Religion, Identity, and Tolerance:
A historical analysis of the clash between Uyghurs and the CCP

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Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. No state organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion.[1]

- Article 36 of the Fifth National People's Congress

[D]etainees were forced to memorize a list of what he calls '126 lies' about religion: "Religion is opium, religion is bad, you must believe in no religion, you must believe in the Communist Party," he remembers. "Only [the] Communist Party could lead you to the bright future."[2]

- Interview of an Ex-Detainee at a Uyghur Re-Education Camp

Introduction

The position of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) — the ruling organization of the current Chinese party-state apparatus — on religion in the modern day appears hypocritical and clearly targeted against the religious customs of the native Muslims inhabiting China's westernmost borderland region, Xinjiang. On the one hand, rights are granted to Chinese citizens protecting their freedom of religious belief along with freedom from discrimination and/or persecution by institutions on the basis of those very beliefs. However, the relatively recent discovery of "re-education camps" all across the Xinjiang province seems to belie these supposed guarantees of religious freedom. Although the CCP claims that these camps serve the purpose of bolstering general education and provide vocational training to the economically downtrodden minority groups, evidence coming out of the camps seems to indicate otherwise.[3]

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[3] Alex Winter, "China has Locked Up 8 Million in Terrifying 'Re-Education' Camps, Docs Reveal," The Pulse, g

In these “re-education camps,” or “detention camps” as I will refer to them,[4] the detainees are actually being threatened, beaten, tortured, and/or ceaselessly indoctrinated in CCP propaganda against religion.[5] Furthermore, the estimated total number of detainees at these camps in Xinjiang is astounding, with roughly 8 million people — half of Xinjiang’s Muslim population — expected to have been through the camps over the last several years.[6] Not only does this treatment of detainees in the camps violate the CCP’s own constitution with regard to religious freedom, but one recent article describes these camps as “likely the largest internment of ethnic and religious minorities since the Second World War.”[7]

Because the most numerically dominant non-Han ethnic group in Xinjiang is the

non-Han peoples in a shared collective Chinese identity under the authority of the Han-led CCP. In exchange for the unity of the various minority ***minzu***, the CCP promised toleration of the various ***minzu*** customs, culture, and religion. However, as Wendy Brown notes, the concept of toleration is flawed because it merely perpetuates divisions rather than resolving them. Thus, concept of ***Zhonghua minzu*** was intended, in theory, to transcend the differences of the various ***minzu***, therefore serving as a deracialized identity for all of the competing ***minzu*** identities in China and resolving the issue of toleration; however, this concept of a shared Chinese identity, in practice, came with an implied a sense of Han superiority over the minority ***minzu***. Hence, ***Zhonghua minzu*** was an assimilationist ideology, through which competing ***minzu*** identities are eliminated as they are assimilated into the CCP's Han-centric identity. In this sense, the CCP rejected alternative policies that would have granted autonomy or self-determination to the various ***minzu***. Toleration was to be granted to ***minzu*** until the CCP naturally assimilated them into the ***Zhonghua minzu***, or until the CCP could assimilate them by force. Although this term was generally abandoned after the CCP was victorious in the Chinese Civil War, the concept of ***Zhonghua minzu*** played a strong role in formulating policy in the early PRC era prior to a revival of the term since 2005 as intellectuals have begun to question the efficacy of the CCP's previous ethnic policies.[9]

This original assimilationist conception of the ***Zhonghua minzu*** proved too idealistic for successful implementation in Xinjiang, where a strong Uyghur identity separate from the CCP's narrative of a shared Chinese identity already existed prior to Xinjiang's incorporation. This distinct Uyghur identity existed not only prior to CCP governance, but also prior to the existence of the CCP as a political organization; the early Uyghur identity was centered largely around the

[9] Mark Elliott, "The Case of the Missing Indigene: Debate Over a 'Second-Generation' Ethnic Policy," ***The China Journal*** 73 (2015): 186.

Whereas some religions in many regions in China are tolerated by the CCP, religious policy in Xinjiang is intolerant due to the Uyghur rejection of shared Chinese identity. Due to the critical role of religion in the creation and maintenance of the Uyghur identity, religious toleration has been revoked by the CCP, allowing the direct attack on Uyghur Islamic practices in the pursuit of breaking the competing Uyghur identity. Durkheim's theories on religious ritual and identity posit that collective identity arises from shared ritual practices, therefore, by revoking the Uyghurs' ability to practice religion, the CCP is directly seeking to destroy the distinctiveness of the Uyghurs. Religious toleration is therefore contingent on the relative subjugation of religious and ethnic groups to the CCP's original sense of ***Zhonghua minzu***, whereas intolerance is utilized to attempt to subsume resistant identities into the CCP's shared Chinese identity by force. As such, this paper seeks to demonstrate that the ongoing CCP-Uyghur conflict, though reminiscent of hostile Marxist philosophy, actually reflects an attempt to intervene in Uyghur religious rituals to break up the collective Uyghur identity for assimilation; however, the CCP will ultimately fail to gain the acquiescence of the Uyghur people to the concept of a shared Chinese identity because the distinction between identities is maintained in current policies through binary of oppressed and oppressor

to this crisis. As will be discussed below

This “century of humiliation,” taking up much of the 19th century, drove the post-Qing Chinese leaders to search for ways to protect their sovereignty against imperialist forces in the future. In response to this state of “semi-colonialism,” Mayfair Yang writes the following analysis:

> Although Chinese territory and the ‘Chinese race’ were perceived to be at risk of being carved up, or rendered extinct in the competition between nation-states and ‘survival of the fittest,’ China’s semi-colonial condition meant that there was no direct Western or Japanese colonial administration that tried to alter or destroy native Chinese culture. Thus, in China, the integrity and very survival of Chinese culture was not felt to be threatened by imperialist forces, and therefore modernity and the cultural transformation that it entailed were not seen in China as a foreign imposition to be repelled, but an urgent self-imposed Chinese undertaking.[12]

Colonialism in China did not spark a sharp, nativist rebuke of Western modernity because the essence of Chinese culture and identity was never threatened by Western rule. Instead, the repeated humiliation of China by the West and Japan drove the Chinese to seemingly paradoxical embrace of modern

development of secularism. During this period, science and religion were increasingly viewed as oppositional realms, with human reason and philosophy being embraced by Enlightenment philosophy over religion and faith to better serve the future of humankind. Reason and rational thought were viewed as the future, while religion was increasingly seen by public intellectuals as an institution of the past. Religion was therefore viewed as inevitably doomed to obsolescence through the lens of the Enlightenment.

Søren Kierkegaard, a 19th century Danish theologian and founder of existentialism, wrote extensively on the Enlightenment distinction between faith and reason, though Kierkegaard ultimately sided with religion over human philosophy. Demonstrating this Enlightenment position of the dichotomy of reason and faith, Kierkegaard stated that "[i]nstead of the objective uncertainty, there is here a certainty, namely, that objectively it is absurd; and this absurdity held fast in the passion of inwardness, is faith."[13] To Kierkegaard, part of the point of religion is that faith is irrational, or absurd. This irrationality is precisely where Kierkegaard believed that religion draws its power from, because adherents must have faith in the face of improbability and the inexplicable. Thus, to Kierkegaard, religion and reason are dichotomous, though religion must be embraced not in spite of its absurdity but because of its absurdity. However, to Enlightenment thinkers who favored reason and rational thought, this was precisely the problem with religion. Because it is absurd, it is untrue, improbable, or at least unsupported by rational thought, and therefore must be discarded in the long run as society advances. Thus, Enlightenment ideology results in an understanding of secularization which "consists in the falling off of religious belief and practice, in people turning away from God, and no longer going to Church."[14] Western modernity is therefore traditionally understood in conjunction with the

[13] Søren Kierkegaard, "Concluding Unscientific

[14] Charles Taylor, ***A Secular Age*** (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 2.

decline of religion and the rise of science and reason, during which people will turn away from religion by choice as it is increasingly viewed as irrational and absurd.

