

The Disappearance of the “Model Muslim Minority” in Xi Jinping’s China: Intended Policy or Side Effect?

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Abstract

This article critically examines how securitization campaigns by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) turn the country’s Muslim minorities into potential threats, while simultaneously seeking to legitimize the CCP’s repressive security practices. Applying securitization theory, the article examines whether there are ethnicity-based differences in the securitization process, particularly between the Hui and Uyghur Muslim minority groups and why such differences exist. In doing so, the article briefly introduces the different Muslim communities within China, as well as the impact of the Chinese government’s Open Door Policy on Chinese Muslim minorities.

The existential security threat perceived and subsequently leveraged by China originates in demands for increased autonomy, more cultural and religious rights, and, in some cases, formal independence from China by its Uyghur population. Sociopolitical unrest in Xinjiang heightens Chinese insecurities and hardens the CCP’s policies toward the Uyghur minority group inside Xinjiang, as well as other Chinese Muslim minorities, specifically the Hui minority predominantly located in Ningxia. There are significant differences in how the state securitizes these two Muslim minority groups, which can be explained with the use of model minorities. In framing its own Muslim minority

groups as a security issue, China employs the post-9/11 Global “War on Terror” to transform ethnic unrest into a terrorism-based challenge to the Chinese state. As such, the focus of securitization shifted from ethnic identity to religious practice. This conceptual shift underlies state attempts to legitimize its counterinsurgency policies under the principle of combating the “Three Evils” of separatism, terrorism, and religious extremism, which are aimed specifically at religious minorities.

Keywords

Uyghurs, Hui, securitization, China, security policy, model minorities

Introduction

*“No one is in a position to dictate to the Chinese people,
what should or should not be done.”*
(Xinhua 2018)

This article employs securitization theory to understand the domestic security campaigns of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and how such policies turn China’s Muslim minorities into potential security threats. Securitization theory allows for an analysis of whether there are ethnicity-based differences in the securitization process, particularly between the Hui and Uyghur Muslim minority groups and why such differences exist. First, this article briefly introduces securitization theory and its application to nondemocratic contexts. Second, it traces the evolution of the CCP security policy toward Muslim minorities, commencing with the collapse of the Soviet Union and Deng Xiaoping’s Open Door Policy and, in doing so, analyzes the CCP’s shifting securitization practices toward two different Muslim minority groups. What is and what is not a security issue within the Chinese context is intellectually ambiguous. Therefore, the article aims to explain how minority issues become securitized.

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) claims to be a multinational indivisible state, in which the constitution expressly guarantees the freedom of religion and the fair treatment of ethnic minorities, including its 23 million Muslims¹ (Durneika 2018, 429). China has ten predominantly Muslim minority groups, the largest of which are the Hui with 10.5 million people (Friedrichs 2017),

mostly located in Western China's Ningxia Autonomous Region and the Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan provinces. Uyghurs, who are the second largest Muslim minority with an official population of 10.069 million in 2010, are located predominantly in the province of Xinjiang (Mackerras 2018, 199). In contrast to its claims of religious tolerance, China has continued to struggle with its religious minorities who levy allegations of religious persecution against the Chinese government. The government, in turn, insists on the supremacy of the CCP over all religious institutions.

The characterization of Islam as an existential security threat to China was prompted by demands for more autonomy from China by the Uyghur population, as well as perceived linkages between Chinese Muslims and Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups in the Middle East (Mackerras 2001). Periodic sociopolitical unrest in Xinjiang and confrontations between individuals or small groups of minority citizens and the state apparatus heighten Chinese' insecurities about the region's stability and harden the CCP's policies the Uyghur minority group, as well as other Chinese Muslim minorities, including the Hui people. This conceptual shift underlies state attempts to legitimize its counterinsurgency policies under the principle of combating the "Three Evils" of separatism, terrorism, and religious extremism, which specifically target religious minorities (Chung 2006, 80).

The significant differences in how the state securitizes Hui and Uyghurs can be explained by model minorities: Zhao Lisheng and Ma Zhiqiang (2018) claim that in Ningxia, there are no significant ostensible distinctions between the Hui people and the Han majority.² The Hui speak Mandarin and share many Han cultural traditions, allowing them to socialize and even intermarry with Han people, a stark contrast to Uyghurs, who avoid marrying with the Han people (Rudelson and Jankowiak 2004, 311 cited in Meyer 2012, 44). Moreover, Chinese government statistics suggest that the Hui are the most economically successful Chinese Muslim minority group (Ho 2013). Patrik Kristof Meyer (2012, 42) suggests that the Hui's similarity and ethnic proximity to the Han make them sympathetic toward the CCP, who in turn have long viewed the Hui as the type of Muslim that it need not worry about. Conversely, Turkic-speaking Uyghurs (most Uyghurs are Sunni Muslims whose writing system is based on the Arabic script³) often have more in common with their Central Asian neighbors than their Han Chinese compatriots.

The strong integration of Hui Muslims into Han society has led the CCP to portray them as a "model minority," especially when

compared to the Uyghurs. In other words, the Hui are seen as “model Muslims” by the CCP, making them suitable “cultural ambassadors” especially for the Sino-Muslim world trade (Ho 2013). Even in Xinjiang, this reputation allowed the Hui to obtain economic and political advantages over the Uyghurs (Côté 2015, 137). Moreover, Colin Mackerras (1998, 34) suggests that the Hui’s reputation of loyalty to China has allowed them more freedom from CCP scrutiny with regard to their religious practice. Unlike Uyghurs, they have rarely been victims of anti-Muslim sentiment until recently. Until the advent of the Xi Jinping administration, the Hui people could even advocate a form of Saudi-style Salafism in Ningxia, whereas, for Uyghurs, these forms of religious practice have long been unimaginable (Su 2016; Gonul and Rogenhofer 2017; Al-Sudairi 2014, 2016).

This article identifies a shift in the securitization policies from ethnic identity securitization to the securitization of religious practice, specifically Islam, in China which influences the shape of what it calls “Chinese Islam.” By claiming that the security threat posed by Islam is existential, the CCP started to categorize all Muslim minorities, including the Hui people, as potential threats, thereby enabling the CCP to claim legitimacy for its repressive security policies.

Before examining the evolution of CCP security policy toward both minorities in more detail, a review of the underpinnings of securitization theory, as well as their application to nondemocratic contexts, is discussed in the succeeding section.

Securitization in Nondemocratic, Multiethnic Contexts

The broad sociological approach used by second-generation securitization scholars is particularly useful for extending the application of securitization theory beyond the study of Western liberal democracies or the Western-centric perspective. While there is a debate over whether securitization theory can be applied to nondemocratic contexts⁴ (Pratt and Rezk 2019, 3), Juha Vuori’s (2008) use of a variant of the sociological securitization approach to the study of China’s security policies suggests that this theory offers useful insights beyond the study of democracies.

