issue. The same year, another letter was sent to Mr. Gidwitz – ambassador of the US Embassy in Brussels – to thank the US government for passing the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act (@belgian_uyghur_association, 2020). In 2021, on Twitter, Paul Magnette⁴ replied to the Uyghur Belgian Association which asked the Belgian government to recognize the Uyghurs' genocide. Magnette replied by affirming that Charleroi would have been the first city of Wallonie to state its solidarity with the Uyghur community (@BelgiumUyghur, 2021). Nevertheless, only one instance of Uyghurs' involvement between *passive information gathering* and *consultation* has been found in Belgium. In other words, the Uyghur community was not directly consulted by actors to inform practice, however, the motion was approved on the basis of information spread by the community. In 2021, the Belgian Parliament voted a joint motion recognizing "crimes against humanity" and a "severe risk of genocide" against Uyghur in Xinjiang. The

³ The meaning of each indicator are reported at pag. 16.

⁴ Paul Magnette is a Belgian politician for the Socialist Party, the current mayor of Charleroi and former Minister-President of Wallonia from 2014 to 2017 (Senate, n.d.).

motion was voted in the Belgian Parliament shortly after a hearing from Sidik's story⁵ in the Belgian Parliament's External Affairs Commission (ANI News, 2021).

Considering instances of diaspora activism in the Netherlands, two events have been identified as in between *consultation* and *collaboration*. In other words, activists were both consulted by actors to inform practice and shared duties with them by working collaboratively together (Migration Data Portal, 2020). In 2020, the Dutch Uyghur community was asked by the Dutch Foreign Affairs officials to submit individual police complaints against Chinese government employees who intimidated people on Dutch land in 2019. Nearly 100 complaints were filed. However, the police was unwilling to proceed since they were unable to adequately investigate the incidents (DUHRF, 2020). In the same year, the Dutch Uyghur Human Rights Foundation (DUHRF) met the US Ambassador of the Netherlands, Pete Hoekstra to an appreciation dinner. The meeting consisted of a meet-and-greet followed by a question-and-answer session discussing US policy against Uyghurs and the widespread human rights violations (DUHRF, 2020). Moreover, there was an instance of *collaboration*. In other words, diaspora activists planned and implemented solutions collaboratively with the Dutch government. In 2020, the Dutch House of Representatives scheduled a special process on the Uyghur issue. During this meeting, two Uyghurs part of the Dutch Uyghur Human Rights Foundation were invited to represent the community. The meeting was attended by MPs van den Nieuwenhuijzen (Greenlinks) and van den Hul (PvdA). During the meeting, the representatives of the Uyghurs' organization had the possibility to share their thoughts with MPs, as well as to address questions from MPs and committee members (Tweede Kamer, 2020). Instances of *collaboration* were also

⁵ Qelbinur Sidik, a former camp instructor, highlighted the conditions inside the camps, stressing systemic rape, torture, sexual assault (ANI News, 2021).

highlighted during interviews: “The Uyghur community influenced the Netherlands to pass the genocide resolution” interviewee V says, “We put pressure on the Dutch Parliament and they took the lead for a joint statement to the UN” as argued by interviewee I. Besides, there were instances of *passive information gathering* as well, here not reported for the sake of summary.

In support of this argument, more interviewees highlighted the difference on the level of involvement of diaspora activists in the Netherlands and Belgium. As interviewee I confirms: “The Uyghur’s organization in the Netherlands is bigger...here Uyghurs speak out more so they are more harassed. In Belgium they are not so active,” and interviewee III follows: “The Uyghurs’ community is more developed in terms of organization in the Netherlands...TR in the Netherlands increased because the likeliness of people speaking out is major.”

Data analysis revealed that Netherlands and Belgium actually differ on the level of involvement of Uyghur activists. Therefore, diaspora activism might determine the extent of China’s TR in countries where is more prominent.

Discussion of findings and conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the cause determining the extent of China’s TR of Uyghurs within democratic host states. In order to establish this relationship, the Netherlands and Belgium were compared and their extent of TR analysed. In the following section, results of each independent variable are reported and discussed to provide an answer to the research question.

According to the data analysis on economic dependence, the Netherlands and Belgium differ on their level of economic dependency on China. The Netherlands and Belgium differ on the outflow of *FDI*, *trade rates growth* and *trade dependence index*. The most striking difference concerns the levels of FDI. The outflow of the Netherlands' FDI (\$4.94B) accounts for 900% more than the one of Belgium (\$0.5B). Moreover, the Netherlands' rate of export growth accounts for 12.9% whereas Belgium rated 9.03% in the last two decades. Lastly, the Netherlands is more economically dependent vis-à-vis Belgium since its trade dependence index accounts for almost 4% more than the Belgium's one. Furthermore, considering interview responses, the impact of economic dependence on China's extent is repeated multiple times by each interviewee. Interviewees discussed the key role that trade growth and investments with China play to the Dutch economy, according to Gorokhovskaia & Linzer's theory (2022). Interviewees also argued the high costs of counter acts for the Netherlands due to possible economic repercussions, following Armstrong's theory (1981). Data analysis confirms the hypothesis that economic dependence determines the extent of China's TR in democratic countries.