In the pursuit of modernization in China, the adoption of Enlightenment ideology meant the elevation of Western ideals and the neglect of religion and Chinese traditions. Writing on the origins of Enlightenment philosophy in China, Mayfair Yang states:

> The tenor of Chinese anti-colonial nationalism has always been in arduous pursuit of modernization, science, and national strengthening through economic and military development, while Chinese traditional knowledge and cultures were generally positioned as obstacles to these national imperatives. Although highly critical of capitalism and Western imperialism, Chinese Marxists and Maoists were no exceptions to this rule, for they accepted the Hegelian teleology of linear history, Western narratives of progress and science as liberation, and their historical materialism meant that they regarded religious culture as merely 'opiates' (yapian) of the people that would recede with their liberation.[15]

Thus, according to Yang, the sovereign anxiety experienced by China over the 19th and 20th centuries almost ironically led to a self-imposed colonial attitude with regard to religion and traditional culture. The ruling Chinese, rather than an outside colonizer, elevated some of the key Western ideals in Chinese society and placed them in contrast to the "old" and "backwards" elements of Chinese culture, which needed to be left behind in pursuit of modernization. Yang writes that in the emerging modern Chinese nation, "[s]cience was glorified, but freedom of religion, even in the Republican era, was not taken seriously. Nationalism seemed at the time the natural and only answer to China's urgent problems, but individual rights, the rights of kin gutat

Chinese public would be drawn towards Marxist philosophy in the first place, Mayfair Yang writes:

> After 'Mr. Science' (Sai Xiansheng) emerged during the May Fourth Movement as a modern object of national desire and liberation, 'religion' (zongjiao), the Western categorical opposite of science, had to be excised from the ailing national body, along with 'superstitions' (mixin). It may be no accident that Marxism, with its doctrine of historical materialism, won out over Western liberalism, since its stance against the philosophical position of idealism, its elevation of material economic needs, and its equation of religion with ideologies of former ruling classes were more unwavering and uncompromising.[19]

Thus, according to Yang, the Chinese ***intelligentsia*** were driven towards Marxism for its materialist nature, its elevation of economic advancement in a society downtrodden by the West, and its simplification of society through the rejection of Western post-Enlightenment liberalism with regard to tradition and religious doctrine. Thus, Marxism gradually gained in popularity and power in China over the first half of the 20th century, culminating in the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) establishment of the People's Republic of China as a one-party state.

Marxism puts forth an understanding of religion that indicts it as both a symptom of economic disparity and as a tool for the continuity of class-based oppression. Arguably one of the most widely quoted lines of Marx on religion from his ***Toward a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*** is his assertion that "[religion] is the ***opium*** of the people."[20] To explain this metaphor of religion as a narcotic drug, religion in the eyes of Marx serves to "numb" society against the injustices perpetrated by itself and appears as an ironic example in light of China's own semi-colonial history involving the Opium Wars. Marx then goes on to state that "[t]o abolish religion as the ***illusory*** happiness of the people is to demand their ***real*** happiness."[21]

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[20] Karl Marx, "Toward a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law"

[21] Ibid, 146.

the continuation of humanity's self-estrangement. Once humanity no longer pushes its desires and potential into the realm of the divine and otherworldly, reason and philosophy can be utilized to effectively obtain and institute the full potential of humanity in the present and material world.

Although the discussion on Marx's religious theory so far appears wholly hostile and intolerant towards religion, further evaluation of Marx's ideology shows Marxism does not have to involve an explicit eradication campaign against religion. In ***The Peasant War in Germany***, Friedrich Engels highlights how, in the case of Thomas Munzer, religion is a tool that can be utilized for the cause of the Proletariat. Despite Munzer's own religious philosophy being on the borderline of atheism, he was able to mobilize the peasantry in a class rebellion against the bourgeoisie under the guise of returning to the "real" Christianity.[23] Additionally, beyond Marx and Engel's speculation on potential appropriation of religion to the communist cause, neither theorist ever specified a timeline for, nor an active program of, the eradication of religion. Marx merely points out that a society that has advanced to the stage of true communism would not contain religion, since "[r]eligion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions."[24] Instead, as a society advances toward socialism, and eventually communism, religion would theoretically disappear on its own. As Marx states, "[t]o abolish religion as the ***illusory*** happiness of the people is to demand their ***real*** happiness. The demand to give up illusions about the existing state of affairs is the ***demand to***

is critical to understanding its later iterations in the Soviet Union. Marx’

> working class. Such an association cannot and must not be indifferent to lack of class-consciousness, ignorance or obscurantism in the shape of religious beliefs. We demand complete disestablishment of the Church so as to be able to combat the religious fog with purely ideological and solely ideological weapons, by means of our press and by word of mouth. But we founded our association, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, precisely for such a struggle against every religious bamboozling of the workers. And to us the ideological struggle is not a private affair, but the affair of the whole Party, of the whole proletariat.[27]

Here Lenin seems to be mainly discussing the need for disestablishing religious institutions, such as the Eastern Orthodox Church in Russia, because they mislead and "bamboozle" the proletariat. However, the ideology behind the political opposition to the Christian Church in Soviet Russia runs deeper than just a concern of the power of religious institutions in opposing the cause of the proletariat. Lenin posits that at the level of the communist party, religion must not be tolerated, but paradoxically protects the rights of individuals unaffiliated with the party. An earlier passage in Lenin's writing appears to offer clarification of this point:

> Religion must be declared a private affair. In these words socialists usually express their attitude towards religion. But the meaning of these words should be accurately defined to prevent any misunderstanding. We demand that religion be held a private affair so far as the state is concerned. ***But by no means can we consider religion a private affair so far as our Party is concerned*** [emphasis added]. Religion must be of no concern to the state, and religious societies must have no connection with governmental authority. Everyone must be absolutely free to profess any religion he pleases, or no religion whatever, i.e., to be an atheist, which every socialist is, as a rule.[28]

Thus, Lenin's view on religion protected an individual's right to choice of religion, but did not extend such toleration to full-blown religious institutions. Smith, in writing on the comparison between Soviet and CCP religious policy, notes that, following the Bolshevik Revolution, "the

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[27] Vladimir Lenin, "Socialism and Religion," Marxists Internet Archive, 1905.
[28] Ibid.

party programme of 1918 called for ‘systematic anti-religious propaganda to free the masses from their prejudices but without irritating the feelings of others.’”[29] Lenin was being cautious in his approach to religious policy, attacking and isolating the church via propaganda while attempting to avoid aggravation of the masses. Under this method, Lenin’s regime was able to destabilize the Eastern Orthodox Church in Russia, arguably the largest threat to communist power in post-Bolshevik Revolution Soviet Russia.[30] Lenin’s philosophy therefore viewed religion as an opponent to be actively grappled with, but not destroyed at all costs. Soviet policy focused on isolating the powerful native of religious institutions, such as the Eastern Orthodox Church, and conducted aggressive, large-scale propaganda campaigns, though the Soviet government was cautious not to overly aggravate the religious masses until they had secured their rule.

Following Lenin’s death in 1924, Joseph Stalin eventually rose to power and intensified many of the policies put in place by Lenin with the

leitmotif of Stalinist discourse at this time became the ‘class enemy is carrying out its work under the cover of religion.’” [32] To counter this “class enemy” that was supposedly operating under a religious guise, Stalin’s response was to ratchet up the pressure placed on religion as a whole, no longer simply religious institutions. This aggressive, anti-religious, Marxist state policy of the USSR thus grew over the early years of its nationhood to become a combined philosophy, first Marxist-Leninism and then Marxist-Leninist-Stalinism. In both cases of Lenin and Stalin, a charismatic authority figure took the existing framework of modernity and radicalized the role of secularism and religion in conjunction with their own philosophy and circumstances.

Chinese adoption of Western conceptions of the role of religion and secularism in modernity were spurred on by the fear of imperialist ambitions of the Western colonizers and Japan. As can be seen through the analysis of these Western ideological influences, secularism was elevated as the key to modernization while religion and old customs either were to be allowed to fade away, were to be eased out, or were to be actively removed from the populace. Evidence of each of these three positions can be seen at points in the history of the People’s Republic of China through the CCP’s policy directives, with the first two demanding some form of toleration of religion, while the latter, active eradication of religion, revoking any toleration for religious practice. Based on the influences on CCP policy, it is clear that the CCP policy directives would be in some form of contestation with Uyghur Islamic religious practices, a fundamental component of the Uyghur identity. However, before addressing the modern crisis, it is important to analyze the background of another key political component of the clash between the two beyond religious policy: the CCP’s national identity it crafted for all ***minzu*** minority groups in the aftermath of the fall of the Qing dynasty.

[32] Ibid, 79.

