

PRACTICING ISLAM IN TODAY'S CHINA: DIFFERING  
REALITIES FOR THE UIGHURS AND THE HUI

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ROUNDTABLE  
BEFORE THE  
CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE  
COMMISSION ON CHINA  
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS  
SECOND SESSION

MAY 17, 2004

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# CONTENTS

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|   | Page |
|---|------|
| STATEMENTS  |      |
| Lipman, Jonathan, professor of history, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, MA .....   | 2    |
| Barat, Kahar, lecturer in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Yale University, New Haven, CT .....                      | 5    |
| Bovingdon, Gardner, assistant professor of Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University at Bloomington, Bloomington, IN ..... | 8    |
| APPENDIX  |      |
| PREPARED STATEMENTS   |      |
| Lipman, Jonathan .....  | 28   |
| Batat, Kahar .....  | 29   |



**PRACTICING ISLAM IN TODAY'S CHINA:  
DIFFERING REALITIES FOR THE UIGHURS  
AND THE HUI**

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**MONDAY, MAY 17, 2004**

CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE  
COMMISSION ON CHINA,  
*Washington, DC.*

The roundtable was convened, pursuant to notice, at 2 p.m., in room 2255, Rayburn House Office building, John Foarde (staff director) presiding.

Also present: David Dorman, deputy staff director; Christian Whiton, Office of Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky; Susan O'Sullivan and Rana Siu, Office of Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Lorne Craner; Susan Roosevelt Weld, general counsel; Anne Tsai, specialist on ethnic minorities; and Steve Marshall, senior advisor.

Mr. FOARDE. Good afternoon to everyone. My name is John Foarde. I am the staff director of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. Welcome to this CECC issues roundtable on "Islam in Today's China."

On behalf of our 23 Commission members, and particularly Chairman Jim Leach and Co-chairman Chuck Hagel, welcome to our three panelists and to all of you who are attending this afternoon.

According to government statistics, which I think many of us agree are subject to question, China has over 20 million Muslims, over 40,000 Islamic places of worship, and over 45,000 imams.

Islam is an officially-sanctioned religion. Article 36 of the Chinese Constitution nominally ensures freedom of religious belief and "normal religious activity" for Muslims in China. Reports regularly surface, however, of government-imposed restrictions on Muslim religious activities. According to these reports, Chinese officials censor the sermons given by imams, limit the ability of Muslim communities to build mosques, and discourage Muslims from wearing religious attire. Chinese policy also prohibits teaching Islam to those under 18 years of age.

The Uighurs and the Hui, China's dominant Muslim groups, have distinct ethnic, cultural, and historical backgrounds, and Chinese authorities treat the two groups differently. The Uighurs, who are of Turkish descent, face harsh religious restrictions and repression, since Chinese authorities associate the group with separatism and with terrorism in western China. The Hui, who are related ethnically to the Han Chinese majority, enjoy greater freedom to practice Islam than Uighurs Muslims.

This roundtable will examine the current situation of Islam in China and the realities of Muslim life across the country. We are privileged to have three extraordinary panelists to share their expertise with us this afternoon.

I will introduce each of them in more detail before they speak, but welcome to Jonathan Lipman, Kahar Barat, and Gardner Bovingdon.

Perhaps I will talk just briefly about the ground rules. Each panelist will have 10 minutes to make an opening statement, and we will, of course, be delighted to accept a written statement to put in the record. I will tell you when you have about two minutes remaining, and that is your signal to wrap things up. When all three of the panelists have spoken, we will open the floor to the staff panel here representing our Commissioners and the CECC staff to ask questions and to hear the answer, for a total of about five minutes each. We will do as many rounds as we have time for before 3:30.

So, without further ado, let me introduce Professor Jonathan Lipman of Mount Holyoke College. Professor Lipman's areas of specialty include East Asian history, especially the modern period, Central Asian and Islamic studies, Asian studies, international relations, and Jewish studies. He is the author of "Familiar Strangers," a history of Muslims in northwest China published by the University of Washington Press in 1998, and co-author of "Imperial Japan: Extension and War, a Humanities Approach to Japanese History, Part 3," published by Social Science Education Consortium in 1995.

