3. Taking Sides: Differences in How the People's Republic of China Securitizes Uyghur and Hui Muslims

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Abstract: This chapter critically examines how securitization campaigns by the CCP turn Muslim minorities into potential threats, thereby drawing into question their sense of cultural security. Applying the framework of Copenhagen School securitization theory, it examines whether there are ethnicity-based differences in the securitization of Hui and Uyghur Muslim minority groups and why such differences exist. The advent of Xi Jinping's tenure at the helm of the CCP coincides with a shift in government policy towards both Muslim minority groups which scrutinizes most visible manifestations of Islamic religious practice and places loyalty to the party at the center of state-sanctioned religion. These developments have resulted in a partial convergence in the cultural insecurity experienced by both Hui and Uyghurs.

Keywords: Hui, Uyghurs, China Islamic Association, *jiejing*, securitization

Anyone attempting to split China in any part of the country will end in crushed bodies and shattered bones. (Xi Jinping 2019)[1]

This chapter employs securitization theory to understand the CCP's domestic security campaigns aimed at the Uyghur and Hui Muslim minority nationalities in China and the effect of such policies on each group's sense of cultural

1 The General Secretary of the CCP, Xi Jinping, speaking with the Nepali Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli during a state visit to Nepal in October 2019 (Awan 2020).

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security. We uncover ethnicity-based differences in the CCP's approach as well as the historical origins of such differences. While we trace the origins of contemporary security policies back to attempts by the CCP's General Secretary Jiang Zemin (in power 1989–92) to make religion compatible with the party's goals and priorities in the 1990s—themselves rooted in the reform and opening (*gaige kaifang*) policy of the 1980s—our focus is on Xi Jinping's efforts to "sinicize" Islam in China since 2012. Such policies define many Uyghur and Hui religious and cultural practices as potential threats, thereby imperiling each minority's sense of cultural security. The CCP has implemented assimilative policies that aim at merging distinctive ethnic identities into a unified, largely Han-centered Chinese identity, itself constructed. Therefore, historical efforts by Uyghurs and to some extent by the Hui to retain elements of their distinct cultures are presented by the CCP as threats to national unity.

The PRC defines itself as a multi-ethnic unitary state (*duominzu tongyi guojia*) consisting of fifty-six nationalities (*minzu*), ten of which are predominantly Muslim. The largest are the Hui, numbering 11,377,914 (China Population Census Yearbook 2020), who mostly inhabit the Ningxia Autonomous Region and Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan provinces. Uyghurs are the second largest with 11,624,300 people living predominantly in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (China Population Census Yearbook 2020).[2] Historically, the PRC's ethnic and religious minorities have experienced only a limited degree of tolerance (Leibold 2016), and public acknowledgement of diversity has often been conditioned by the minorities' demonstrated willingness to adapt to a CCP-defined ideal, itself molded around Han culture. Uradyn E. Bulag (2000, 196) argued that the Sino-centered assessment of ethnic minorities has historically been based on how culturally close they were to Han culture and the extent of their service to the Chinese empire and state.

Islam is an important source of culture and identity for all Muslim minorities in China and is the principal means by which Hui Muslims distinguish themselves from the Han majority (Stroup 2016, 999). For example, Hui regard Islamic education as a marker of Muslim identity in a non-Muslim country (Jaschok and Chan 2009, 2). At the same time, the CCP tends to view Islam and other monotheistic religions with considerable suspicion. Following the CCP's declaration of its own "War on Terrorism" in 2014,

2 Recently the CCP has sought to rebut allegations of genocide against China's Uyghur population by issuing new 2020 census statistics, which claim that the Uyghur population has grown 16 percent over the past decade (*Xinhua* 2021). These statistics are contested by the international community (Tang 2021).

Uyghur demands for more autonomy from China and their alleged ties with Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups in the Middle East helped the CCP depict this minority group as an existential security threat. The CCP's express concern with socio-political unrest in Xinjiang was used to justify harsh counter-insurgency policies towards Uyghurs and, to a lesser extent, the Hui people. The way the CCP applied the label "War on Terrorism" made it difficult to distinguish between ordinary crimes, non-violent political protest, and violent activities (Roberts 2020). These policies are framed by the CCP as a means of countering the "three forces" (*sangu shili*) of ethnic separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism (Chung et al. 2006). By increasingly viewing all visible forms of Islamic religious practice through a security prism, such policies undermine the Uyghur and Hui sense of cultural security.

The significant differences in the extent to which the CCP sees Uyghurs and Hui people as a security threat can be explained using the "model minority" theory. In 2010, the Chinese academics Zhao Lisheng and Ma Zhiqiang (2010, 47) claimed that there were no significant ostensible distinctions between Hui people and the Han majority in Ningxia. The Hui speak Mandarin and share many Han cultural traditions, making it easier for them to socialize and do business with the majority population. Given Hui cultural similarity and ethnic proximity to the Han majority, the CCP has long portrayed Hui people as geographically, historically, and socially better adapted than the Uyghurs to China's modernization process, characterizing them as the type of Muslim that it did not need to worry about (Meyer 2012, 42). Although there were number of violent Hui rebellions during the Qing dynasty in Qinghai, southern Gansu, and elsewhere, these were typically viewed as result of local contention rather than an existential threat to the authority (Lipman 1997; Kim 2004; Friedrichs 2017). The privilege that comes with being a "model" Muslim in the Chinese context is ambiguous and, at best, always conditional on the CCP's interest. Conversely, Turkic-speaking Uyghurs often have more in common with their Central Asian neighbors than their Han Chinese compatriots.