Origins of *Minzu* Policy and CCP Toleration

As indicated above, the Chinese adoption of Western values of religion and secularism to modernize Chinese society was driven by fears over imperialist interference in the sovereignty of the post-Qing Chinese nation. Likewise, since the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1912, China has focused on anti-imperialist objectives for its policy on the vast variety of nationality/ethnic groups, or

though Elliot acknowledges the high improbability of China adopting such an understanding of the term due to the international protections specified for indigenous peoples.[36]

Despite Elliot's solution to the modern conundrum involving the term ***minzu***, I have chosen to utilize the term within this paper in the form of "nationality." First and foremost, ***minzu*** appears to be used synonymously with nationality by Chinese elites in the years between the fall of the Qing dynasty and the modern People's Republic of China and is also highly compatible with similar Marxist and Soviet discourses. Second, adopting an alternative definition would unnecessarily complicate the CCP rhetoric of ***Zhonghua minzu***, the concept of a single unified Chinese people crafted out of the multitude of ***minzu*** occupying the territory of the PRC.[37] Lastly, as Elliot notes "just as within the English word "nationality" is the root word "nation", so within the Chinese expression ***shaoshu minzu*** [national minority; ***shaoshu*** is the adjective, "small in number"] there is the word ***minzu***. Both terms are prone to be applied in political contexts, and may be thought to embody an inchoate nationalism or national consciousness that could one day be called into existence."[38] As I contend within this paper, the Uyghur ***minzu*** has developed into a coherent Uyghur identity partially as a reaction against the CCP's own policy implementations with regards to religion and ***minzu***. Using the term ***minzu*** in conjunction with the English translation of nationality therefore assists in providing clarity to the arguments I make with regards to the Uyghurs, and in fact, the Uyghurs themselves have demonstrated their own nationalism through calls for independence from the CCP regime. However, although I utilize ***minzu*** in conjunction with nationality for the purposes of this paper, the reader should certainly

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[36] Ibid, 212.
[37] James Leibold, ***Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism: How the Qing Frontier and Its Indigenes Became Chinese*** (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 98.
[38] Elliot, "The Case of the Missing Indigene," 204.

keep in mind that the term is much more complex, especially in contemporary discussions, than simply meaning ‘nationality.’

Following the collapse of the Qing dynasty, Chinese intellectuals were forced to adopt new conceptions of state structure, transitioning from an empire to a nation-state, in order to remain relevant as a society. Whereas the Qing dynasty, as with all dynasties prior, was an empire, in order to keep up with the imperial West, post-Qing Chinese elites had to reject the empire as a viable state project and instead adapt into the Western formulation of the nation-state. James Leibold, writing on the formation of the modern Chinese nation, writes the following summary of this transition of state formulation:

> [Western] Modernity authenticates the nation-state system as the only legitimate expression of sovereignty, with nations replacing gods and empires as the subject of history and linear progression superseding cyclical transcendence. At the same

One area viewed as a potential source for identity creation in the nation-state construction of Republican era China was the concept of a “national religion.” In the aftermath of the collapse of the Qing empire, the “religion of the overwhelming majority of Han Chinese was neither Buddhist, Daoist nor Confucian, but drew selectively on all three traditions and combined these with elements of local ritual and belief. Popular religion was par excellence local, rooted in networks of cults, festivals and ancestor worship based on the household, territorial communities, guilds and other associations.”[40] Chinese popular religion was by far the most widely practiced religion in China during the fall of the Qing dynasty as a result of the numerical dominance of the Han across Qing territory and converting it to a national religion would have accommodated the majority of Chinese citizenry. However, the adoption of Western values and the desire to modernize led to two major ideological roadblocks. The first obstacle was the previously-mentioned internal Orientalist attitude towards China’s homegrown popular religious sects as “backwards” and anti-modern. The second obstacle was the Western Enlightenment value of the separation of religious power from the government. Thus, attempts at a unified Chinese “national religion” failed due to the inability to nationalize the only religious category widely believed by the majority of Republican Era Chinese citizens.

The question of “national religion” also overlooked the variety of religions practiced by minority groups, often racially and]-Ƕ

shaping identities out of the variety of underlying minority groups, often linked by some combination of religion, race, culture, or geographic region. Sun Yat-sen, the ideological leader of China in the early Republic Era, attempted to capture the diversity of China by "formulation of the Chinese Republic [as] being made up of five constituent nationalities, the term ***minzu***… was used to designate the Han, the Man (Manchus), the Meng (Mongols), the Zang (Tibetans), and Hui (Muslims). Under this schema, the religious identity of the dominant Han remained open to debate, whereas for the four other ***minzu***, it was naturalized as a function of their ethnic identity."[42] However, at this stage ***minzu*** was only

Thus, although all ***minzu*** constitute distinctly unique people, including the Han and other Chinese minority ***minzu***, all of the ***minzu*** of China are to be bound together in a singular Chinese identity dubbed ***Zhonghua minzu***. In this phrase, “Zhonghua” refers to both “China Proper,” the Central Plains of China where China’s ancestral civilization is understood to have originated, and to supra-ethnic, assimilating identity of the Chinese state. Although never fully embraced by the minority ***minzu*** of Sun Yat-sen’s early Republican Era China or necessarily even the other ruling

> rights for nations; then, a close, unbreakable alliance in the class struggle of the proletarians of all nations in a given state, throughout all the changes in its history, irrespective of any reshaping of the frontiers of the individual states by the bourgeoisie.[44]

Thus, Vladimir Lenin called for support of self-conscious national movements in two respects. First, Marxists must recognize the right of all nations, hence nationalities or ***minzu***, to self-determination if so chosen by the nation. Second, Marxists must also support these movements in line with the class struggle of the proletariat of a given state, regardless of any territorial compromise necessary.

Stalin also weighed in on the concept of self-determination for nationalist movements against oppressor nations in 1923, just a year before Lenin passed away and control of Soviet Russia shifted. In writing on the merits of upholding and advocating in favor of self-determination, Stalin states that Marxist support for self-determination of all nationalities "removes all grounds for suspicion that the toilers of one nation entertain predatory designs against the toilers of another nation, and therefore creates a basis for mutual confidence and voluntary union."[45] Thus, Marxism demands cooperation between the oppressed of the world, regardless of nationality, which is supposed to inadvertently lead to trust and the joining together of the oppressed groups in socialist society. However, Stalin goes the extra length of adding apparent stipulations to the rights afforded to ***minzu***, foreshadowing less accommodative and tolerant policies to come: "It is beyond doubt that the labouring masses of the backward peoples are not in a position to exercise the rights that are accorded them under 'national equality of rights' to the same degree to which they can be exercised by the labouring masses of advanced nations."[46] To remedy the situation of the "backwards" nationalities, Stalin suggests that "the

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[44] Vladimir Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination," Translated by Bernard Isaacs and Joe Fineberg, Marxists Internet Archive, 1914.
[45] Joseph Stalin, "Concerning the Presentation of the National Question," Marxists Internet Archive, 1923.
[46] Ibid.

Mongolia was sufficiently prepared for independence. However, the response of the Han Chinese, by far the most powerful ***minzu*** both numerically and politically in post-Qing China, was in strong opposition to the secession of Outer Mongolia, as it undermined the territorial sovereignty of the Chinese nation. Leibold offers insight on the importance of territory under the

> [T]he moment they [Soviet leadership] included Lenin's principle of national self-determination in the party's political program, CCP leaders attempted to circumscribe it. The Comintern's insistence that the CPP support Outer Mongolian independence in the name of socialist brotherhood sharply contradicted the social Darwinian logic [the linear view of history and geo-politics in which the strong are justified in preying on the weak for survival] that had come to reinforce the presumed superiority of the age-old Sinic cultural core, and it threatened to undermine the party's patriotic and revolutionary credentials.[56]

CCP leaders were willing to circumvent problematic aspects of Marxist and Soviet ideology in order to pursue their own sovereign interests, in the process creating their own strain of ideology unique to China: "they [Bolsheviks] ignored China's unique cultural traditions in their application of Marxist theory, and [Mao] called instead for the creation of a new strain of Marxism unique to China and its national form."[57]

In the face of continued foreign imperialism through the invasion of Japan during World War II, the CCP came to fully embrace Sun Yat-sen's conception of ***Zhonghua minzu*** in conjunction with the full implementation of the united front to cooperate with the Kuomintang government against the Japanese invaders. During this tumultuous period in China, Marxist idealism had to be abandoned by the CCP as "[u]nity was now more important than class struggle, and the party urged the settling of all disputes among the nationalities according to the principle that 'brothers that quarrel at home should join forces against an attacker from without.'"[58] Thus, the CCP and the Kuomintang not only called a ceasefire in their civil war, but also called for all the various ***minzu*** to join together to repel the foreign imperialists. Seeing as the Japanese sought to sow discord amongst the various ***minzu*** in order to weaken the Chinese resistance to invasion, a new emphasis on "[f]orming a new, overarching national identity

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[56] Leibold, ***Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism***, 106-107.
[57] Ibid, 98.
[58] Ibid, 103.