Vuori argues that by highlighting its illocutionary logic (Szalai 2017), securitization can be utilized to study security policies in nondemocratic contexts, in addition to the liberal democratic one, where the majority of empirical analyses have so far been conducted

(Vuori 2008). Nondemocratic regimes, particularly authoritarian systems, draw an ambiguous line between normal and emergency situations because a much broader array of domestic political issues (including most public expressions of political dissent) may be perceived as threatening by the nondemocratic regime. In China, matters without a direct connection to regime stability, such as protests against sexual harassment on public transport, have triggered crackdowns entailing censorship and arrests. Despite asserting complete control over their political subjects and the absence of permitted political challengers, Vuori (2008) suggests that nondemocratic regimes depend on security discourses as legitimators, both with respect to their domestic audience and the international community. Thus, authoritarian regimes such as the Chinese state depend on legitimacy, just as nondemocratic systems do (although such legitimacy may be of a different form and acquired with different methods).

However, the high degree of control exercised by the Chinese state over its citizens and the CCP's absolute control over and censorship of China's national news media pose significant challenges in assessing the response of China's domestic audiences (i.e., the Han majority, the Muslim minorities themselves, and other ethnic and religious minorities in China). While Haiyun Ma (2019) and Jingyuan Qian (2019) identify an increase of anti-Muslim sentiments on social media, the interaction of such online expressions with government censorship is elusive. Moreover, as at least one of the periods analyzed in this article precedes the widespread use of social media, any analysis of anti-Muslim sentiments online would ultimately fail to capture developments over several decades. Thus, as elaborated throughout this article, the authors have decided to focus primarily on the international dimension of the securitization process and on the responses of the international audience, an important aspect of securitization.

The authors suggest that the use of locutionary and illocutionary acts allows the CCP to put forward its rules of governance (as captured by Xi Jinping's use of the phrase "with Chinese characteristics"), which are at odds with liberal democratic conceptions of citizenship or human rights, as legitimate and deserving of acceptance and respect from the international community. Such demands for acceptance and respect entail both noncriticism of and noninterference with what the CCP frames as domestic affairs, as well as affirmative cooperation with China on matters such as climate change, international trade, or

the Global “War on Terror.” Securitization theory reveals how CCP discourses are used to make state repression legitimate vis-à-vis China’s international counterparts including within the United Nations (UN). By casting domestic rivals as part of an international, common, and existential security challenge (“Islamic terrorism”), the CCP seeks to undermine international criticism of its security policies, while presenting itself as a rule-conforming international actor. This strategy complements initiatives to shore up the international legitimacy for China’s nondemocratic regime through, for example, the creation of its own multilateral institutions (such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) and the commission of global infrastructure projects as part of the One Belt One Road Initiative. In this vein, the CCP exercises power not only through coercive mechanisms such as police, military, and legal systems but also through a variety of noncoercive means including institutions, economic benefits, and discourse.

In line with the arguments put forward in this article, securitization scholars have demonstrated that securitization can be used for a variety of purposes beyond the mere legitimization of emergency measures (Vuori 2008). Securitization can be used to mobilize both domestic and international audiences or secure their consent to a given policy. Another important function that securitization can fulfill is maintaining support, delegitimizing opposition movements, and maintaining a general political apathy among nonsupportive segments of the population. Further, nondemocratic regimes, using security discourses as sources of legitimation, may seek to use securitization to construct crises that can be used to “negate other problems or to transform structural difficulties into easy targets” (Bigo 2002, 69). In this respect, nondemocratic regimes that are also multiethnic can resort to securitization to demark and (re)configure boundaries between the majority population and a securitized minority group or between minority groups that are securitized to different extents by the state. Thus, security problems are part of a political spectacle (Edelman 1988) and are constructed with purposes of control. While there appears to be little evidence of Han majority resistance to the framing of Muslim minorities as a security threat throughout the three eras analyzed in this article, the international audience’s reaction to such securitization strategies was much more ambiguous.

With respect to the Chinese state’s own securitization practices, the CCP, like all other autocratic regimes, designs political discourse to have the most persuasive impact on the population by being

explicitly normative and value oriented, thereby seeking to shape the values of their audience. While Western political discourse is typically designed to appease constituents, Chinese political discourse is meant to be persuasive based on particular moral justifications, which are directly linked to the ideology and vision of the CCP. Thus, the aim of Chinese political discourse is to teach and bind audiences to a certain ideological position rather than to disseminate information (Vuori 2008). Vuori's emphasis on legitimacy as the underpinning of all regimes, including authoritarian regimes, is pivotal to understanding Chinese policy toward its Muslim minority groups.

This article seeks to develop Vuori's theories further, in light of the unprecedented policy shifts of the Chinese state toward different Chinese Muslim minorities. Combining both a multiethnic population and a nondemocratic political regime, the Chinese context enables the authors to explore (from a securitization perspective) state practices of otherization and threat definition across two ethnic and religious minority groups. This section argues that despite the absence of democratic accountability, the CCP's domestic security policy initiatives depend crucially on their perceived legitimacy, including within the international community. In order to generate legitimacy for domestic and international audiences, different Muslim minority groups are demarked to domestic and international audiences as either "good" or "bad" Muslims and as "harmless" or "threatening," respectively. Moreover, the responsiveness of securitization practices to wider geopolitical developments reveals the contingency of each group's status on changing sociopolitical contexts. Hence, this article goes beyond the analysis of Marie Trédaniel and Pak Lee (2017), whose study of the Sinicization and securitization in Xinjiang is confined to the state, the Han majority, and the Uyghur minority nexus. By analyzing the effect of CCP policies on two distinct Muslim minorities—the Uyghurs and the Hui—as well as the CCP's attempts to make its security policies legitimate to an international audience, this article reveals intersections between the securitization of ethnicity and the securitization of religion, as well as the implications of a shift from the former to the latter for China's different Muslim minority groups. The move toward an increased securitization of Islam entails the growing securitization of Hui Muslims despite their ethnic similarity to the Han majority. Thus, while Hui Muslims in China have historically been treated as a model minority vis-à-vis their Uyghur counterparts, they were gradually drawn into the adverse effects of the CCP's securitizing

practices. The next section analyzes the evolution of CCP policy toward these two minority groups.