Until Xi Jinping's ascent to power in 2012, Hui people's assimilation into Han culture and society led the CCP to portray them as a "model minority," especially when compared to Uyghurs. In the CCP's Sinocentric socio-spatial hierarchy, Hui Muslims are closer to the Han center than any other Muslim group (Friedrichs 2017, 58). Due to the greater level of assimilation to Han culture, Hui religious identity was often understood in apolitical terms, enabling community members to adapt and flourish while dynasties and governments changed (Hammond 2020, 226). This assimilation

notwithstanding, there are instances throughout history where Hui people have pursued their interests politically, engaging in constitutional debates both in the Republic of China and during the early PRC to secure rights and privileges in the fields of politics, economics, and education (Eroglu Sager 2021, 12–13). The CCP frames any residual or ongoing Hui–Han conflict as "misunderstandings" and claims that "conflicts between ethnic groups are often triggered by small problems" which can be solved if people "respect each other and follow the customs" (*CCP News* 2014; *Zhongguo xiaokang* 2016). Particularly, during the early and mid-1990s, the government-led China Islamic Association (CIA) begun celebrating Hui Muslims as people who gradually abandoned farming and started new businesses. It portrayed them as a "model examples" for economic development, compatible with China's speedy modernization (see example, CMJ 1996.5).

In fact, Hui have been portrayed as the best example of civilizational dialogue between Confucianism and Islam (Ma 2016), sometimes even being seen as suitable "cultural ambassadors" and "cultural mediators" of Sino-Muslim world trade (Ho 2013). Even in Xinjiang, Hui people obtained economic and political advantages over Uyghurs (Côté 2015, 137) and were, until recently, rarely victims of religious discrimination by the authorities. Prior to the Xi era, Hui people could even advocate a form of Wahhabism in Ningxia, whereas for Uyghurs such religious strains have not been tolerated (Gonul and Rogenhofer 2017; Al-Sudairi 2016).

This chapter identifies a shift in CCP policy from ethnic identity securitization to the securitization of religious practice between the early 1990s and 2018. By claiming that the security threat posed by Islam is existential, the CCP now categorizes all visible manifestations of Islamic religious practice as potential threats, thereby undermining the Uyghur and Hui sense of cultural security. Before examining such policies in more detail, we review securitization theory and its application to non-democratic contexts.

Securitization in Non-Democratic Contexts

Securitization theory studies how governments frame issues as existential security concerns to legitimate their policies. It understands security as a self-referential practice, which means the issue in question is not necessarily a real threat; it is only presented as such. The Copenhagen School of security studies sees security as a speech act, a quality injected into certain issues that places them in a realm above normal politics, a realm where extreme measures must be adopted in order to guarantee the survival of referent

objects like the state, the individual, the society or the environment (Buzan et al. 1998, 24). Wæver adopts the concept of the speech act from John Langshaw Austin's theory of language (1995, 46). Speech acts not only describe the world but are also capable of changing it, being both performative and constitutive. In other words, any issue can be turned into a security issue and an existential threat is understood to exist as soon as it is framed this way.

While there is a debate over whether securitization theory can be applied to non-democratic contexts (Browning and McDonald 2011), Vuori persuasively uses a variant of this theory to study the CCP's security policies towards the Tiananmen protests and the Falun Gong (2011). The extension of this analytical approach beyond security policies in liberal democracies emphasizes securitization's illocutionary logic (Vuori 2008). The focus on communicative effects and implied meanings allows researchers to "see through" the formulaic and propagandistic communication style of the CCP. We suggest that the use of illocutionary acts allows the CCP to implicitly promote its model of governance, which is at odds with liberal democratic conceptions of citizenship, freedom, universal rights, democracy, and self-determination, while at the same time ostentatiously acknowledging them. We thus argue that the CCP exercises power not only through coercive mechanisms such as the police, military, and legal system, but also through a variety of seemingly non-coercive means, including the conferral of economic benefits (through infrastructure projects and trade policies), cultural policy and religious guidance by institutions such as the CIA (Glasserman 2016).