Professor Lipman has also edited two volumes on China and published dozens of articles, book chapters, and reviews on a wide range of subjects. He lectures nationally and internationally and is the winner of numerous grants, including a major grant for faculty development in East Asian studies at the "Five Colleges:" Mount Holyoke, Smith, Hampshire, and Amherst Colleges, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Professor Lipman is a dedicated leader in understanding and teaching Asian culture and history.

Professor Jonathan Lipman, thank you very much for being with us. Over to you for 10 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF JONATHAN LIPMAN, PROFESSOR OF HISTORY,  
MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE, SOUTH HADLEY, MA**

Mr. LIPMAN. Thank you very much, especially to the Commission for this opportunity to speak on something I have studied for a lot of years, and still have so much more to learn about.

The presence of considerable numbers of Muslims throughout the Chinese cultural area has created difficulties of both perception and policy for every China-based state since the 14th century. Living in every province and almost every county of the People's Republic, the people now called Hui have managed simultaneously to acculturate to local society wherever they live and to remain effectively different, to widely varying extents, from their non-Muslim neighbors. Most of them use local Chinese language exclusively and they have developed their so-called customs and habits in constant interaction with local non-Muslims, whom they usually resemble

strongly in material life. Inter-marriage has made them physically similar to their neighbors, with some exceptions in the northwest. But their Islamic practice and/or collective memory of a separate tradition and history allow them to maintain distinct identities.

In short, they are both Chinese and Muslim, a problem that must be solved within many local contexts, for there is no single isolated territory occupied primarily by Hui which could serve as a model for Hui all over China. Many of the characteristics of the Chinese Muslims can only be understood through the localness of Hui communities, despite their common Muslim religion and state-defined *minzu* identity. This is my main point. Their adaptations include learning local language and fitting into local economic systems, sometimes, but not always, in occupations marked as Hui, tanning, jade selling, and keeping halal restaurants.

Chinese scholars posit two simultaneous interlocking processes, what we might translate as ethnicization and localization, as responsible for the formation of the Hui within the Chinese cultural matrix. But these two processes have not generated any uniformity amongst these communities. Even the centrality of the mosque, obvious in Muslim communities anywhere, has been modified by acculturative processes in some eastern Chinese cities where, perhaps, the halal restaurant, or even other community centers, might take precedence.

Hui intellectuals, when they talk about themselves, emphasize the national quality of “Huiness,” what we might call its minority nationality core. But many ordinary Hui, when they talk about themselves, stress the local. Religious leaders and pious individuals, of course, place greatest importance on Islamic religion as a unifying valance of identify, but they also recognize its limits.

Despite the claim that “all Muslims under Heaven are one family,” most Hui clergy and most ordinary Muslims do not connect themselves easily or comfortably with Turkic-speaking Muslims in Xinjiang, whether considering their culture or their imagined socio-political ambitions. Only in religion is the connection made, and even then it can be tenuous. After all, the vast majority of Hui, even those who have traveled extensively in the Middle East, are clearly Chinese in their language, material culture, and textual lives outside the mosque. However much they might identify with Muslims elsewhere, even unto donning Arab clothing and headgear for photo opportunities, Hui are not members of Malay, Turkish, Persian, or Arab, or any other obviously Muslim culture in which Islam is a natural component of identity. On the contrary, they must distinguish themselves constantly from the overwhelming majority of Chinese speakers who are not Muslims, while still remaining part of the only culture and polity in which their identify makes sense, namely China.

Seen in that light, my study of the Hui suggests some conclusions regarding their place in contemporary China. These conclusions, of course, are not all directly related to Islam, but because Islam is the characteristic of Hui people that distinguishes them most obviously from non-Muslim Chinese, I believe that all of these conclusions are, to some extent, germane to the problem of Islam in China.