The Evolution of CCP Security Policy toward Muslim Minorities

The evolution of CCP security policy toward Muslim minorities can be traced through three different periods: the post-Soviet Union Era, the Chinese response to 9/11, and the Xi Jinping era. Each period is examined by analyzing policy responses to security incidents and legitimization discourses occurring within the relevant period. As hinted at in the previous section, Chinese securitization practices aim at three audiences: the domestic Han majority, the domestic non-Han minority groups, and the international audience. The following analysis focuses specifically on securitization practices and legitimization discourses aimed at the international audience, which serve to justify individual acts of repression and garner acceptance for China's wider security policy umbrella toward Muslim minority groups. The historical and geopolitical contexts of such discourses and the international audience's responses are also analyzed.

The Post-Soviet Union Era (1990–2001): The Barren and Gulja Incidents

The post-Soviet Union era was shaped by the presidency of Jiang Zemin and a series of policies rooted in Deng Xiaoping's calls for economic modernization and for "freedom of literature and art," which also included a call for more "freedom of religious beliefs." It is important to recognize that Deng's efforts were aimed at the control of possible dissent, which suggests that renewed tolerance did not stem from a greater appreciation of religion but, rather, from its manipulation for the CCP's purposes. The limits of the CCP's tolerance for public expressions of opinion was shown in the crackdown during the 1989 democracy protest in Tiananmen Square.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the priority of Jiang Zemin's agenda shifted toward national security policy and the need to retain international legitimacy for a regime that was both nondemocratic and opposed to the values advocated by an increasingly hegemonic West. The Tiananmen crackdown revealed to the world how brutal, ruthless, and unpopular the CCP regime had become, thus rattling both the CCP's domestic authority and international legitimacy (Laliberté and Lanteigne 2008). Simultaneously, the CCP was judged

harshly by the West and human rights conditions became a prominent issue in many countries' dealings with China. During Jiang Zemin's reign (1989–2001), the West submitted multiple "anti-China" motions to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland 2004). The real challenge confronted by the CCP with respect to its legitimacy in the international arena has been largely understudied by securitization scholars (e.g., Trédaniel and Lee 2017).

However, reflecting on this dimension allows us to better understand the framing of the regime's domestic religious policies. Instead of responding to the international allegations directly, Jiang Zemin made "compromises in almost every other field" (Zhao 2005, 66). China claimed that Western forces used religious freedom and national self-determination as a pretext for supporting the 14th Dalai Lama and his government-in-exile, actions allegedly threatening China's national security. Beyond the CCP's concerns over Tibet, Jiang Zemin issued the *Notice on the Improvement of the Religious Work* on February 7, 1990, which set out the CCP's desire to control religious activities. In 1991, Jiang issued the *Second Notice on Several Questions Concerning Further Improvement of the Religious Work*, which emphasized that all party members including government officials at various levels and all sections of society should be mobilized to go a step further, to be more serious about, more concerned with, and more competent in religious work and to make religion adapt itself to a socialist society (Fang 2014). Jiang Zemin imposed restrictions on religious activities by ordering all places of worship to register, in order to avoid taking advantage of religious reasons to split the country (Fewsmith 2001). An important aspect of the CCP's religious strategy during this period included the policy of the "Three Sentences" (三句话) articulated in 1993. Jiang states:

The correct treatment and handling of the religious question is part and parcel of building socialism with Chinese Characteristics. I want to stress three things: first, the Party's religious guidance should be comprehensively and correctly implemented; second, religious affairs should be administered in accordance with law; and third, religion should be actively guided to be compatible with socialist society. (Gong 2004; Chinese Communist Party News Network)

The policy of the Three Sentences emphasizes that religion should be “according to law,” “actively guided,” and “compatible with socialist society” (Guangwu 2001, 528–29 cited in Potter 2003, 323). Jiang enlarged the Three Sentences by adding an additional sentence—that the principles of national independence and self-government should be firmly upheld—during a speech at the National Work Conference on Religious Affairs on December 10, 2001. With the new regulations toward religion and Muslim minority groups, the CCP as a securitizing actor began to redefine China’s security in terms of what it deemed “proper” expressions of Chinese identity and behavior to ensure national unity. This framing itself defines many non-Han groups as a security threat.

Despite the CCP’s acknowledgement of religion and some improvements in its tolerance of religion, many religious communities did not view the changes as sufficiently far-reaching. Dissatisfaction within the Uyghur communities following the Soviet Union’s collapse and Western criticism of the Tiananmen massacre manifested in several riots in Western China, which is home to many Muslim minority groups. In response, the CCP became more sensitive regarding the security of Xinjiang (Clarke 2011, 218). The CCP was concerned about the possibility of an Islamic revival in neighboring Central Asian states including Afghanistan, which it viewed as a threat to its own internal stability. Specifically, the Uyghurs’ ethnic, cultural, and religious proximity to its Central Asian neighbors sparked fears over the Uyghur community’s separatist ambitions in Xinjiang.

Under the abovementioned circumstances, the CCP developed anxieties over maintaining its authority in Xinjiang, whose “vast natural resources, geostrategic, geographic and political significance [...] are critical to the preservation of the Chinese state and its leadership” (Karrar 2009; Hyer 2006; Rice 2007 in Meyer 2012, 12). Thus, the CCP framed the Uyghurs’ religious beliefs as an alternative allegiance to the Chinese government and also a source of political instability and chaos. In fact, during this time, the primary concern of the CCP was not Islam, but, rather, fears about Uyghur separatism that were discursively conflated with and attributed to religion. This discursive framing coincided with the material reality that some Uyghurs aspired to separate from China and form an independent East Turkestan, a demand that was sometimes made legitimate using religiously inspired rhetoric. As a result, the CCP defined the Uyghurs’ religious activities in Xinjiang as a threat, which manifested in some restrictions

on mosque activities and the performance of Hajj, particularly for Uyghurs. These activities were framed by CCP securitization practices as disloyal and a challenge to China's domestic unity. In contrast, the Hui people across China were permitted to travel on the Hajj and interact more freely with the Islamic world outside China. In fact, with the tacit acknowledgment of the CCP, Hui Muslims, whose religious practice was not securitized by the CCP at this stage, began establishing networks with other Muslim regions that would later develop into economic and cultural exchange. The tolerance of religious, cultural, and economic activities of the Hui people suggests that the Hui were viewed as loyal and unproblematic from a security perspective. This apparent differentiation between Muslim minority groups adds an additional dimension to the securitization processes identified by Trédaniel and Lee (2017) and is exhibited in different government responses to public protests emerging in both the Uyghur and the Hui communities.