Adopting a similar argument, Topgyal (2011a; 2011b) shows how CCP discourses and policies inflate Tibetans' insecurities about their way of life and belonging within the national collective. Securitization at the state level can thus result in the cultural insecurity of ethnic and religious minority groups. In the context of the PRC, the non-democratic character of the regime results in a linkage of the CCP's security discourses to matters of regime stability. This security discourse is concerned particularly with borderlands such as Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia, all of which, historically, have exhibited centrifugal tendencies and could conceivably threaten the territorial integrity of China. The PRC government therefore delegitimizes such trends by labeling individual outbreaks as "incidents" (*shijian*), separating each case from others and thus downplaying long-term social and political grievances. Building on the above-mentioned theories of securitization and Topgyal's case study, this chapter investigates the differences in the CCP's securitization practices targeting the Uyghurs and Hui using the example of the Sinicization of Religion (*zongjiao Zhongguohua*) campaign.

CCP Security Policy towards China's Muslim Minorities Prior to Xi Jinping

The following pages focus on the CCP's reaction to key incidents taking place between the CCP and Uyghurs and Hui people during the two decades before Xi Jinping's ascent to the leadership of the CCP. By reflecting on the 1990 Barin uprising and the 1997 Ghulja unrest and the CCP's policy towards Uyghurs and Hui people during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, we show significant differences in how the party framed each minority's religious practice, thus affecting their sense of cultural (in)security. We illustrate that while the Uyghurs were long framed as threatening and suspicious by the CCP in the Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao (2002–12) eras, Hui Muslims remained relatively unscathed by CCP securitization practices.

In 1990, Jiang Zemin proclaimed that "Marxist views of nation and religion" (*Makesizhuyide minzuguan he zongjiaoguan*) must be established and that "religious work must be done properly" (*yiding yao zuohao zongjiao gongzuo*; United Front Work Department 2014). Jiang also imposed restrictions on religious activities by ordering all places of worship to register. Registration was framed by the CCP as a way of safeguarding social harmony by imposing much stricter control of religious organizations than it had previously (Leung 2005, 909). At the United Front Work Conference in November 1993, Jiang emphasized the need to make "correct" (*zhengque*), i.e., modify, religious beliefs and practices in China because of "the manipulation and control [of Catholicism and Protestantism] by imperial powers." Religious practice in China would henceforth be adapted to socialist society (United Front Work Department 2014). According to what became known as the "three sentences" (*sanjuhua*), articulated in 1993, the CCP's policies should be thoroughly implemented, and religion should be administered according to law and made compatible with socialist society (Potter 2003, 323). In December 2001, Jiang added that the principles of national independence and self-governance should be firmly upheld (Fang 2014, 339).

Despite the CCP's formal acknowledgement of religious freedom, many religious communities felt that such recognition was insufficient. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of Central Asian republics in 1991, Uyghurs became more concerned with questions of independence, freedom, and self-determination. Restrictions on their cultural and religious practices led to several confrontations with the authorities (Clarke 2015, 218).

The 1990 uprising in Barin Township in Kashgar Prefecture is attributable partly to the dissatisfaction of Uyghurs with the mass immigration of Han

Chinese into Xinjiang, the closure of a local mosque prior to a religious festival, and the extension of strict family planning policies to the Uyghurs (Amnesty International 2010, 9). In response to a violent incident involving around 200 Uyghurs in Barin, the CCP launched a region-wide campaign to repress dissent and separatism (Millward and Peterson 2020). The CCP's so-called Strike Hard against Violent Terrorist Activities (*yanli daji baoli kongbu huodong*) campaign would become one prong in its long-term strategy to tighten its grip over Uyghurs in Xinjiang, thereby curtailing their cultural autonomy and security.

In contrast, when Hui people clashed repeatedly with Han throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, such conflicts were framed by the CCP not as matters of separatism or (dis)loyalty to the Chinese state, but as matters of poverty and inequality (Stroup 2021). The authorities did not frame the Hui–Han clashes as terrorism or as a threat to the country's unity and rejected the idea that the global Islamic revival and the Hui were linked. The party-state frames Han–Hui conflicts as a "lack of ethnic knowledge, never a deliberate provocation" (Lu 2010).

Even though the eruption of conflicts with the majority Han population involved both groups, the official portrayals of both groups were different. Uyghurs were presented as the "dangerous" or "bad others," while the Hui continued to be perceived as a model, "non-threatening" minority or "familiar strangers" (Lipman 1997) and their protests were downplayed as manageable disturbances and economic grievances. As a result, Hui people's cultural autonomy remained largely unaffected. Close cooperation with the CCP, including through the Hui-dominated and state-controlled CIA, allowed Hui people to affirm their sense of cultural security by framing their religious practices as the only form of "compliant" Islam within China. Hui religious practice was framed as "modernist," i.e., committed to making Islam compatible with CCP ideology, specifically the "love the country, love the religion" (*aiguo aijiao*) principle, which insists that religion must always be subordinate to the goals of the nation and compliant with the demands of national authorities (Glasserman 2016).