[***Zhonghua minzu***] was central to the revolutionary strategies of both the Guomindang [Kuomintang] and the Chinese Communists."[59]

As a net result of the success of the united front and ***Zhonghua minzu*** in repelling the invading Japanese imperialists, this policy remained pivotal to Mao's ideology and policymaking not only post-Japanese invasion, but even after the CCP victory in the Chinese Civil War, also known as the Chinese Communist Revolution. This new, uniquely Chinese policy was independent of previous ideological influences and is best summarized in the following passage by Leibold:

> Mao's new nationality policy represented a clear departure from the earlier Comintern-inspired program. The Leninist principle of national self-determination, with its explicit right of political secession, was replaced by the vaguer promise of the right to manage one's own affairs. Gone too was the previous aim of minority national liberation, now supplanted by the goal of uniting all minzus into a single body to jointly resist the

obuu bo[ ]a
[illegible] Japanese invaders. Finally, the party [illegible]. Fod [illegible] uni ra hes

umbrella term. In the creation of China's national myth, the concept of ***Zhonghua minzu*** was shown to be Han-centric. In connecting the modern iteration of the People's Republic of China with the various different historical dynasties and empires of China, CCP nationalist historians also placed the Han ***minzu*** in a position of superiority over the ***minzu***, leading the more backwards ***minzu*** of the ***Zhonghua minzu*** forward into modernity:

> [O]ver the course of five thousand years, a single Hanzu gradually grew from the Yellow Emperor's clan to the center of the multiethnic Zhonghua minzu. Through the process of this material and cultural envelopment, the Han absorbed countless different clans, tribes, races, and cultural groups. The Han nationality thereby transformed itself into a microcosm of the Zhonghua minzu's collective diversity: its geographic spread became the unified territory of the Chinese nation, its national culture embodied all local and ethnic cultures; and its mongrel blood flowed through the veins of each and every member of the mighty Zhonghua minzu. In other words, within the

non-Han ***minzu*** to Han-oriented governance and historical narratives. The various ***minzu*** were therefore to be tolerated by the Han, as per the united front policy, until these groups could be subsumed by the superior Han nationality.

The application of Wendy Brown's theories on toleration and identity help to further understand the implications of the Han-centric ***Zhonghua minzu*** principles. As has already been mentioned, the united front effectively served as a contingent form of toleration extended to minority ***minzu*** in the face of imperialist threats. Brown's theories help to explain that, at the very least, toleration would serve to perpetuate the opposition of ***minzu*** identities already formed distinct from the CCP prior to the foundation of the People's Republic of China. At the core of Brown's theories are contradictions surrounding the true meaning of the term "toleration." Whereas the Euro-American tradition of political theory has romanticized the term in conjunction with progress and universal human rights, the reality is that toleration is merely a state of conditional coexistence with the difference of the "Other" rather than the acceptance and acknowledgement of the val1o

Thus, the artificial elevation of tolerance as a critical component of human life leads to Western tolerance discourse which "while posing as both universal value and an impartial practice, designates certain beliefs and practices as civilized and others as barbaric."[68] For those barbaric and backwards beliefs and practices, tolerance must be revoked to then allow the liberation — the violent institution of Western ideals — of such backwards people. Thus, tolerance can be seen as a political tool used by Western powers to enforce their own beliefs as universal, with toleration revoked for groups that do not comply with these Western ideals.

Based on the political nature of toleration, its role in establishing Western modernity, and its close association with Enlightenment ideology, the concept of toleration most definitely was adopted alongside other aspects of Western modernity by the CCP in its Chinese nation-building project in spirit through policies such as the united front, even if not in the explicit phrasing. Toleration became a reward granted by the CCP to the various minority ***minzu*** for complying with its policy directives, which in the years prior to the foundation of the PRC were primarily anti-imperialist. Because toleration perpetuates division, ***Zhonghua minzu***, the CCP's collective identity of all Chinese ***minzu***, could be interpreted then as an attempt to get beyond the conundrum of toleration by advancing to a state of acceptance and acknowledgement of the "Other," the minority as equal.

However, due to the Han-centric goals of the CCP's ***Zhonghua minzu***, the "Other," here understood as the Uyghurs, is granted toleration only until they can be effectively subsumed into the ***Zhonghua minzu***. As has been previously mentioned, the concept of ***Zhonghua minzu*** actually constitutes a veiled representation of Han norms, customs, and identity as the foundational structure of Chinese society, while various ***minzu*** are expected to eventually abandon their previous identities to conform with this new, Han-focused Chinese identity. If ***minzu*** were to

[68] Ibid, 7.

reject ***Zhonghua minzu*** as their overarching identity, the CCP

Alatshahri region in the decades prior to attempted incorporation of this region into the PRC due to the increased cross-border travel and trade coming from the Middle East to Asia.[75]

Travelers from oasis to oasis helped to transmit different written copies of ***tazkirah*** around the region, resulting in many similarities between differing stories and even the adoption of certain common stories between different communities, slowly bringing together their religious communities. ***Tazkirah*** were malleable and were shaped as others 'corrected' and added to an original author's work, eventually leading to a convergence of stories into something akin to basic cultural system augmented by Islam.[76] Combined with an increased utilization of the local written vernacular of Turki, these ritual performances led to the more widespread access to ***tazkirah***.[77] Thus, these common stories publicly performed in a ritualistic manner lead to the development of a form of Altashahri identity prior to what scholars and the CCP have historically understood or even acknowledged. A common Altishahri — proto-Uyghur — identity existed under the Qing dynasty and the Republican era of China through shared religious traditions and narratives, augmented by the increasing connectivity of the region throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

Out of this common religious identity naturally arose the concept of a shared national origins for the entire Uyghur people, which inevitably butted against the CCP's own myth of national origins for the Uyghurs contained in the ***Zhonghua minzu***. In the years leading to the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the CCP attempted to bolster the strength of this assimilationist ideology by historically projecting it onto the various ***minzu*** across the several millennia of the history of China. By acknowledging the distinctiveness of of the various ***minzu*** prior to their statuqllyXb X

Xiongnu appear in Chinese language histories as the mortal enemies of the Han dynasty."[79] Regardless of which history a Uyghur subscribed to, both historical claims of Uyghur identity and peoplehood posit Uyghurs as in control of their own identity and justified in their claims to nationhood distinct from the Han-ruled People's Republic of China.

This concept of a historical, unified Uyghur people was concocted specifically against the aims of the united front and concepts of ***Zhonghua minzu***, and to fight back, the CCP developed its own politicized history for the region of Xinjiang. Bovingdon argues that the the CCP had two strategies in creating its own counter to the Uyghur historical claims, the first being that "they applied the frame of class analysis in interpreting the past, insisting that in all periods the affinities of all exploited peoples, regardless of language and culture, were stronger than those of any one group for its corresponding exploiting class — within the boundaries of the 'Chinese nation.'"[80] Thus, due to its role in the liberation of the proletariat within the modern Chinese nation, the CCP's claims to sovereignty transcended those of independent ***minzu*** identity and culture. The second aspect of CCP strategy focused heavily on the ***Zhonghua minzu*** as the natural progression of linear Chinese history:

> [T]hey [Chinese nationalist historians] developed the notion of 'main currents' and 'countercurrents' in history. The 'unification' of many peoples under the rule of powerful dynasties and harmonious relations among the laboring ranks of those peoples were the main currents of Chinese history. Internecine battles among peoples they labelled ***countercurrents***. Official Chinese histories of the Uyghurs used these narrative strategies to prove that Uyghurs had be]c be0 1 n thbsens o

As part of this emphasis of Uyghur's as part of the ***Zhonghua minzu***, CCP historians had to

Han people were once again placed in the center of the mythos of the modern Chinese state, with all various minority ***minzu*** ultimately benefiting from the "enriching" qualities of the Han people, who will inevitably absorb all ***minzu***: "In constructing a myth of Zhonghua cultural antiquity and racial propinquity, Sinic intellectuals transposed the Orientalist discourse of white racial superiority onto China's own minority nationals—rationalizing a paternalistic nationality policy and a Darwinian narrative of Chinese historical development with a single, dominant Han majority at its center."[84]