In 1990, the Baren Riot in Kashgar (Xinjiang) can be interpreted both as the consequence of international developments and as a trigger of securitization practices toward the Uyghur minority. When hundreds of people gathered outside government offices in Baren to protest against the closure of a local mosque prior to a religious festival⁵ (Amnesty International 2010, 9) and the extension of strict family planning policies to the Uyghurs (Holdstock 2014b), the CCP responded with a long-term strategy to securitize and tighten its control over the Uyghur community. The Baren Riot was not officially framed as an act of Islamic terrorism, but rather as an act of illegal separatist defiance. The CCP's response to the incident resulted in the further securitization of the Uyghur population as dangerous separatists. Notably, when the Hui-Han conflict occurred during the 1990s, such conflicts were not framed by the CCP as pertaining to either separatism or loyalty to the Chinese state. Rather, incidents including a clash between the Hui and Han residents of Yuanyang (Henan) were framed as dissatisfaction based on grievances rooted in poverty and inequality (Jiang and Tian 2015, 129).

As the CCP desperately sought to boost the national economy, the exploitation of natural resources in Xinjiang became an increasingly attractive prospect. Thus, the party committed major resources to boosting economic growth in Xinjiang including the exploitation of Xinjiang's oil and gas reserves. As a consequence, large swathes of the Han population were transferred to Xinjiang

as part of economic development policies (Becquelin 2004a; Côté 2011). These policies amplified dissatisfaction among Uyghurs, as jobs and economic opportunities were increasingly being transferred to the Han population. Predictably, such dissatisfaction caused further riots, seemingly confirming the CCP's framing of Uyghurs as threatening—the Gulja Riots (also known as the Yining Riots) were a series of demonstrations and protests in Xinjiang in February 1997. The Uyghurs gathered in Yining to protest the Chinese government's harsh policies toward them, including restrictions on religious and cultural activities in Xinjiang (e.g., traditional Uyghur gatherings or *meshrep*). In addition to protesting the perceived infringements upon their religious and cultural rights, the Uyghurs requested that legislative autonomy regulations—which ostensibly governed all ethnic minority regions in China and gave groups such as the Hui considerable cultural freedoms—also be respected in Xinjiang. The conflation of demands for autonomy with the calls of some Uyghurs for Xinjiang to secede from the PRC confirmed the separatist framing of the threat discursively ascribed to the Uyghurs. More than 150 people were reportedly killed by the security forces during the uprising (Amnesty International 2007 cited in Wayne 2009, 250).

Again, the imposed restrictions affected the Uyghurs specifically and had scant impact on the Hui Muslim minority, highlighting the ethnic differentiation among Chinese Muslim minorities within CCP securitization strategies at this stage. The Hui people were then able to dominate the state-controlled Islamic Association of China (IAC) and cooperate with the CCP in defining the curricula of Islamic Scripture Academies, thereby asserting themselves and their religious practices as unproblematic from the perspective of the CCP (Glasserman 2016).

In light of the two riots discussed, the CCP bolstered its campaign against separatism in Xinjiang, which it labelled as a “people’s war” against “ethnic separatisms and illegal religious activities” (*Xinjiang Daily* 1998 cited in Becquelin 2000, 88). While this discursive framing may have been effective with respect to the CCP's domestic audience (Trédaniel and Lee 2017), beyond its promises of gradual “liberalization,” the Chinese state was still lacking a compelling narrative to legitimize its security policy to an international audience. Around 1999, Chinese government discourse officially started referring to a terrorist threat emanating from the Uyghur minority in Xinjiang (Tanner and Bellacqua 2016, 8). The Baren Riot, almost a decade earlier, had become a launch pin for a shift in the framing of Xinjiang's

politics of dissent. Though unrest was present in Xinjiang even before the formation of the PRC, the geopolitical changes triggered by the Afghan War and the collapse of the Soviet Union triggered the framing of the Baren Riot and subsequent Uyghur unrest as an existential separatist threat that was tied to both the Uyghurs' ethnicity and religion. Thus, the CCP transitioned from its 1990s anti-separatist campaigns in Xinjiang to a counterterrorism campaign in the early 2000s and applied significant extraordinary measures that undermined religious freedoms for the Uyghurs that the Hui continued to enjoy. As the next section illustrates, this evolution in PRC policy was to be shaped dramatically by the "September 11th terrorist attacks and the corresponding change in the discourse of the international system, in conjunction with the launch of the, so called, 'War on Terror'" (Bakshi 2002 as cited in Aris 2009, 467; Oresman 2003).

The Securitization of Chinese War on Terror (2001-2012): The Chinese Response to 9/11

September 11, 2001 ushered in an array of new policies across the world using the framing of a global security threat that could only be addressed by a "War on Terror." This framing demarked alleged differences between Muslims and non-Muslims and resulted in the securitization of social life across many geographical contexts, including in China, where participation in a Global "War on Terror" became a legitimization narrative for its oppressive security policies toward Muslim minority groups. Terry Narramore (2015, 115) remarks that 10 days after 9/11, the Secretary of the Communist Party Committee for the region declared that "Xinjiang is not a place of terror." Soon thereafter, China's response to 9/11 manifested in new regulations toward Muslim minority groups, in particular Uyghurs. Many such policies were supported by the Hui-dominated IAC, which aligned Hui modernist practices of Islam with Jiejing's (解经) policy of demarking Sufi and other Islamic practices common among Uyghurs as "false" and harmful (Glasserman 2016, 53). Hui participation in the demarcation of Uyghurs as threatening and problematic from a security perspective suggests that the securitization process identified by Trédaniel and Lee (2017) is perhaps more complex than originally identified by the authors and entails the elevation of one "model" Muslim minority group at the expense of the other. As such, the Hui acquiescence within the IAC's demarcation of Uyghurs' religious and

cultural practices as problematic can be interpreted as evidence of their acceptance of the CCP's securitization practices among some domestic audiences.

In an attempt to associate itself with the hegemonic Western powers in the international system, China's immediate response to 9/11 took the form of Jiang Zemin's support of the American administration of George W. Bush. The CCP tried to change China's image by framing terrorism as a common enemy, which must be responded to by means of international cooperation (Chung 2018; Rodríguez-Merino 2019, 32). With 9/11, Chinese government's public discourse on terrorism⁶ changed dramatically, with state media speaking more openly about violence in Xinjiang to frame itself as being affected heavily by terrorism "just like the United States" (Tanner and Bellacqua 2016, 24). Although the framing of terrorist incidents in the United States and Europe often referred to a broad "Islamist" threat, the CCP applied the new discursive frame of terrorism specifically with respect to the Uyghurs. Unlike the Uyghurs, the Hui people were seen by the CCP as a minority group minimally influenced by external Islamic groups or revivals (Li and Ji 2015, 165).