This framing of "compliant" Islam around Hui culture and religious practice would, in turn, threaten the cultural security of Uyghurs, a fact brought out by a second outbreak of unrest in Ghulja in 1997. Following the Barin uprising, the CCP feared that Uyghurs would follow other Central Asian independence movements and attempt to separate Xinjiang from the rest of China. Policies that encouraged hundreds of thousands of Han people to relocate to Xinjiang as part of CCP efforts in urbanization, industrialization, and economic development (Becquelin 2004) amplified Uyghurs' grievances

as jobs and economic opportunities were increasingly transferred to the Han population. Predictably, such dissatisfaction found its outlet in the Ghulja protests of February 1997, when Uyghurs protested the harsh policies, including restrictions on religious and cultural activities in Xinjiang, including *meshrep*, a form of collective cultural expression that includes Uyghur music, songs, and the recital of poetry, which offered Uyghurs an indigenously produced means of maintaining their ethnic boundaries vis-à-vis the Han majority (Roberts 1998). Rachel Harris (2020) illustrates how *meshrep*, as an important Uyghur cultural practice, was recognized on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage. The same practice was subsequently targeted by the Chinese government's "counter-extremism" measures. Uyghurs in Ghulja had used *meshrep* gatherings to revive Islamic culture and to counteract social problems such as alcoholism and drug abuse in their community. Its prohibition and the arrest of a prominent *meshrep* leader in 1996 caused considerable resentment among Uyghurs. Fearing a further erosion of their culture, Uyghurs demanded that the laws and regulations on the "autonomy of ethnic regions," which ostensibly govern all ethnic minority regions in China, be respected in Xinjiang. The Ghulja protests were violently suppressed by the authorities and more than 150 people were reportedly killed by security forces (Wayne 2009, 250). The Chinese government arrested over one thousand Uyghurs and closed mosques and religious centers (Amnesty International 2007).

After the Barin and Ghulja unrest, the relations between the party-state and the Uyghurs gradually worsened, leading to harsh repression of Uyghur identity (Castets 2004, 28). The CCP bolstered its campaign against alleged separatism in Xinjiang, which it described as a "people's war" against "ethnic separatism and illegal religious activities" (*Xinjiang Daily* 1997 cited in Dillon 2003, 106). While this discursive framing may have been effective for the CCP's domestic audience (Trédaniel and Lee 2017), the Chinese state still lacked a compelling narrative to legitimize its security policy for an international audience; its promises of gradual "liberalization" were not taken seriously (Dreyer 1993).

The Impact of the Attacks of September 2001 and the 2008 Beijing Olympics

China's response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the U.S. eventually spurred new regulations targeting the Uyghurs, who perceived these changes as threatening to their cultural security. Many such policies,

including prohibitions on Uyghur funeral rituals and scattered (non-CIA approved) *hajj* pilgrimages (*lingsan chaojin*), were supported by the Hui-dominated CIA, which helped the party-state label Islamic practices common among Uyghurs as harmful (Glasserman 2016, 52–54). Both Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao emphasized that the Chinese state clearly distinguishes between the "three forces" and Islam itself (CMJ 1999.1). Nonetheless, the party alleged that Uyghur opposition to the state and outbursts of violence in Xinjiang were rooted in connections between Uyghurs and the Taliban and in Uyghurs' alleged support for Osama bin Laden (Shichor 2006, 99).

While the CCP's claims about links between the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM)[3] and international terrorist networks remain unproven (Roberts 2020), the CCP nonetheless succeeded in framing Uyghur nationalism as a cause of terrorism within China. Uyghurs who tried to flee Xinjiang were often accused of being "violent terrorists" seeking overseas training (Rodríguez 2019). The separatist threat allegedly posed by traditional Uyghur culture was conflated with another threat allegedly emerging from their Islamic religious practice (CMJ 2001.3).

The focus on terrorism within China became particularly acute during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, which were preceded by a violent incident in the city of Kashgar in which sixteen soldiers of the People's Armed Police Force were killed (Gunaratna and Wang 2010). The threat of terrorism allegedly emanating from the Uyghur community prompted a crackdown in Xinjiang which would severely curtail Uyghurs' daily life and cultural practices.

In contrast, Hui Muslims were used to showcase China's "friendly Muslim face" to a global audience (CMJ 2008.2; CMJ 2008.4). While interactions between Uyghurs and foreign Muslims were viewed with the utmost suspicion, the CCP promoted Hui engagement with the attendees of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, who were invited to "learn about Chinese Muslims and Islam in China through [their] perspective" (CMJ 2008.5). After the opening of the Olympic Village, thousands of Hui volunteers (CMJ 2008.5a) and fifteen Hui imams from Beijing were chosen as religious volunteers, tasked with providing religious services including the Friday prayers and consultation to Muslim athletes in the Olympic Village. These activities were articulated with the slogan "I participate, I dedicate, I am happy" (*wo canyu, wo fengxian, wo kuaile*; CMJ 2008.5b). Muslim athletes were escorted by volunteers to visit Hui mosques and the Niujie Halal Supermarket in Beijing and given introductory CDs and books about Islam and Muslims in

3 East Turkistan is a term used by some Uyghurs to refer to their homeland and refers to two East Turkistan Republics founded in 1933–34 and 1944–49.