Such is the historicized nature of the national identity centered on ***Zhonghua minzu*** that the CCP sought to develop. Writing on the role that this identity was intended to accomplish by the CCP, Leibold states:

> So, too, early twentieth-century historians, answering the nationalist appeal to save the nation, attempted to project a desired state of national unity onto China's historical past. In imagining a unified and homogeneous national community, Chinese histori`p g

pushes back directly against the Han and actually forms itself against the Han governance. On the other hand, the CCP sought to enfold Uyghur origin and mythos into the Han narrative of ***Zhonghua minzu***

Soviet Russia. This took the form of the CCP's own authoritarian leader, Chairman Mao Zedong. While discussing the relationship between sovereign power, colonialism, and religion in modern China, Mayfair Yang posits that the aforementioned concerns of Chinese sovereignty in the face of imperialism drove an increase in the power vested in the Chinese political system, which was held in a monopoly by the CCP, over the course of the 20th century:

> Amidst the renewed threats to China's sovereign territory from the Japanese in the 1930s, US nuclear power in the 1950s and 1960s, and the Soviet Union in the 1960s, the state of emergency reproduced a sovereign exception whom

government, do offer some insight into the ideological positions of the CCP during the rule of Mao Zedong. Smith, analyzing Zhou Enlai's position on religion in the early years of the CCP, writes that "Zhou Enlai reported to the party cell of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference that there were two types of religion in China: one was connected to ethnic minorities – Islam, Mongolian and T

> disagree with the Marxist world outlook. The same holds true for the patriotic people in religious circles. They are theists and we are atheists. We cannot force them to accept the Marxist world outlook.[92]

Furthermore, Mao himself emphasized that “this situation will continue for a very long time. If we fail to recognize this, we shall make too great a demand on others and at the same time set ourselves too small a task. Our comrades in propaganda work have the task of disseminating Marxism. This has to be done gradually and done well, so that people willingly accept it. We cannot force people to accept Marxism, we can only persuade them.”[93] Thus, even if Mao does not appear to be directly returning to a tolerant Marxism, he does seem to either be deviating from the harsh Soviet policy or at least returning to a soft Marxist-Leninist in contrast to the

feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism. Such persons are found in political circles and in industrial and commercial, cultural and educational, scientific and technological and religious circles, and they are extremely reactionary."[95] This statement effectively places a target on religious circles, among the other listed groups, to be watched carefully for anti-communist tendencies.

More evidence that Mao's personal philosophy was more similar to that of the Soviets is seen in Mao's earlier writings during the initial phases of the communist revolution in China. To Mao, there are four authority structures that must be overthrown in pursuit of class revolution. Writing on these authorities, Mao states:

> These four authorities--political, clan, religious and masculine--are

toward religion present in Mao's earlier writings dissipated by the time he was made Chairman of the CCP, the following examination of policy demonstrates that Mao slowly returned to this "revolutionary attitude" over the course of his rule.

There were significant differences in the circumstances of the communist revolutions in the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China that led to distinctions in their official philosophies on religious policy in the aftermath of their revolutions. Though Smith acknowledges that early CCP policy did consult and draw upon precedents established by the Soviets, he highlights that CCP policy differed from the Soviets due to a much less structured

> and groups appear to push the envelope too far. Before the onset of the Cultural Revolution, the CCP favoured the institutionalization of religion in ways unseen before in China's history… Through the creation of these associations, the party sought to use the United Front Work Department to enforce compliance with its directives.[99]

Thus, even though the early CCP policy was built on ideology that emphasized the negative role of religion in society, the Chinese government was willing to tolerate religion in order to accomplish other goals that were pressing for the newly formed nation, such as the development of a national identity and establishment of protection against foreign interference. The United Front policy fit into this picture by enabling the CCP to infiltrate religious organizations, leading to surveillance of "problematic" religious organizations, without directly attacking religion in general.[100] Thus, religion clearly still was viewed as an enemy by the Chinese government, but its presence was tolerated, though closely monitored.

Additionally, the state institutionalization and infiltration of religious organizations under united front policy enabled the CCP to co-opt and intervene in the affairs of these religious organizations, indirectly leading to bureaucratic control over religion itself. To carry out this policy, religious officials chosen by the CCP were put in charge of either creating or reshaping religious organizations in an appropriately "patriotic manner."[101] The first instantiation of this policy occurred in Protestant Christianity in China, in which Wu Yaozong was "instructed and entrusted to lead a 'patriotic' movement for the Chinese Protestant churches to become self-ruling, self-supporting, and self-propagating."[102] The emphasis on independence of the churches was a critical move for China, reflecting its concerns of imperialism and defending its

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[99] André Laliberté, "Religion and the State in China: The Limits of Institutionalization," Journal of Current Chinese Affairs 40, no. 2 (June 2011): 4.
[100] Ibid, 897.
[101] Ibid, 897.
[102] Fenggang Yang, ***Religion in China: Survival and Revival Under Communist Rule*** (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2011), 68.

sovereignty. This need for independence was especially pressing for the CCP in both Christianity and Islamic faith organizations, due to the international church community present in both religions. Leung emphasizes that this exact concern over the international nature of certain faiths confronted the CCP in its early years, stating "[t]he Muslim faith, therefore, has always presented a strong and complex challenge that went far beyond simple ideological rivalries. So, in a way, did Christiantity… it is the international and institutional features of the churches that present serious problems for the religious policy makers."[103] Accordingly, early CCP policy avoided directly attacking religious institutions, but instead sought to "nationalize" these institutions by severing their international connections and instating their own personnel. Early CCP policy therefore sought to harness religion in the pursuit of the Chinese communist cause via nationalism. As is shown through this implementation of the United Front policy, the CCP was not only able to fend off imperialist powers and bolster nationalism by rejecting foreign influence and wealth in its religious organizations, but also increase its own authority by subtly taking control of religion in the People's Republic of China under the guise of national security.

With regard to ***minzu*** policy post-Communist Revolution, the CCP was tempered by the promises of respect and autonomy it had promised through the united front; however, the assimilationist nature of ***Zhonghua minzu*** continued to play a prominent role in policymaking even as the term itself disappeared until recently, and was a critical part of Mao's political agenda. Though the CCP supposedly operated on a framework of autonomy similar to "self-determination," the reality is that the operating framework still reflected ***Zhonghua minzu***. The following passage by Leibold is especially helpful with this point:

> As early as 1940, the party asserted that it was the responsibility of the "modern" Han majority, as China's "ruling minzu," to guide the Mongol, Hui, Tibetan, and other "backward

[103] Leung, "China Religious Formal, [illegible]

the whole economy. In the new socialist society, the ideal distribution of consumer materials was established as 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his labor.' Everyone in the country was supposed to participate in labor of material production."[106] The emphasis on material production even in the countryside led to the neglect of adequate farming and agricultural yield, sparking widespread famine and political violence leading to at least 45 million deaths during this period.[107]

Surprisingly, recovery from the resulting famine wrought by the Great Leap Forward led to a widespread religious revival across China, including Islam for the Uyghurs in Xinjiang.[108] This revival of religious beliefs and practices disturbed officials of the atheist CCP, especially in light of the economic message of the Great Leap Forward: "[m]oney, they [CCP officials] reported, was being 'wasted' on temple reconstruction, on extravagant temple festivals and on lavish marriage and funeral rituals."[109] Of further concern for these officials was the amount of time that the populace was "wasting" on religious activity that could otherwise have been devoted to production, along with the apparent "wasted" labor of clergy members. As a result, religion was discouraged, clergy membership reduced, and religious sites appropriated by the state into secular uses.[110] Furthermore, the religious revival coupled with the failure of the Great Leap Forward led the CCP in the early 1960s to adopt a more hostile rhetoric towards religion, implying that "the religious revival was being stirred up by landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries and 'bad elements' in order to sabotage socialist construction."[111] In the final years of this period, "[t]he previously salient distinction between 'religion' and

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[110] F. Yang, ***Religion in China***, 70.

[111] Smith, "On Not Learning from the Soviet Union," 94-95.

‘superstition’ was now increasingly challenged, as the earlier rhetoric of treating religion with respect was jettisoned.”[112] This period of religious policy was characterized by increasing hostility and tension on behalf of the CCP with regard to the contradiction between its newfound emphasis on economic production and the glaring resurgence of religiosity across China.