According to the data analysis on TR measures, the Netherlands and Belgium are similar. The security and migration policies of both countries are not characterized by specific elements against TR such as *providing proactive protection for targeted individuals or considering TR within asylum review processes*. Instead, both countries made similarly efforts to implement some measures against TR within their foreign policies. They both *supported mechanisms for holding governments accountable for TR and multilateral campaigns*. For instance, the 2019-statement to the UN against China (Putz, 2020). Lastly, interview responses confirmed the similarity on TR measures of

both countries. One argument repeated by interviewees is the absence of measures by the Netherlands and Belgium and the need for collective actions to counteract TR. For instance, the lack of action by Dutch police officers to investigate cases of TR is often mentioned. Interviewee II stated that the Belgian government took seriously the issue, however, he afterwards suggested that no TR measures have been actually implemented. At national and EU level, interviewees confirmed that there were no effective measures to address the issue for a variety of reasons: lack of evidence and equipment, absence of information and communication with high-ranked government officials, and veto power of China in the UN Security Council which prevents the adoption of policies. Data analysis confirmed the similarity of the Netherlands and Belgium on TR measures. Therefore, according to the MSSD adopted, TR measures do not determine the extent of China's TR within democratic host states.

Data analysis on diaspora activism was carried out to indicate that the two selected countries were similar on other explanatory variables. However, a deeper investigation of the level of involvement of Uyghurs within the countries revealed the following results. When diaspora activism is prominent, the extent of TR is greater (Moss, 2020 & Michaelsen, 2020). Interview responses revealed a strong connection between TR and Uyghur activism. Many interviewees stated that the more outspoken a community is, the more China tries to repress them. By analysing Belgium's instances of diaspora activism, four of them were identified as *passive information gathering*. Only one case was defined as in between *passive information gathering* and *consultation* since the community was not directly consulted by actors but the 2021-motion was approved on the basis of information spread by the community. Considering the Netherlands' diaspora activism, two instances were identified as in between

consultation and *collaboration*. In the first case, the Uyghur community was consulted by the Dutch Foreign Affairs officials to prove evidence on TR and they were assigned to file police complaints. In the second case, Uyghurs were consulted by the US ambassador of the Netherlands to both discuss US policy on the matter and possibly implement solutions together. Moreover, one instance was identified as *collaboration* since the Uyghur community was asked to discuss, plan and implement solutions together with the Dutch government. Data analysis on diaspora activism showed how the Netherlands and Belgium are actually different on the level of involvement of Uyghur activists. Diaspora activists in Belgium mainly contributed information to interested parties whereas in the Netherlands activists managed to collaborate with the government.

Interviews responses confirmed these data. Respondents often mentioned that in the Netherlands Uyghurs are better organized and their community is more developed and outspoken than the one in Belgium. During interview III, some reasons were given to explain this argument. First of all, Uyghurs arriving in the Netherlands are mostly relocated to villages next to each other. Therefore, stronger connections are built among diaspora members. Secondly, the Dutch Uyghur community is older since they started to migrate to the country already in the 80s. Thirdly, they have stronger cultural and religious communities. Since the Netherlands and Belgium actually differ on the level of involvement of Uyghur activists, diaspora activism might determine the extent of China's TR within democratic host states.

According to the MSSD, the hypothesis is confirmed when the two selected cases differ in the independent variable of interest – economic dependence – and China's extent of TR of Uyghurs. The Netherlands is more economically dependent on China

than Belgium. Besides, it recorded 59 incidents of TR in 2020 vis-à-vis the 21 cases of Belgium. Therefore, the hypothesis that economic dependence determines China's extent of Uyghurs in democratic states is confirmed. However, data analysis showed how the two cases also differ on diaspora activism. The level of involvement of Uyghur activists in the Netherlands is greater than the one in Belgium. This confirms Moss (2020) and Michaelsen's (2020) theories suggesting that the extent of TR is greater when diaspora activism is prominent. For these reasons, to the RQ – To what extent does economic dependence determine China's TR of Uyghurs in democratic host states? – the answer is that economic dependence determines China's TR *to a certain extent*. Economic dependence determines China's TR *to a certain extent* because diaspora activism also impacts the level of China's TR in the Netherlands and Belgium.

To conclude, there are two causes determining the extent of China's TR of Uyghurs in democratic host states: economic dependence and diaspora activism.