With respect to religious policy, it is important to note that President Hu Jintao, who took office in March 2003, had previous experience as Party Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). During Hu's administration, tensions between the security forces and the Tibetan minority escalated into several violent confrontations that were framed by Hu as "core national security interests with the potential to either 'safeguard national unification or to split the motherland'" (Hu Jintao cited in Topgyal 2011a, 197). Hu established his credentials as a tough administrator of government control mechanisms in Tibet, including the use of deadly force against protesters and the imposition of martial law in Lhasa (Topgyal 2011a, 2011b). Hu's response to the global reaction against the crackdown in Tibet resorted to narratives around the notion of national sovereignty and emphasized that the "Tibet problem was an entirely internal issue of China" (Xinhua 2008). He defended oppressive security policies as a choice between protecting national unity or risking a split of the motherland (China Daily 2008 cited in Topgyal 2011b, 261). Hu Jintao's presidential term witnessed several confrontations between the state and separatist forces in Xinjiang (Davis 2008, 18). Although the CCP began to publicly acknowledge antistate clashes in Xinjiang in the mid-1990s, the authorities changed how they discussed "violence" in the region after 9/11. The CCP began alleging that Uyghur opposition

to the state was connected to international terrorism. Specifically, the Chinese government claimed that the outbursts of violence were rooted in connections between the Uyghurs and the Taliban as well as their support for Osama bin Laden (Shichor 2006, 99). Thus, according to the official website of the Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations (2001), the Chinese government asserted that “Osama bin Laden and the Taliban in Afghanistan [...] provided the ‘Eastern Turkestan’⁷ terrorist organizations with equipment and financial resources and trained their personnel” (Castets 2003, 11). It also claimed that one particular organization, the Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) was a “major component of the terrorist network headed by Osama bin Laden and Taliban” (Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the UN 2001). Not long after, a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry stated that as “a victim of international terrorism,” China trusted that “efforts to fight against East Turkestan terrorist forces should become a part of international efforts” and should also win “support and understanding” from the international community (Becquelin 2004b, 39). Rémi Castets (2003) has expressed their doubts regarding the alleged links, instead viewing these discourses as the CCP’s attempt to frame Uyghur nationalists as a separatist threat within the “War on Terror.” Nonetheless, such discourses reveal that securing international approval as an equal member of the international community remained a key priority for the CCP.

However, the international audience’s response to these securitization strategies was more ambiguous. While the United States Department of State initially refused to treat the advocates of “greater freedom” in Xinjiang as a matter of international terrorism, it would gradually adopt the CCP discourse on ETIM and, in late 2002, designated the group a “terrorist organization” (Bernstein 2019). Despite this designation, American politicians repeatedly emphasized that the ETIM listing and the framing of an international “War on Terror” should not be used by China to justify domestic repression toward political opponents and minorities (Human Rights Watch 2005).⁸ Moreover, in September 2002, the United Nations Security Council followed China in defining ETIM as an organization linked to Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, suggesting that the CCP’s securitization strategy was at least partially successful with international audiences.

The CCP bolstered its securitizing narrative about the threat posed by the ETIM by engaging in active diplomacy and by releasing documents to show how Uyghur terrorist groups are an active threat

inside China (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN 2002). According to the Human Rights Watch (2005), the first document of this sort, titled "*East Turkistan*" Terrorist Forces Cannot Get Away with Impunity, was published in January 2002 (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN 2002). It described violence in Xinjiang as the work of the ETIM and contained data of violent activities that were framed as separatist, terrorist incidents. However, the way in which the CCP applied the label "War on Terror" made it difficult to distinguish between nonviolent political protests and activities that involved violence. In this regard, Yitzhak Shichor (2006) suggests that the use of "terrorism" in the CCP's official documents is problematic.⁹ He asserts that many conflicts could be regarded as ordinary crimes but have been framed as terrorism to defend the increased crackdown on Uyghurs. Many of these problems have no apparent links to separatist motivations (Shichor 2006, 101). Yet, the CCP insisted that the crimes of Uyghur separatist groups were supported by Pakistan and Afghanistan and funded by Osama bin Laden himself (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN 2001). According to the *People's Daily* in 2003, the CCP requested that Interpol issue arrest warrants for several individuals it identifies as members of the ETIM terrorist group.

In acceptance of this framing of ETIM and the alleged security threat in Xinjiang, Kyrgyzstan deported two persons, whom China suspected to be ETIM members and claimed they had "plotted to attack the U.S. Embassy in Kyrgyzstan as well as other U.S. interests abroad" (Human Rights Watch 2005). Similar deportations would be implemented by Cambodia and Nepal. Moreover, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC announced a joint agreement between Russia and China to help both nations in their respective struggles against political opponents, with Russia "seeking help against Chechen rebels and the Chinese seeking help against Uyghur separatists" in October 2004 (Human Rights Watch 2005). While each instance of cooperation may be motivated by economic and/or geopolitical imperatives, they nonetheless suggest tacit endorsement by some international audiences of the CCP's framing of the situation.

After 9/11, the CCP did not clearly define what it framed as "terrorist forces" in Xinjiang. Rather, the party linked "separatist thought" to its new approach of engaging in a "War on Terror." This argument paves the way for framing nonviolent protest or political intentions as terrorist activities. Even the expression of

minority culture in art or literature can be considered as a threat to national unity and solidarity. Henceforth, in a speech in June 2004, Hu emphasized that "[w]e have to fight against the three evils of separatism, terrorism and extremism," adding that terrorism in all forms must be repelled for world peace and development (Xinhua 2004; Donovan and Kane 2014). Thus, after 9/11, what was previously considered as separatism was now rebranded as Islamic terrorism using the label of the Global "War on Terror." It is important to note that this notion of alleged Islamic terrorism was aimed particularly at the Uyghurs and was thus not entirely distinct from concerns over the Uyghurs' separatist ambitions. Thus, Trédaniel and Lee (2017) rightly suggest that in adopting security arguments, the Chinese state attempted to legitimize the implementation of extraordinary measures in front of its domestic audience by discursively blending the threats of an Islamic resurgence and Uyghur nationalism into the framing of the foreign-instigated "Three Evils." Building on Trédaniel and Lee (2017), it is important to emphasize that a similar legitimation strategy was also used with respect to China's international audiences and that, as already suggested, the Hui people and other Muslim minority groups remained largely unaffected. The distinction between the "good" and the "bad" Muslims in CCP security policies and discourse is apparent in the government's response to security incidents originating in both communities during this era.