The increasingly aggressive and oppressive religious policy surrounding the Great Leap Forward foreshadowed the impending policy of the era following this period known as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (or simply the Cultural Revolution). This new period, lasting from 1966 to 1979 and ending with Mao’s death, is

old ideas. All religion [officially recognized and not] fell into the categories of the four olds."[114] The eradication of the 'Four Olds' were to be replaced by Chairman Mao Zedong's cult of personality as represented by the revolutionary cadres of Red Guards. It is clear, therefore, that one of the primary aims of the Cultural Revolution was the absolute eradication of religion in the People's Republic of China.

Perhaps most ironic is that the CCP elected to maintain its outward portrayal of freedom of religious belief through the language of the operating constitution of the People's Republic of China throughout this period. Fenggang Yang points out that the religious freedom as outlined in the Common Program in the first several years of CCP governance was not only ratified in official constitution in the 1954 First National People's Congress, but freedom of religious belief was also retained in the 1975 reformed constitution, albeit with an added protection for the freedom of atheist propaganda.[115] Thus, there was an inherent contradiction between the official doctrine of the CCP in the People's Republic of China and the practical implementation of its policies with regard to religion. As already mentioned, Yang has pointed out that the official constitution of the People's Republic of China has never adhered to its constitution as a guiding principle for religious policy.[116] However, Leung offers a deeper take on this contradictory phenomenon, stating that "[u]nder Mao 'religious freedom' had been implemented to give Marxism-Leninism the upper hand in the church-state struggle through the exercise of teaching authority."[117] In this sense, religious policy of toleration was a tool to gain control of religious organizations in the CCP before eventually being used to enforce a mandated secularization of the entirety of the People's Republic of China in pursuit of an ideal CCP modernity. Once Mao

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[114] F. Yang, ***Religion in China***, 73.
[115] Ibid, 74.
[116] Ibid, 74.
[117] Leung, "China Religious Freedom Policy," 901.

and the CCP felt confident in its sovereign power, this toleration was revoked as religion as a whole was viewed as “backwards,” “barbaric,” and contrary to CCP ideals, therefore in need of violent and oppressive techniques to implement the desired compliance.

Durkheimian Theory in Xinjiang

Before continuing on the central argument of this paper, that the oppressive policies in Xinjiang will ultimately fail to gain the integration of the Uyghurs into the CCP’s shared

As part of his analysis of primitive religions, Durkheim argues that humanity has an inherently double nature. Under this twofold system, Durkheim posits that there is the individual self, which manages the profane (non-religious) aspects of life. However, there also exists a social self, which transcends the individual and bonds with others, leading to the formation of society. This social self is also what interacts with the sacred, or religious, an area of life understood as wholly distinct from the profane. Describing this system, Durkheim states that "man is twofold. Within him are two beings: an individual being that originates in the organism and whose sphere of action is strictly limited by this fact; and a social being that represents within us the higher reality of the intellectual and moral order that we know through observation — by which I mean society."[119] Thus, Durkheim believed that this two sided nature of human existence is ultimately what enables society to form in the first place.

Though the twofold nature of humanity ***enables*** societal formation, collective ritual is posited by Durkheim as the

make those contacts more intimate. This in itself causes a change of consciousness."[121] Durkheim's last line thus indicates that as people's consciousness is changed, they are molded together in a sense of shared commonality and identity. Lastly, while attempting to describe exactly how collective effervescence supports a collective society, Durkheim offers the following insight:

> [During collective effervescence] what then occupies their thoughts are common beliefs, common traditions, the memories of great ancestors, the collective ideal of which they are the incarnation — in short, social things… Society, then, is foremost in people's minds; it dominates [and directs] their conduct; which amounts to saying that at this time society is more alive, more active, and consequently more real than in ordinary times.[122]

Thus, under Durkheim's framework, the social self is engaged during religious rituals and pushed into a state of collective effervescence, which in turn binds individuals together into a collective identity.

Under the Durkheimian theory of ritual and society, religion plays a pivotal role, as the individual self is incapable of gen

countered and held in check by antagonistic te ch

When the religious landscape of the Uyghur region prior to the formation of the People's Republic of China is evaluated in this theoretical religious context, it is clear that there existed a pre-CCP Uyghur identity centered on the existence of a uniquely Uyghur form of Islam. The rituals of the Uyghur people outside of Islam, such as the public performances of ***tazkirah***, serve to reinforce the distinction of the Uyghur people from other Islamic turkic peoples, while much more apparent distinctions exist between the Uyghurs and Han China simply on the basis of Islam. As such, the early proto-Uyghur identity clearly demonstrates Durkheim's notion of ritual and collective identity, in which people from common localities are assembled under ritual in collective effervescence.[126]

Mao's launch of the Cultural Revolution provides the first look at attempts to intervene in the ritual mechanisms of Durkheimian theory, as the policies of the Cultural Revolution severely disrupted and outlawed the ritual religious practices of the Uyghurs. As demonstrated above, religion was a central part of the identity of the Uyghur people. By closing the borders, the CCP ended practices such as the ***hajj***, reducing connection to the ***ummah*** and ending a longstanding ritual practice for Uyghurs. During this oppressive decade, Uyghur people were often forced to consume pork,[127] a feature of Islamic culture that Durkheim would point to as a ritual of the negative cult — a religious prohibition — important for consolidating social identity.[128] In forcing consumption, the CCP sought to violate this negative cult, and lead Uyghurs away from Islamic religiosity. Furthermore, the destruction of shrines and mosques resulted in a reduction in ritualistic spaces, in which Uyghurs conducted Islamic rites such as daily prayer and ***tazkirah*** performance. The outright ban of Islamic Sharia law resulted in an inability to fully express and practice all the values of Islam communally in the public sphere. Each of these oppressive

[126] Ibid**,** 259**.**
[127] Mukherjee, "Comparing China's Contested Borderlands," 69.
[128] Durkheim, ***The Elementary Forms of Religious Life***, 224.

Durkheim’s processes of ritual and collective effervescence, supposedly disrupting the identity of a people. However, this outlook ignores the fact that a lack of toleration also perpetuates division; the difference for intolerance is that this division is expressed through violence and oppression. If anything, intolerance perhaps elevates the extent to which the oppressed identity is formulated against the oppressor. The collective oppressed people are placed into a pseudo-liminal state, distinct and separate from the oppressor, further entrenching the divide between the identity of the collective-self and the “Other.” Though, at the surface level, the outside prevention of a group's ability to perform religious rituals would seem to indicate the breakdown of an identity, I push back against this traditional understanding of Durkheim by suggesting that unwanted prevention religious ritual maintains the divide of the Uyghurs and CCP.

Return to Toleration and Islamic Revival

Following the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, power gradually shifted to a new Chinese political leader, Deng Xiaoping, in the year 1978. From the beginning of Deng Xiaoping’s reign at the head of the People’s Repu r

paper. Though some restrictions remained in place, compared to the prior aggressive enforcement of atheism, the CCP policy to a period of relative toleration of religion.

With the transition of power from Mao Zedong to Deng Xiaoping, numerous aspects of Chinese policy changed, including certain religious restrictions that were lifted in the 1980s. First, some of the shrines and mosques in Xinjiang that were confiscated by the government under Mao were returned to religious groups and restored to functionality.

period of eased tension, though still not completely devoid of religious restrictions, lasted until the late 1990s and early 2000s.