Nevertheless, since diaspora activism revealed to be another determinant, one of the shortcomings of this research project is the observer-expectancy effect. Additional factors could explain why similar democratic host states record different levels of China's TR. As revealed by the responses from interviews, there are additional plausible explanatory variables. The politicization of the TR issue in host states is one of them. Interviewees argued that the more the issue is politicized, the less China is able to penetrate into the sovereignty of states. As interviewee II suggests: "The extent of China's TR also depends on how host countries look close at this problem," and interviewee III follows: "One of the causes determining China's extent of TR could be related to the fact that in the Netherlands the political pressure is not that high...it is not

a political issue.” “The issue is not on the radar, the Dutch government is not very interested in the situation...it is not a political issue” argues interviewee IV.

Another independent variable mentioned is the country of origin of Uyghurs in host states. According to interviewee I, the majority of Uyghurs living in the Netherlands come from the Uyghur region Xinjiang. In Belgium, most of them come from other countries such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Therefore, it is easier for the CCP to exercise coercion-by-proxy of the people coming from Xinjiang since China has territorial sovereignty there. As he suggests: “Demography might play a role...most Uyghurs living in Belgium come from Turkey, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan...In the Netherlands, they mostly come from Xinjiang...so China can easily repress them since they have family members who still live there.”

Connected to this hypothesis, interviewee IV suggests that the ethnicity of people living in the host country might influence China’s extent of TR. The presence of Han Chinese in the Netherlands is high and, as mentioned above, TR is also exercised by Chinese living in democratic states. Therefore, the Netherlands is more “equipped” with agents of TR. “One of the causes determining the extent of China’s TR is the ethnicity of the people living within the EU countries...in the Netherlands there is a big community of Han Chinese people, loyal to China.”

These variables should be analysed in future research projects since they might impact the level of China’s TR in democratic host states. Furthermore, for future research, economic dependence and diaspora activism as causes determining China’s extent should be analysed on the basis of a larger sample. In such manner, it would be possible to establish a stronger causal inference.

Appendix I

Interviewees data

Interview number	Sector	Role and name of organization	Venue
I: Adil Çinar	NGO	Founder and secretary of the Dutch Uyghur Human Rights Foundation (DUHRF)	In person
II: Koen Stoop	International organization	EU representative (Belgium) at the World Uyghur Congress	Online
III: Alerk Ablikim	NGO	Political Secretary of FreeUyghur and Commissioner Working Group Europe	In person
IV: Casper Wits	Academic research	Lecturer East Asia Studies at Leiden University	In person
V: Ahmedjan Kasim	Advocacy	Active in local politics in Ede (The Netherlands)	Online

Appendix II

List of questions for interviews

1. Could you talk about your role within “name of the organization,” education and background?

This question allows to have a broad idea on the background of the interviewee.

2. Walk me through the level of transnational repression of Uyghurs in the Netherlands/Belgium/Europe (depending on the interviewee).

This is a specific grand tour question which means that he/she will explain something he/she knows well in a focused way. This will allow to get a broad idea of the steps and other possible mechanisms for the outcome, as well as context.

3. Follow-up question: Could you give me some examples of reasons for China’s transnational repression within the country?

This is an example question which is fundamental to gain more details on the phenomenon.

4. Have the Dutch/Belgian government helped your organization in contrasting China's actions? For instance through funds, services or personnel? What about providing useful information?
5. If yes, how effective their help was, in your opinion?
6. Could it be improved? If yes, how?
7. What could have caused the lack of/help from the Dutch/Belgian government?

Questions from 4 to 7 help to determine the level of efficiency of host state in contrasting China's transnational repression. The inefficiency of the host state might be derived from its economic dependence on China.

8. Turkey as an example of authoritarian regimes has recorded a huge number of cases of China's transnational repression of Uyghurs, what do you think might have determined this phenomenon?
9. Do you believe this argument might be applied to democratic states as well?
10. Since democratic host states might have economic repercussions if they go against China's actions, do you believe that states might "trade" human rights for financial benefits by not responding to the issue?

Questions from 8 to 10 are specifically related to the main hypothesis.

11. Follow-up question: What about your colleagues? Do you know what they might think?

N. 11 gives more insights on rival explanatory variables. The follow-up question provide further details by shifting from an individual perspective to a group one.

12. Do you think that the domestic institutions of host countries are unprepared to address transnational repression? If yes, why?
13. Do you think that the measures of states in addressing transnational repression are effective? In particular, security, foreign and migration policies?
14. If security, foreign and migration policies were improved, do you believe that China's extent of transnational repression would be lower?

Questions from 12 to 13 provide answers on the rival hypothesis: inadequate TR measures determine the extent of China's TR.

15. Do you believe that there might be other reasons determining the extent of China's transnational repression within the country? If yes, which ones?

N. 16 is a repetition. This allows to gain more insights after the discussion with the interviewee.

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