The securitization of the Uyghurs during this era is particularly apparent in a series of incidents surrounding the Urumqi Riots of 2009. First, the Kunming bus bombings, which occurred amid heightened tensions due to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, showed the CCP's willingness to publicly denounce Uyghur perpetrators as "terrorists" even if, in light of the Olympic Games, this framing would later be rescinded (BBC 2008). The Beijing Olympics would prompt increased debate over China's human rights record and its treatment of ethnic and religious minority groups, as exemplified by German Chancellor Angela Merkel's announcement that she would not to attend the Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony. This announcement triggered debates among many European Union (EU) leaders about whether or not to boycott the games (Guardian 2008). The extension of this scrutiny to the situation in Xinjiang suggests ongoing resistance by international audiences to the CCP's securitization strategy.

In the same year, a second confrontation between the Uyghurs and state security guards in Kashgar was again defined by government

sources as a “terrorist plot” (Xinhua 2008). Later, in the context of indiscriminate violence perpetrated by a group of Uyghurs against Han civilians in the July 2009 Urumqi Riots, the CCP implemented a blanket closure of all mosques in Urumqi, framing the violent expression of resentment within the umbrella of “Islamic terrorism.” The link between such “terrorism” and previous concerns over separatism appear in the chairman of the Standing Committee of the Xinjiang Regional People’s Congress’s ascription of the riots to the three forces of “extremism, separatism and terrorism” (Xinhua 2009). The sweeping religious repression enacted by the CCP during this era was tightly bounded with the increased level of violence in Xinjiang. Thus, the Chinese state started using the Uyghurs’ cultural symbols (mostly religious practices and forms of dressing) as symbols of security concerns to control some aspects of the Uyghurs’ daily life in Xinjiang. As such, highly intrusive religious policing led to frequent spontaneous incidents of local violence, which were themselves a reaction to state violence and perceived violations of halal spaces. Moreover, the gradual introduction by local authorities in parts of Xinjiang of “transformation through education” centers to tackle extremism suggests that the CCP framed Uyghur violence as intrinsic to their culture and not a response to individual grievances.

In stark contrast, violent conflicts between the Hui and Han peoples during the Chinese “War on Terror” were framed as the response of individual struggles for recognition in the face of economic inequality. A prime example of the refusal by the CCP to securitize the Hui minority during this era is apparent in a 2004 riot, known as the Nanren Incident. The Nanren Incident refers to the escalation of a traffic accident into street battles between Hui and Han villagers, resulting in the deaths of 148 people.¹⁰ While Western news reports (see McElroy 2004; BBC 2004; Le Monde 2004) claimed that this incident could represent a sign of Islamic revival and increasing militancy of the Huis asserting their Islamic identity, the Chinese government did not acknowledge any link between global Islamic revival and the Hui. The CCP also refused to frame the incident as terrorism or as a threat to the country’s unity. Thus, while the Uyghurs struggled to preserve their cultural identities, the Hui remained a model minority, whose religion and culture were still framed as “nonthreatening” to the CCP, despite its considerable similarities with Uyghur practices.

In summary, the Hu Jintao government differentiated between different kinds of Muslims: the Uyghur Muslims were seen as potentially dangerous and bad, whereas the Huis were portrayed as

model Muslims for other Muslims to emulate, a status replicated in their overrepresentation in state-controlled religious institutions. In the Xi Jinping era, the securitization of religion, especially Islam, reached a new level in which the Hui also emerged as a target.

Xi Jinping's Authoritarian Revival

The centralization of control over all domains of governance can be seen as a defining feature of Xi Jinping's leadership (Repnikova and Fang 2019, 3). At the 19th Party Congress in 2017, President Xi Jinping was elevated to a status equal to the CCP's founding father Mao Zedong, with his ideologies enshrined in the party's constitution (Xinhua 2017).

At the CCP's third plenum in 2013, Xi established two new bodies: the National Security Council, also known as the State Security Committee, and the Central Small Leading Group on Comprehensively Deepening Reforms. These two bodies provide Xi with direct power over socioeconomic policy, military forces, domestic security, propaganda, and foreign policy (Zheng and Gore 2015). Since the beginning of this era, Xi's leadership contrasted with Hu Jintao's low profile both on domestic and international affairs (Ross and Bekkevold 2016). Xi has sought to bring back strongman politics, thus changing the party's collective leadership mechanism (Zheng and Gore 2015). Following Deng Xiaoping's "Socialist Economic Market," Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents," and Hu Jintao's "Scientific Development," Xi has been promoting his own policy framework under the term "China Dream" (中国梦) (Tsang and Men 2016).¹¹ This ideological framework advocates the "great revival of the Chinese nation" to anticipate and shape political developments in China. The nucleus of the China Dream involves "state prosperity, collective pride and happiness, and national rejuvenation" (Ross and Bekkevold 2016, 122). Notably, the China Dream does not endorse ethnic or cultural diversity but focuses rather on Han-ness as a reference frame for providing development to minority groups. Importantly, the international dimension of the China Dream, translated by Xi into a bold stance toward the international community, entails firm demands of international recognition and respect for China's nondemocratic regime. Similarly, Mulvad (2019, 451) suggests that Xi Jinping's aim is to upgrade and revive Deng Xiaoping's modernization framework by combining a "neo-Maoist return to charismatic legitimation and Mass-line party-building. Crucially, Xiism also resembles Maoism more than Dengism in aiming

for international rather than simply domestic hegemony.” Xi has been even more forceful than Hu in his efforts to control China’s religious and cultural traditions and to link their exercise with subordination to the CCP’s ideology (Cook 2017). In the context of a broader ideological campaign to limit the influence of so-called “Western values,” Xi has warned against foreign infiltration within the religious sphere (Cook 2017), which is perceived by the CCP as a threat to national security (Leung 2018). This framing suggests to the international community that the CCP regards Western influence as dangerous in itself and that international regime legitimacy is asserted beyond participation in Western-led multilateral projects. In response to the allegedly foreign-inspired “religious” threat, the CCP began targeting everyday practices of Islam as security concerns in themselves rather than focusing on overtly political acts or behavior connected with religious extremism. Under Xi’s rule, all visible acts of religion were politicized, which manifested in repression and crackdowns particularly in Xinjiang. In his own words, Xi has elevated the prominence and importance of “religious work” on the party’s agenda: “Communist Party cadres must be unyielding Marxist atheists [...] We should guide and educate the religious circle and their followers” (Cook 2017, 4).¹² Religious policy under Xi can be distinguished from that of the Hu Jintao era in its “expansive control over religion” with security concerns articulated by the CCP around religious practice taking a prominent position in justifying the ongoing “War on Terror” campaign. Although, since 9/11, the CCP has regularly framed conflicts with the Uyghurs within the Global “War on Terror” discourse and has framed periodic violence in Xinjiang as externally inspired Islamist terrorism (Clarke 2011, 140), the “War on Terror” discourse is now extended broadly to most everyday practices of Islam. Nonviolent expressions of resistance and expressions of everyday religious faith are themselves increasingly framed as terrorism (Roberts 2017; Harris 2018), causing increased tensions between Muslim minority groups and the state. President Xi has called for a “people’s war” to have terrorists “chased down the streets like rats” (Finley 2019, 14). New CCP cadres are ordered to rural areas to “educate” the people regarding the threats of Islamism and to protect “ethnic unity” and “stability” (Human Rights Watch 2018). These regulations have also resulted in an increased security presence in Xinjiang.