When restrictions on religious groups were lifted under the rule of Deng Xiaoping, the most recognizable rebound in Uyghur Islam lay in the rapid restoration of destroyed Islamic ritual spaces and construction of new religious spaces across Xinjiang, whether they be mosques or shrines. As Finley points out, the number of mosques within Xinjiang grew by a factor of five from 1979 to 1989, showing a massive resurgence in religious property. [135] Mosques play an important role within the Durkheimian framework of religion, as religious property constitutes a religious ritual space. Mosques are a place of prayer, a critical ritual in Islam. The expansion of the quantity of mosques therefore does indicate an increase in Islamic ritual conduct, but only if attendance of these mosques rises as well. Interestingly, Finley notes not only an increase in attendance and religiosity of Uyghurs in Xinjiang over this time but also documents a sort of "peer-pressure" effect on other Uyghurs as they begin practicing Islam after the relaxation of CCP regulations.[136] Whereas this peer-pressure effect might initially draw into question the true religiosity of mosque attendees in the 1980s and 1990s, ultimately this question is irrelevant to the Durkheimian understanding of religion as well as the resurgence of Uyghur identity. Because religion and identity arise from ritual, the initial intention behind those attending the mosque is not pertinent because by merely attending, even through peer pressure, Uyghur mosque attendees reinforce Islam as associated with the Uyghur identity. As long as these new attendees of mosques continue to participate in Islamic ritual with the Uyghur community, religious sensibilities will follow according to the following quote by Durkheim: "Every time we are in the presence of a ***type*** of thought or action that uniformly imposes itself on particular wills or

[135] Ibid, 634.
[136] Ibid, 638.

intellects, that pressure exerted on the individual discloses the intervention of the collectivity."[137] Thus, even if the impulse to attend a mosque stems from peer pressure, the result is both a reflection and reinforcement of the Uyghur societal identity. Additionally, Durkheim's notion of identity fits into this pie a(

modern times, the periods of social unrest in the People's Republic of China had dire implications on the Uyghur people's observance of Islamic dietary law. During the Cultural Revolution, it was common for Uyghurs to be forced to consume pork to reinforce that they were not under the thrall of religious ideologies.[142] This ritual abstention had to be broken in order to stay in the good graces of the CCP, resulting in a violation of Uyghur identity and principles — Chinese values and traditions literally being forced down the throat of Islamic Uyghurs. Yet, after over a decade of religious persecution during the later years of Mao's rule, dietary following of ***halan*** and ***haram*** foods also resurged along with mosque numbers; many Uyghurs grew to once again view the ritual restrictions of ***halal*** and ***haram*** as fundamental to their identity as Uyghurs, and as Muslims.[143] This system of prohibition, Durkheim'

A component of the solidarity developed with the Uyghur Islamic revival lies not only in the increase in Uyghur identity but also an increase in solidarity with the broader Islamic community, the ***ummah***. With the incorporation into the PRC, Xinjiang was largely isolated from the global community. Yet, Deng Xiaoping's relaxation of restrictions combined with an increase in globalization led to an immediate reconnection to the ***ummah***, largely in central Asia and the Middle East.[150] An increase in the import of Islamic materials further encouraged Uyghur Muslims to renew their faith. The Qur'an was not even available in the Uyghur language until 1986, and its translation inevitably increased the access to broader Islamic thought and practices in Xinjiang.[151] Studying abroad in Middle Eastern countries also was a prominent factor in the connection to the global Islamic community.[152]

Undoubtedly, one of the largest rituals factor of Islam is the ***hajj***; however, due to the geographic distance of Xinjiang, the ***hajj*** has only ever been an Islamic ritual undertaken by a minority of Uyghurs, though it does remain a part of the Uyghur Islamic identity. This annual ritual journey to Mecca is regarded as a necessity of any devout Muslim and was interrupted when the CCP closed Xinjiang's borders. However, with Deng Xiaoping's reopening of China's borders, Uyghur Muslims were once again allowed to perform the ***hajj***. Writing in the midst of the Uyghur Islamic revival, Joanne Finley notes that, "the hajj experience is at the very least serving to increase the sense of religiosity among pilgrims and their neighbourhoods back home, and to enhance their sense of being part of a broader Islamic community."[153] In this sense, the Islamic ritual pilgrimage of the ***hajj*** serves not only to strengthen the Uyghur identity, but to bind it with other Islamic nationalities that performed the same ritual journey (and so distinguish them

[150] Mukherjee, "Comparing China's Contested Borderlands," 69.
[151] Finley, "Chinese Oppression in Xinjiang," 643.
[152] Ibid, 645.
[153] Ibid, 644.

further from non-Muslims back home). As a result of these journeys, Uyghur Muslims returning from the ***hajj*** also brought back with them new Islamic thought patterns from abroad, adding new Islamic thought patterns into the Islamic ideology of the Uyghurs.[154]

In light of this period of relief from oppressive restrictions, many Uyghurs look back on this era favorably. Sean Roberts, in his analysis of CCP justification of present day oppressive policies, writes the following of the post-Mao lifting of religious restrictions:

> Many Uyghurs who lived through the 1980s to this day call this time the 'Golden Period' in recent Uyghur life, remembering it for the hope it provided for a different future and a different China. In retrospect, if these accommodating policies had been sustained, it is likely that Uyghur would have been more readily integrated with Chinese society during the 1990s, especially if the PRC had recognized the XUAR as the Uyghurs' homeland and had instituted substantive ethnic autonomy there.[155]

The post-Mao Islamic Revival in Xinjiang is arguably the most freedom Uyghurs have experienced since Xinjiang's incorporation into the People's Republic of China and the

Chen Quangguo as Party Secretary in Xinjiang in 2016. The detention camps of the CCP in Xinjiang constitute the latest attempts to break the Uyghur identity and assimilate the Uyghur people into the ***Zhonghua minzu***, this time by force.

Several recorded incidents in Xinjiang appear to show this very issue of toleration allowing the perpetuation of a divide, as the toleration under Deng Xiaoping eventually led the Uyghur people in the midst of the Islamic Revival to be emboldened in airing their grievances with the CCP along with their desire for independent statehood.

uncoordinated responses to instances of state oppression. However, reports on both incidents invoke some form of religious involvement, indicating that, despite the increased religious freedom of the Uyghurs, these alleviations allowed the reconnection of Uyghurs to their core identity as a people and emboldened their ability to organize and protest CCP decisions they viewed as unjust.

To the CCP, these events, among many others following the Islamic Revival, required a harsh crackdown on the Uyghurs in order to quell the unrest and bring about some stability to the XUAR. Government officials throughout all of the People's Republic of China were already on high alert in the early 1990s due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, which "sparked fear throughout the CCP that the PRC could face a similar fate to the now defunct USSR, but it sparked particular fear amongst those CCP officials responsible for governing the Uyghur homeland."[159] Due to the Uyghurs' historical connection and proximity to Russia, Roberts states that "[m]any Uyghurs from China had witnessed the twilight of Soviet power, the fall of communism, and the emergence of Central Asian nation-states… For many Uyghurs, these events renewed hope of attaining independent statehood."[160] The Uyghur resistance to CCP governance once again threatened the CCP's ***Zhonghua minzu*** and prompted a harsh reaction to attempt to destabilize the Uyghur identity and destroy any claims to a distinct nationhood. Furthermore, the Islamic components of these Uyghur disturbances worried the CCP, as "[t]he combination of an ideology of self-determination with Islamic religiosity apparent in the Baren incident raised fears in the government that Uyghurs may be organizing a religiously inspired resistance movement to Chinese rule."[161] CCP crackdowns therefore not only targeted the general components of Uyghur identity, but Uyghur Islamic attributes specifically; what limited

[159] Ibid, 54.
[160] Ibid, 54.
[161] Ibid, 53.

toleration existed post-Mao was once again revoked, and Uyghur Muslims, rather than all of religious believers, were equated with “barbarians” and “backwards” society.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Deng Xiaoping’s economic liberalization to integrate the various ***minzu***

essentially being used to pay for the silence of the Uyghurs while simultaneously destroying Uyghur cultural remnants in pursuit of modernization and development. This aspect of the Uyghur identity conflict furthered the divide and reinforced the perceived need of the CCP to revoke toleration and therefore treat the Uyghurs as outside of the laws applicable to the CCP's governance of the ***Zhonghua minzu***.

As part of the CCP's crackdowns on the Uyghur people, and all Muslims of Xinjiang post-Islamic Revival, the CCP sought to lump Uyghur separatists together with other unsavory elements of modern society to furthering the 'Othering' of the Uyghur people and justify even harsher policy measures. To accomplish this feat, the CCP classified separatism as being part of the "three evils," which constituted terrorists, extremists, in addition to separatists. The first instantiation of this grouping occurred in the 1998 meeting the "Shanghai Five," a meeting of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan to resolve border issues and advance diplomatic relations. During this meeting, the CCP added fighting the "three evils" to the agenda of the group, and had Uyghur nationalists branded as being amongst ''terrorists,' 'extremists,' or 'separatists,' categories of population which the PRC has framed collectively as the 'three evils' and one of the most existential internal security threats to state and society."[164] By associating Uyghur separatism with terrorism and extremism, the CCP was able to deal a blow to credibility of the Uyghur people and their calls to autonomy, isolating them from other ***minzu*** within China along with the international community due to the inherently negative feelings of people towards these phenomena, all while further entrenching the Han and the CCP against the Uyghurs. Thus, "[t]he power of the 'three evils' was that it blurred the lines between three different perceived threats, equating them as a unitary threat in the policies of the states concerned. For the PRC, it

[164] Ibid, 3.