China, which collectively emphasized the Hui element (CMJ 2008.5b). Hui students from the CIA branch in Beijing were also introduced to domestic and foreign reporters as patriotic, loyal, and content with the CCP (China Islamic Institute 2008; see also Jarmila Ptáčková's chapter). The prominence accorded to Hui Muslims as the outward-looking face of Chinese Islam also increased the popularity of the 2008 Beijing Olympics among Hui, who often attended public viewing gatherings to support the athletes. This practice contrasted with the stringent security measures encountered by China's other Muslim communities. For example, Uyghurs were banned from public gatherings.

The Hui's crucial role in legitimating the 2008 Beijing Olympics to a global Muslim audience bolstered their status as a model minority, a condition that helped them preserve a sense of purpose, prosperity, and cultural security. In contrast, the definition of Uyghur religious practice as unlawful and dangerous and its complete exclusion from the Muslim face on display at the 2008 Beijing Olympics further eroded their cultural security. This led to a series of incidents surrounding the games. The bombing of two public buses in the city of Kunming in July 2008 increased tensions between Uyghurs and the government, even though the CCP publicly denied that the explosions were an act of terrorism (BBC 2008). As the CCP's definition of terrorism was kept intentionally vague, Uyghurs lived in constant fear that their non-violent public activities, art, and literature would be framed as illegal and threatening to national unity.

Xi Jinping's Authoritarian Revival

The appointment of Xi Jinping as the CCP's general secretary in November 2012 started a new stage in the policies towards ethnic and religious minorities. One indication of the change was the promulgation of the 2015 Counter-Terrorism Law (*fankongbuzhuyifa*). With the increased securitization of Islamic practice, Hui Muslims' identity and religious life would be increasingly affected, as the Uyghurs had been impacted before. The Hui now risk losing both their status as a model Muslim minority and the high level of cultural security associated with this status. The cultural security of all Chinese ethnic and religious minority groups is now increasingly threatened the CCP's more and more assertive sinicization policies.

In the Xi era, the party-state became even more forceful than in the previous Hu era in its efforts to control China's religious and cultural traditions and in demanding their subordination to the CCP's ideology (Freedom

House 2018). Under Xi, the party emphasized that "communist party cadres must be unyielding Marxist atheists" and must "guide and educate religious circles and their followers" (*China.org* 2016). Although the CCP had been presenting conflicts with Uyghurs as part of a Global War on Terrorism for over a decade (Roberts 2020), such fears of foreign influence were now extended to many everyday practices of Islam.

The definition of non-violent expressions of resistance and religious faith as terrorism (Roberts 2020; Harris 2018) has caused increased tensions among religious and ethnic minorities. Although both Uyghurs and Hui people have faced increased cultural insecurity, for the Hui the situation has been new in that their elevated status as a model minority has increasingly been drawn into question. In Xinjiang, these measures have resulted in an increased security presence. CCP cadres, moreover, have been ordered to rural areas to "educate" the people regarding the threats of Islamism and to protect "ethnic unity" and "stability" (Human Rights Watch 2018).

While the CCP describes virtually all forms of unrest in Xinjiang as terrorism, it is important to distinguish growing unrest—some of it violent and emergent in response to increasingly repressive government intervention in Muslims' daily lives—from the four acts of civilian-targeted violence perpetrated in 2013–14 (Millward and Peterson 2020). In 2014, a group of knife-wielding Uyghur assailants killed 28 people and injured over 113 others at Kunming train station, an incident that became known as China's September 11 (Kaiman and Branigan 2014). The attack provoked outrage on Chinese social media and forced the government to intensify its already repressive measures (Abuza 2017).

In December 2015, the party-state implemented a new Counter-Terrorism Law, which would provide the basis for the subsequent mass internment of Uyghurs. Embracing a discourse of terrorism-related security threats, the government began securitizing religion and identity through the notion of "de-extremization" (*qujiduanhua*), which is focused on individuals, and "counter-extremism" (*fanjiduanhua*), which deals with groups (Topal 2021). In effect, Uyghur expressions of ethnic or religious group identity were equated with dangerous and illegal conduct. The new restrictions also prohibit veiling and fasting during Ramadan as well as the possession of religious texts and prayer carpets, which are important cultural and religious identity markers (Cook 2017). As these restrictions suggest, Uyghur-populated areas are increasingly subject to constant surveillance (Tobin 2020), which characterizes their inhabitants as a potential threat to national unity.

The Xi administration implemented new policies through the United Front Work Department, whose task is to subordinate all aspects of society

to the CCP, thereby eliminating non-party-controlled intermediary bodies and civil society groups (Wang and Groot 2018, 569). From the late 1940s onwards, the regulation of ethnic and religious communities has constituted the department's central preoccupation, and this task has only gained in importance in recent years (Wang and Groot 2018, 580). One major tool for strengthening loyalty to the regime presented as patriotism and support for the CCP among China's ethnic and religious minorities is the policy to sinicize religious practice within China—most obviously the three major religions of Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam. In effect, the campaign would lead to a reduction in the religious and cultural autonomy of religious minority groups in China.