The increased regulation of the everyday life of Muslim minorities, particularly the Uyghurs, triggered violent responses such as the Kunming knife attack in 2014, which was framed by the CCP and

state media as China's own 9/11. The attack occurred at the Kunming train station, where a group of knife-wielding assailants killed 28 people and injured over 113 (Holdstock 2014b). According to Zachary Abuza (2017), the Kunming knife attack provoked outrage on Chinese social media and forced the government to intensify its already repressive measures. President Xi demanded that security officials "severely punish in accordance with the law the violent terrorists and resolutely crack down on those who have been swollen with arrogance" (BBC 2014) for the sake of "maintaining the social stability" (Kalman and Brannigan 2014 in Holdstock 2014b, 1; Blanchard 2014). Xi's framing of the Kunming knife attack as deeply intertwined with global "Islamist-inspired" terrorism and the proliferation of "religious extremism" sets the scene for demarking all religious practices as potentially leading to "extremism" and thus dangerous. This escalation of the securitization on all forms of religious practices is apparent in a swathe of new antiterrorism laws enacted both in Xinjiang and at the national level. As such, even the implementation of compulsory Mandarin classes for the Uyghur youth in Xinjiang was publicly legitimized "as a way of fighting terrorism" (*Economist* 2015).

This increased attention on regulating religion through the lens of "illegal and extreme practices" has impacted the full spectrum of religious life in China, including the Buddhism of China's Tibetans and the Islam of Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and even of the Hui community. Thus, the phenomenon identified by the authors extends beyond the mere securitization of Uyghurs in Xinjiang as discussed by Trédaniel and Lee (2017). Despite their prior status as a model minority, the Hui people have begun to worry about their future under Xi's new calls to "Sinicize religion" (Yu 2015). Thus, Xi has made clear that Sinicization should affect both religious practice and religious doctrine.¹³ The CCP now defends Sinicization as a vital weapon against terrorism and extremism, particularly toward China's Muslim population. Similarly, Party Secretary Chen Quanguo,¹⁴ known for his role in the 2012 crackdown in Tibet and in his capacity as the "architect"¹⁵ of Xinjiang's so-called "re-educational camps" said that the Xinjiang government must improve the conditions of religious places to guide religion and socialism to adapt to each other and ordered Xinjiang's security forces to apply techniques perfected in Tibet (China Daily 2019). Such techniques include "educational measures" and comprehensive information gathering on all matters possibly relevant to social stability through all levels of the CCP party organization, as well as an ominous array of "emergency response mechanisms."

In order to comply with the new regulatory requirements, Chinese authorities have ordered the removal of Arabic signs and Islamic decors from domes of mosques and halal food labels/signage (even onion-shaped domes), a move heralded by government officials as fighting a pan-halal-ification under which Muslim influence was ostensibly spreading into secular life (Gan 2018; Palmer 2019). Similarly, the bilingual signs (in Arabic and Chinese) of the historic Muslim quarter in Xian have been replaced with new signs featuring only Chinese characters. Chinese officials emphasize that no new “Arab-style” mosques are to be built across all of China’s Muslim communities. Hui-controlled Arabic language schools were closed down in Gansu and Ningxia. Similarly, three Hui mosques in Yunnan province were shut down for being “illegal religious education” centers (Chen 2018; Reuters 2018). In Weizhou, a Muslim-majority town in China’s northwestern Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, local authorities issued a demolition order for the Grand Mosque, claiming it had been “illegally expanded” (Mcneil 2018). After Hui protests, the government chose to remove eight domes of the Grand Mosque, rather than completely demolishing the mosque (Gan 2018). These measures indiscriminately target both Uyghurs and Huis, demarking Islam itself as the new epicenter of the securitized threat. Thus, through the securitization of religious practice, the Hui’s status as a model minority is increasingly drawn into question.

Unlike in previous eras, the international audience’s response to the CCP’s repressive measures has become increasingly polarized. While the international community accepted some of China’s prior securitization attempts, particularly with respect to ETIM, a clear division has emerged in the UN between defenders/supporters and critics of the Chinese government’s policies toward Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang. In July 2019, 22 (mostly Western) countries including Japan, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom launched the world’s first major collective challenge to Chinese government’s repression and crackdown on the Uyghurs and other ethnic and religious minorities. The joint statement to the High Commissioner of the UN’s Human Rights Council of 22 nations criticized the Chinese government and demanded that China end its “mass arbitrary detentions and related violations” (Human Rights Watch 2019b) as well as calling on the Chinese government to allow UN experts to access the region. However, the CCP denies all allegations of torture or political indoctrination and claims that camps constructed

in Xinjiang are "vocational training centers," which are aimed at fighting "terrorism" and combating "Islamic extremism." Within a week, the ambassadors of 37 countries submitted a joint letter to the President of the UN Human Rights Council and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to support China's "remarkable achievements in the field of human rights" (Xinhua 2019). They asserted that "China has undertaken a series of counter-terrorism and de-radicalization measures in Xinjiang, including setting up vocational education and training centres" (Xinhua 2019). The unconditional endorsement by a large number of member states of the CCP's securitization attempts reveals both a power shift in China's geopolitical significance and the partial success of its securitization strategy, particularly among other authoritarian regimes. As such, the partial success of the CCP's securitization strategy increasingly draws into question norms and values previously considered universal.

In light of the CCP's increased domestic repression of Muslims and the increasingly polarized response of the international audience, the Xi Jinping era entails a marked shift from the presidency of Hu Jintao. During the Hu Jintao era, the Hui people, as well as their cultural traditions and religious practices, were framed as unproblematic and largely distinct from the alleged global threat posed by "Islamic terrorism." Under Xi Jinping's administration, the Hui's ethnic proximity to the Han majority was no longer sufficient to be framed as loyal to the CCP. Rather, all visible manifestations of Islam, even among the Huis, are now suspect. Previously, the Hui people served as a multilevel bridge: first, between the Han majority and Chinese Muslim minorities; second, between the Chinese state and the Uyghurs (as a model minority); and third, between China and the outside Muslim world. Under the Xi Jinping era, all three bridges look increasingly unstable.