was critical that ‘separatism’ was included in this trinity of security threats to allow coordination on combating Uyghur calls for self-determination.”[165]

This strategic rhetorical move on behalf of the CCP represents yet another adoption of Western societal tools to be co-opted by the CCP to serve its own purposes in China, not that terrorism was utilized for apolitical reasons by the West either. Originating in the US in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the international War on Terror launched by US President Bush came to involve more than the simple demand for justice, serving to justify US pursuit of national interests in the Middle East. Furthermore, Islamophobia was stoked in the West as Islam was reduced to a violent religion in the framing of the so-called ‘Clash of Civilizations.’ Similarly, the War on Terror was utilized by the CCP for political purposes as was the case for Western nations, while also leading to the same feelings of Islamophobia for the Xinjiang region. As further policies were implemented by the CCP, the policies became more and more reductionist in scope. While Uyghur separatism intially was the target of this association of separatism, extremism, and terrorism, more aspects of the Uyghur identity were roped into this association. Uyghur Islam was pulled into this association as well, with any religious actions beyond state sanctioned or recommended protocols warranting scrutiny and possible internment. While toleration was revoked in the West for Islam in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, China similarly revoked toleration of Islam within Xinjiang due to the fears of its ability to unite

After a particularly concerning outburst of violence in Urumqi, the CCP officially stepped up its pressure on the Uyghurs through a new set of policies beginning in 2014. After bombs were set off in a train station in Urumqi, “President Xi Jinping launched a so-called “People’s War on Terror”, transforming Xinjiang into a digital police state.”[168] Surveillance and government tracking of any Uyghurs determined to be a potential threat became commonplace under these new policies. Any number of traits could trigger inclusion on the surveillance listings, including something as simple as attending mosque, avoiding alcohol, or refusing to eat pork. With the arrival of Chen Quanguo as the CCP secretary for Xinjiang in 2017, the CCP officially began the development and use of the detention camps in order to further control and intervene in Durkheim’s collective identity as demonstrated by the Uyghurs.

The very existence of the CCP’s harsh and oppressive policies over 70 years pival o_r(ed,y'litrin

Durkheim to the CCP's policies, stating that "It's very clear that religious practice is being targeted… They [the CCP] want to fragment [Uyghur] society, to pull the families apart and make them much more vulnerable to retraining and re-education."[169] Further summarizing these characteristics of the current policy regime, Roberts of

As was discussed in the theoretical framework put forth in the previous section, intolerance does not lead to assimilation. Although intolerance does enable an oppressor to violently intervene in the collective ritual process, supposedly disrupting the identity of a people, such a method with the intent of ***assimilation*** will ultimately fail. This failure is due to the fact that intolerance also perpetuates and strengthens division rather than fostering unity between competing identities because the oppressed identity is reinforced against the oppressor through conflict and struggle. The oppressed people under an intolerant regime enter into a pseudo-liminal state, reinforcing the difference between the self and the "Other." In this case, the CCP is able to disrupt the traditional religious components of the Uyghur identity through the detention camps and other oppressive policies. However, by nature of these oppressive policies, the CCP will fail to assimilate the Uyghurs because these policies maintain the distinction between Uyghur identity and ***Zhonghua minzu*** rather than fostering a sense of compromise and unity between them. Most effectively demonstrating this point is that a recent interview with a man who was detained the camps states "[i]nstead of re-educating him, he says his experience at the camp 'made me hate the government even more.'"[171]

Conclusion

In the CCP's pursuit of constructing a cohesive Chinese national identity during and after the Chinese Civil War, Chinese officials selectively drew from Western ideologies to pursue their own version of Western modernity. These ideologies helped to shape the CCP's policies with regard to its various ***minzu*** and religion, as managed through the Western concept of toleration. Tolerance appears to be contingent on the acceptance of the CCP's shared Chinese identity, while

[171] Schmitz, "Ex-Detainee Describes Torture In China's Xinjiang Re-Education Camp."

minzu towards the Han-defined Chinese modernity. Furthermore, the situation in Xinjiang demonstrates that toleration is not a short-term solution to a preexisting conflict, it merely allows the perpetuation of both sides' grievances. The return to toleration following the intolerant period of Mao Zedong brought about neither the status quo nor a reduction in religious belief in Xinjiang, but a resurgence of Islam in the region. To attempt to solve the current issue between the Uyghurs and the CCP through the re-imposition of religious tolerance for the Uyghurs is a naive Western proposal that would most certainly end once again in a burgeoning Uyghur identity followed by hostile CCP policy. It is possible that had the CCP crafted their unified Chinese identity without the centrality of the Han ***minzu*** and placed more emphasis on equality and mutual respect, the CCP may have been able to successfully generate the originally envisioned ***Zhonghua minzu***. However, the reality is that the CCP's emphasis on the Han people's burden of lifting the "backwards" minority ***minzu*** established a hierarchy from the very beginning of the CCP's reign. Thus, the case of the modern Chinese nation-state demonstrates that even a tolerant secular regime cannot successfully integrate multiple peoples without force if that regime does not guarantee each ***minzu*** true equality along with an equal share in the national identity.

Based on this analysis of the Uyghur-CCP identity conflict, several conclusions can be made concerning the interaction of religion and nationalism. While religion has served as the basis of nationalism in many instances around the globe, the CCP went the opposite direction during the formation of the People's Republic of China, rooting itself not even in liberal secular attitudes, but in strictly atheist ideology. As such, it would seem that any religion in the People's Republic of China is inherently opposed to Chinese nationalism and therefore separatist to a degree. However, as China shifted its position post-Mao, it became clear that religion under CCP

religion is not inherently separatist, with religion only being viewed as such if a religious group rejects CCP nationalism.

In this sense, the CCP demonstrates that religion is only viewed as separatist dependent on how the government of a nation chooses to define itself. The modern conflict between the Uyghurs and the CCP therefore demonstrates that, by choosing to define itself in terms of secularism and atheism, all religion was inherently alienated and separatist when confronted with atheist Chinese nationalism. Post-Mao, this opposition of religion and nationalism shifted from being inevitable, to enabling religion to be subservient to Chinese nationalism. However, if religion was not subservient to Chinese nationalism, it was to once again be viewed as separatist. In this sense, a government framing of its nationalism determines what religions are allowed to exist as part of its governed society, dictating which other religions are therefore separatist. In the case of the United States, religion's role in society is traditionally understood as being up to the individual, and protected through the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause of the U.S. Constitution; however, certain court cases have demonstrated that religions in the United States must still adhere to a certain sense of public order. In the 1879 ***Reynolds v. United States*** case, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected a claim by the Mormons to be exempted from a law prohibiting polygamy, blocking their ability to practice an aspect of their religion. Closer to the present day, the 1990 ***Employment Division v. Smith*** case upheld the prohibition of peyote by Native Americans even when stipulated by religious

ideas can be seen even in tolerant societies such as the United States, and the actions of the CCP

currently, I believe that the conflict of identity could be resolved in one of two manners, though neither actually fulfills the CCP's desired assimilation of the Uyghurs. First, the removal of justification of Han superiority and the treatment of Uyghurs as true equals rather than as the "Other" which must be subjugated. In this process, greater autonomy, and even self-determination would be afforded to the Uyghurs, likely resulting in a degree of separation from the People's Republic of China. This separation and autonomy would allow time to heal the wounds of CCP rule in the minds of the Uyghur people, eventually de-escalating the opposition through which both identities conceptualize the other. However, the likelihood of the CCP backtracking to its established hostile and oppressive policy appears highly improbable given the current attitude of the CCP on the Uyghurs. The first solution offered is perhaps viewed as too idealist by the CCP, and negates its assimilation mission of ***Zhonghua minzu***. Instead, a significantly less humane approach could be adopted by the CCP as well. Should the Uyghurs continue to refuse the CCP's assimilationist mentality, one could see the CCP revoking not only the toleration of Uyghur practices and beliefs, but potentially even the existence of the Uyghur ***minzu***. Such a move would effectively mark a transition from cultural genocide to a traditional genocide of the Uyghur people. Though a transition to outright genocide of the Uyghur people would be met with criticism in Western nations, the world is already split in opinion on the CCP's current detention camps; unless the international community is able to organize, the CCP may decide that the current international climate would enable the full scall genovide of the Uyghurs with little repercussions. Such a decision by the CCP would be the worst possible scenario for the Uyghur ***minzu***, as all religious theory would be irrelevant as the Uyghur people would struggle for survival.

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