Sinicization demands the removal of all foreign influences from the faith, a paradox since Islam was imported to China by Muslim traders. It entails the removal of Arabic script and architecture as well as calls to combat "halalization" (*fanqingzhenhua*, *qingzhenfanhua*), i.e., the alleged overreach of religious doctrine into everyday life. It also seeks to bring any residual permitted religious activities more firmly under party control (Grose 2020). Li Jianhua, secretary of the Party Committee of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region echoed Xi's demand "the notion of halal should not be generalized," for instance, by using halal designations outside dietary contexts and insisted (China Youth Network 2016) that "all Hajj pilgrimages that are not organized and administered by the CIA must be stopped to resist foreign infiltration" (*Zhongguo zongjiao* 2017, 20). These strict measures are intended to curb so-called de-sinicization (*quzhongguohua*) through the Arabization (*Ahua*, *Alabohua*), Saudization (*Shatehua*, *Shahua*) and halalization of Islam in China, referred to as "three -izations" (*sanhua*; see also Jarmila Ptáčková's chapter). In 2018, the party-state developed a new narrative of allegedly combating "foreign infiltration" among China's Muslims, particularly targeting Hui-inhabited areas. This extension of the policy of the "three forces" under the sinicization campaign was titled the "three -izations and two fevers" (*sanhua liangre*), which refers to the need to fight "Arabization," "Saudization," "halalization," and the "fevers of mosque building and hajj" (Lanzhou Honggu District Government 2020). The trend was described using the example of Gansu Province:

> [I]n the construction of Islamic activity venues, large domes and high preaching towers are built, burqas are worn, religious observance imitates the rituals of Arab countries; the interpretation of [Islamic] classics does not conform to China's national conditions, Chinese culture, and social

> development, but seeks and follows models from abroad, and Arabic is used as the language of the Hui. (People's Government of the Zhangjiachuan Hui Autonomous County 2018)

As a result of this new CCP discourse, similarities to global Islamic culture, whether in the form of architecture, food culture, clothing, grooming, or language, have increasingly been deemed deviant and problematic, not just for Uyghurs but also for Hui people, who had previously enjoyed considerable discretion to engage in the activities in question.

As part of the CCP-directed and CIA-administered *jiejing* (religious interpretation) policy, Xi's sinicization campaign aims to strengthen the "ideological guidance" given to Chinese Muslims and emphasizes the need to implement strict measures against "infiltration by foreign actors in China" (*Huanqiuwang* 2017). *Jiejing* means "(re)interpreting the Quran" and has been implemented by local CIA branches since 2001. *Jiejing* reveals the sophisticated ways in which the CCP exercises control over religious officials and, we argue, ascribes a religious mandate to their own policy priorities (Doyon 2014, 49). While it is sometimes described as a curriculum of scriptural interpretation that emphases "patriotism," "territorial unity," and "ethnic unity" as core tenets of the faith (Glasserman 2016), *jiejing* goes beyond mere curricula to establish a party-controlled and allegedly religiously mandated way of thinking and acting for Muslims.

The use of *jiejing* work as a control mechanism is highlighted in a speech given by CIA president Chen Guangyuan at a conference on Islamic interpretation, which demanded that *jiejing* "meets the needs of Xinjiang's struggle against separatism and actively guides China's Islam to adapt to socialist society" (*Zhongguo zongjiao* 2011). *Jiejing* work seeks to combat the "three forces," particularly among the Uyghur community in Xinjiang (*Zhongguo zongjiao* 2013). In its most recent iteration, *jiejing* prevents Muslim pilgrimages without CIA chaperones, the reading and possession of religious books, translations of the Quran other than the state-sanctioned translation by Hui scholar Ma Jian and the adherence to and propagation of *halal* lifestyles that differ from the CIA versions.

The Regulations on Religious Affairs, amended in September 2017 and implemented since February 2018, define the CCP's role as "protecting legitimate religious activities while curbing and preventing illegal and extreme practices" (State Council of the PRC 2017). However, these new policies go beyond pre-existing requirements for religious organizations to be registered by the state to possess property, publish literature, train and approve clergy, and collect donations (Albert 2018). By regulating religion

through the lens of "illegal and extreme practices," religious life in China has been severely curtailed.

Additional sinicization requirements were detailed in a report titled "Religious Work Series, Five Years of Hard Work—Review of Islamic work since the Eighteenth National Congress of the CCP" (*Zhongguo zongjiao* 2017). The document states that the State Administration of Religious Affairs aims to resolutely forbid all private places of worship. In effect, all religious activities in personal dwellings were deemed unauthorized religious activities. This invasive approach to religious practice can also be traced in a campaign launched in 2014 and known as *fanghuiju*, i.e., "visit the people, benefit the people, and get together the hearts of the people" (*fangminqing, huiminsheng, juminxin*; Wang and Lei 2017, 32; see also Giulia Cabras' chapter). This campaign mandates officials from government agencies, state-owned enterprises, and public institutions to regularly visit and monitor predominantly Uyghur citizens in their homes and places of work. This practice shows that the autonomous spaces of Uyghurs in their own homes have been taken away by a party-state which makes a connection between the intimate details of people's daily lives and counter-terrorism. Visitors report on "extremist" behavior, which includes a range of daily Islamic practices such as praying, fasting, veiling, avoiding alcohol, speaking Uyghur, or expressing opinions not unreservedly supportive of the CCP (Smith Finley 2019). Visitors have also disseminated propaganda and attempted to "educate" away their Uyghur hosts' allegedly extremist beliefs (Byler 2018).