Conclusion

This article argued that securitization theory offers valuable insights into the policymaking of nondemocratic regimes, specifically the authoritarian context of the People's Republic of China. The analytical lens of securitization makes it possible to trace significant shifts in the CCP's approach toward its two most significant Muslim minority groups as well as attempts to gain acceptance and legitimacy for its repressive security policies. 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 the Uyghur unrest in Xinjiang framed primarily as an issue of separatism. Following 9/11, President Hu Jintao appropriated the framing of the Global “War on Terror” to demark violent incidents and political protest in Xinjiang as “Islamic terrorism.” In Hu’s Global “War on Terror,” China sought recognition from the international community for legitimization of repression in Xinjiang based on a common struggle against “Islamic terrorism.” Throughout these periods, China’s Hui Muslims were largely unaffected by the increased securitization of the Uyghurs. Rather, their characterization as a model minority provided the Hui people with access to economic opportunities and freedom from scrutiny in a way that differed substantially to the predicament of the Uyghurs. In the Xi Jinping era, the increased emphasis on Han-ification and the ideological entrenchment of anti-Islam transformed all acts of Islamic religious practice into potentially subversive behaviors, which are linked to terrorism by the CCP’s security apparatus. The Uyghurs remain the primary target of the CCP’s campaign against “Islamic terrorism.” Nonetheless, in this climate of persistent anti-Muslim sentiment, the Hui people have become an ancillary target, which draws into question their model minority status.

This analysis reveals the contingency of China’s securitization practices both on the specific ethnicity and cultural identity of each Chinese Muslim minority group as well as on broader international developments. The influence of wider geopolitical contexts on domestic securitization practices highlights the pervasiveness of the Global “War on Terror” narrative, even outside the Western democratic context that is frequently studied by securitization scholars. Within this widespread “War on Terror” framing, individual regimes, such as the CCP, put forward their own definition of “Islamic terrorists,” which varies according to the changing needs of the ruling party. Similarly, the analysis of securitization practices across multiple temporal contexts reveals the significance of individual political leadership styles as well as changing regime capacities. Thus, securitization as encountered in the context of Chinese Muslim minorities emerges as a phenomenon that is both complex and multilayered. By exploring how the analytical framework of securitization theory interacts with the notion of model minorities, scholars of multiethnic societies are able to explore the apparent inconsistencies in ascribing adverse and often existential security implications to aspects of (Islamic) religious

practice. Thus, the process of “otherization” reflects an interplay between what is politically desirable and undesirable across both the religious and ethnic dimensions. The gradual revocation of the Hui model minority status during the Xi Jinping era suggests that in China, ethnicity-based preferences may gradually become subordinate to broader national security imperatives, which rely on the demarcation of all manifestations of Islam as problematic in order to shore up legitimacy for its oppressive security policies.

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Notes

1. According to the Council on Foreign Relations' report on religion in China "Muslims cover about 1.6 percent of China's population, accounting for around twenty-two million people" (Albert 2018).

2. Zhao and Ma point to a local saying in Ningxia that between "Hui and Han people the teaching of two beliefs results in one understanding" (回民汉民, 教是两教, 理是一理). This mantra suggests that although the Hui and Han people have different religious beliefs, their philosophy of faith is the same (Zhao and Ma 2018).

3. The majority of Uyghurs' mother tongue is Uyghur and Chinese is a second language, which is learned at school and in the community (Baki cited in Austrian Red Cross 2016, 8).

4. These debates question the distinction between politics of the "normal" and the "exceptional" in nondemocratic regimes (Aradau 2004; Browning and McDonald 2011; McDonald 2008).

5. In contrast, the Chinese state portrayed the riot as a "counter-revolutionary rebellion" and an "open challenge to the government."

6. Tanner and Bellacqua (2016, 8) argue that the Chinese government has encountered terrorist incidents since 1983. However, before 9/11 the Chinese government did not define the case of six Chinese defectors hijacking a Chinese airliner to Seoul, South Korea as terrorism, rather, describing the hijacking as the act of "criminals."

7. East Turkestan is a term used by some Uyghurs to refer to Xinjiang. It implies a degree of independence from China and the aspiration to create an independent Uyghur republic, comparable to the Central Asian states.

8. President Bush stated this in October 2001 as did U.S. Ambassador Clark Randt in January 2002 (Human Rights Watch 2005).

9. According to the Chinese government, the World Uyghur Youth Congress is also considered as a terrorist organization (People's Daily News 2003).

10. According to Jieli Li and Lei Ji's (2015), the number of casualties were reported to be 150 people. However, according to a Xinhua News Agency report, only seven deaths were announced (Jiang and Tian 2015, 129).

11. The phrase "China Dream" (Zhōngguó mèng, 中国梦) is a signature slogan of President Xi Jinping (Peters 2017, 1303). However, its English translation remains disputed, with some adopting the translation "China Dream" (BBC 2013) and others preferring the phrase "Chinese Dream" (Kuhn 2013). Given its correspondence to the literal meaning, this chapter prefers the former.

12. The same concern was voiced by Zhu Weiqun, former executive deputy of the United Front Work Department, who declared in 2011 that: "The party's work of religion will be fundamentally compromised if party members are allowed to believe in religion, since some could become spokespeople for certain religious groups and are unlikely to treat different religions equally... Freedom of religious belief in China means that every citizen has the freedom to believe or not to believe in any religion. When a citizen voluntarily joins the CPC, he or she accepts the Marxist dialectical materialism view of the world and has the right to believe in no religion" (China Daily 2011).

13. Xi has since reiterated the focus on Sinicization in his report to the 19th Party Congress, where he made clear that the CCP "will fully implement the Party's basic policy on religious affairs, insist on the Sinicization of Chinese religions, and provide active guidance for religion and socialism to coexist" (Bowie and Gitter 2018).

14. Chen Quanguo is the Communist Party Secretary of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and a member of the 19th Politburo. He was a Party Secretary of Tibet since 2011 and was the only person to have served in both Tibet and Xinjiang (Bloomberg News 2018). In Tibet, Chen demanded that Buddhism be adapted to "socialist civilization" (Chinanews 2012 cited in Human Rights Watch 2012).

15. This epithet is seen on several news articles such as "The Architect of China's Muslim Camps is a Rising Star Under Xi" (Bloomberg News 2018) and "Architect of China's Muslim camps Chen Quanguo expected to stay on in Xinjiang for now" (Zheng 2019).

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