In 2016, the CCP used the same framing to launch the Becoming Family (*jiedui renqin*g) campaign, which paired Uyghur families with Han party members or cadres of different ethnicities, allegedly to "improve Uyghurs' understanding of the identity and role of the Chinese nation" and "to crack down on illegal religious activities in accordance with the law" (Pu and Yang 2018, 39; Wang and Lei 2017). This policy meant that Uyghur families were forced to welcome supervisors into their homes, their lives, and even their beds (Kang and Wang 2018), effectively coercing Uyghur hosts to adopt Han culture and thus eliminating their cultural security and feeling of privacy. In early 2018, Xinjiang's authorities extended this program by tasking the cadres to spend at least five days out of every two months in Uyghur homes (Human Rights Watch 2018).

The crackdown on Islamic culture and religious practice now extended beyond Uyghurs and targeted Hui in Xinjiang and elsewhere. CCP officials defined "four activities" (*sixiang huodong*), i.e., the naming of new-born babies, circumcision festivities, weddings, and funerals (*qiming, geli, hunli,*

zangli), as additional security concerns (Cao 2017). It is these "four activities" which distinguish the Hui from the Han majority and are thus central to their sense of cultural security. While Hui people in some parts of China still use the guise of "culture" to engage in some of the above-mentioned activities (particularly outside Xinjiang), they face increased suspicion and scrutiny by the party apparatus.

In 2018, the CCP secretary of Cherchen (Ch. Qiemo) county in southern Xinjiang declared that:

> [W]e should no longer exclude the delicacies of all ethnic groups with "halal" and "non-halal," and all Uyghur party members and cadres must start "de-extremization" by emancipating their minds from the tip of their tongues, starting with dietary practices and with daily life practices such as naming, circumcision, weddings and funerals. We should declare war on "religion and clan bondage" and promote the complete separation of religion from ethnic customs … We must resolutely prevent the religion-ization and religious extremization of ethnic customs … (*Shouhu jiayuan* 2018)

As a result of this ever more expansive definition of extremism, cultural activities were emptied of all religious content and pressed into a secular mold, affecting both Uyghurs and Hui, particularly in Xinjiang.

An extended crackdown on religious practice was introduced with the "four entries to the mosques" (*sijin qingzhensi*), announced in May 2018 by the CIA. The policy demanded that "the national flag and anthem enter the mosque, the constitution, laws and regulations enter the mosque, the core socialist values enter the mosque, and the Chinese excellent traditional culture enters the mosque" (CMJ 2018.4; for more on "Chinese excellent traditional culture" and "core socialist values," see the introductory chapter by Jarmila Ptáčková and Ondřej Klimeš, as well as the chapters by Mohammed Alsudairi and Jarmila Ptáčková).

In late 2018 the "four entries to the mosque" were expanded to "five entries and five goods" (*wujin wuhao*) by adding the "spirit of the Twentieth National Congress of the CCP" (Hengyang City Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau 2022). The addition was explained as "forming a further exploration of Muslims' [in China] adherence to the direction of sinicization" (*Zongjiao minzubao* 2022). Yang Guanjun, President of the CIA's Beijing branch added that the "five entries" activities aim to improve "the patriotic enthusiasm of the Islamic community and Muslim masses, build a solid ideological foundation of being united with the party and walking with the country, and

further strengthen and deepen the understanding of the great motherland …" (*Zongjiao minzubao* 2022). The "five goods" are "good political character, good compliance with the law, good civilized and friendly behavior, good cultural heritage, and good service to the society" (United Front Work Department of the Yunnan Provincial Committee of the CCP 2019; CIA Hunan 2018). These new policies require Hui people to publicly prove their loyalty to the "party's religious policies and the spirit of General Secretary Xi Jinping's speeches on religious work" (United Front Work Department of the Yunnan Provincial Committee of the CCP 2018). In the same year, Chinese authorities in Yunnan shuttered three Hui mosques for "illegal religious education" and "illegal worship" (Chen 2018). Moreover, about 100,000 copies of the Quran were confiscated from closed Arabic language schools and children were banned from learning Arabic in Shandong in 2020 (Ma 2020). The policies which had been applied to Uyghurs since 2014 were thereby imposed on the Hui.

The erosion of Hui privileges is also evident in the destruction of domes and minarets on mosques in Inner Mongolia, Henan, Qinghai, Yunnan, and even in the so-called "little Mecca" in Linxia, Ningxia (Domonoske 2018; Feng 2019; Gan and Chang 2023; Myers 2019). Some Hui schools in Inner Mongolia were "sinicized" by having crescent-shaped stone monuments removed from their courtyards and Arabic slogans replaced with slogans in Chinese (Ma 2020). Across China, Hui officials were prohibited from publicly using Arabic script (Feng 2019). Some Muslims of the Zhuang nationality in rural Yunnan were even forced to cremate their dead.[4] The *Chinese Muslims* journal (*Zhongguo Musilin*; CMJ), which had previously praised the construction of Arabic-style mosques and the interaction of Chinese Muslims with Muslim-majority countries, now claimed that restrictions on Hui religious practice had been unduly delayed by an excessive focus on economic development (CMJ 2018.6a; for more on the reversal of the previous cultural diplomacy with Arab countries in Ningxia, see Jarmila Ptáčková's chapter). Similar restrictions were also applied to *halal* signage, whose removal was presented by the CIA as a matter of "de-extremization" (CMJ 2018.6a). The party-state claimed that such measures are a way of helping Chinese Muslims, a legitimation strategy that is echoed in a statement by the Third Division of the State Bureau of Religious Affairs, which decried the peddling of "fake *halal*" (*jia qingzhen*) food (CMJ 2018.6a).

The crackdown on China's Hui Muslims since 2016 is partly rooted in the party-state's fear of fundamentalist strains of Islam, i.e., Salafism and

4 Confidential recordings.

Wahhabism (Al-Sudairi 2016; Gonul and Rogenhofer 2017). These strains are believed to be spread by Hui students who received private scholarships to attend religious institutions in Saudi Arabia or Pakistan (Leibold 2016; Durneika 2018). Patriotic slogans are no longer sufficient for Hui Muslims to be considered loyal; the sinicization campaign instead expects believers to sacrifice multiple aspects of their religious and cultural lives. As a result, the Hui are now experiencing a rapid erosion of their cultural security. The elevation of Hui culture and religious practice as the only legitimate form of Islam was used to isolate other Muslim minorities, particularly Uyghurs, but the same processes of othering and discrimination which first criminalized Uyghur Muslims have subsequently been extended to the Hui. Nevertheless, the sweeping arrests of Uyghur writers, scholars, and musicians (Ramzy 2019) and the mass incarceration of over one million Uyghurs in internment camps (Roberts 2020) suggest that Uyghurs remain the primary target of the CCP's religious and cultural sinicization policies. As a result, Uyghurs face an unprecedented level of cultural insecurity.

Conclusion

This chapter builds on studies by Vuori (2008; 2015) and Topgyal (2011a; 2011b), who showed that securitization also applies to non-democratic regimes and surfaces in the CCP's security discourses and policies towards its domestic population. We traced significant shifts in the CCP's approach towards its two most significant Muslim minority groups: Hui people and Uyghurs. Religious practice in China is always constrained by the requirements of compatibility with and subordination to CCP ideology. However, under Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin a degree of religious freedom existed, with Uyghur unrest in Xinjiang framed primarily as an issue of separatism. Following the September 2001 terrorist attacks, the CCP appropriated the U.S. discourse of the Global War on Terrorism to demarcate violent incidents and political protests in Xinjiang. The Hui Muslims were relatively unaffected by the securitization measures applied to Uyghurs at the time, and their characterization as a model minority provided many Hui people with access to economic opportunities and a level of cultural security. In the Xi era since 2012, the authorities' emphasis on sinicization has reinterpreted all acts of Islamic religious practice as potentially subversive behavior linked to terrorism. Uyghurs remain the primary target of this campaign, but the Hui have become an ancillary

target, which draws into question their model minority status and impacts their cultural security.

As Muslims in China cannot be treated as a singular entity, each of the PRC's predominantly Muslim nationalities faces distinct challenges to its perceived cultural security. Despite the Chinese government's efforts to promote a fixed and cohesive Chinese Muslim identity constructed around Hui religious practice, Muslim life in China remains complex and diverse. The CCP defines Muslim identity around the ideological aspiration to a harmonious society (*hexie shehui*), which includes the promotion of patriotism, economic development, social stability, and interethnic harmony. Its *jiejing* policies define the parameters of lawful Islam in China, including the religious tenets and practices tolerated by the party-state. Any forms of cultural or religious practice seen as violating this framework are treated by the CCP as a challenge to its power.

The articulation of religious and cultural practices under the "love the country, love the religion" policy (Ho 2013) initially enabled Hui Muslims to distinguish their Muslim identity from the securitized cultural and religious practices of Uyghurs. In contrast to Uyghurs, Hui Muslims were not viewed as a challenge to the PRC political order prior to the Xi era. Since 2012, visible signs of Islamic religious practice and other features that differentiate Hui and Han people have been considered threatening. These are therefore otherized and securitized under the label of "illegal religious activities" or "religious extremism." The gradual revocation of the model minority status of the Hui during Xi Jinping's reign suggests that the privileges granted due to Hui ethnic proximity to the Han are increasingly being subordinated to security policies. The Hui are now seen as more Muslim and less Chinese. Their friendly Muslim faces, which were on display during the 2008 Beijing Olympics and beyond, are nowadays deemed increasingly threatening by the CCP.

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