First, the Hui do not exist as a unified, self-conscious, organized entity. Some would argue that no ethnic group conforms to these criteria, but our commonsensical notion of “the Uighurs,” for example, or of “the Tibetans,” discussed in endless newspaper articles indicates that many of us believe that ethnic groups should, or do, look like that. The Hui do not.

The Hui have some national leaders, but they are all empowered and, thus, to some subjective extent, delegitimized by their intimate association with the state, for they lead the “Hui” through the National Islamic Association, the Nationalities Commission, state-sponsored madrassas, public universities, and other government-approved organizations. In contrast, separatist movements in East Turkestan, based in Germany and the USA, for example; the Independent Republic of Mongolia, which is a nation state; and the Dalai Lama’s leadership of a substantial portion of Tibetans from exile all are headquartered outside of China. These represent models for ethnic identity which the Hui do not—indeed, cannot—follow.

Second, some Hui communities are more difficult, sensitive, volatile, and potentially violent than others. This could be due to historical memory of confrontation, desire for revenge, too bellicose or inflexible Muslim leadership, to local geographical or economic conditions which militate against harmony with non-Muslim neighbors or the state, to insensitive or downright discriminatory policy or behavior from functionaries of the state at various levels.

Negotiation between Muslim leaders and state authorities has succeeded in some cities and prevented the escalation of conflict in others, allowing some Hui communities to thrive. On the other hand, in places such as Yuxi and Xiadian in Yunnan, in some counties of western Shandong, and in southern Ningxia, Hui communities have exploded in violence against one another or against the forces of law and order. Similar and geographically proximate communities in Yunnan, for example, have had very different histories. How much more disparate must local Hui histories be in Gansu, Henan, Beijing, or elsewhere?

Third, we cannot ignore the power of PRC [People’s Republic of China] *minzu* policy and its underlying vision of “the minorities,” the *xiaoshuminzu*, including the Hui, as primitive peoples who require the leadership of the advanced Han *minzu* in order to advance toward the light of modernity. This mixture of condescension and fear toward non-Chinese people has much power in Han society. There can be no question that some Hui resent this attitude and its attendant policies, but others do not, or at least they mute their enmity with acknowledgement of Hui achievements and successes in both the past and the present. An oft-heard contemporary claim states that “We Hui can always defeat the Han in business; they are afraid of us.” This echoes an edgy old Han proverb, “Ten Hui, nine thieves.”

Though this persistent ethnocentrism will always produce small-scale confrontation, even rage and violence, there are no Hui leaders or organizations calling upon all Hui all over China to reject the authority of the current system in favor of Hui hegemony or of emigration. In this, the Hui of China strongly resemble the Muslims of India, who persist in their homeland despite constant tension and occasional open ruptures with the majority society which,



to some extent, denies the validity of their sense of belonging and brands them as dangerous and foreign. But unlike the Indian Muslims, the Hui have no Pakistan, no Bangladesh to which they can turn as a “more authentic” homeland, and they constitute an incomparably smaller percentage of the general population. That is, the Hui can only be Hui in China.

Finally, as far as most Hui are concerned, neither separatist movements nor Islamic fundamentalism should undermine the unity of China as a nation state. The Hui can only be Hui in China, however orthodox or othopractic they may be in their Islamic lives. Even if increasing international communication raises the consciousness of Middle Eastern issues and Islamic identity among the Hui, this will result in calls for “authentic” religion rather than separatism.

The small communities of Hui living outside of China—in Turkey, for example, or in Los Angeles—have not attempted to set up governments in exile, but rather halal Chinese restaurants, confirming to the pattern of other Chinese emigrants in those part of the world. Thus, despite the Hui being defined as a “minority nationality,” we must nonetheless regard them as unequivocally Chinese, though sometimes marginal or even despised Chinese.

Some among them, especially young and militant imams, might claim that the unity of the Islamic ummah overrides national Chinese identity, but this contention cannot be shared by most Hui. Like African Americans or French Jews, the majority of Hui participate as patriotic citizens in the political and cultural life of their homeland, even when antagonistic elements in the society or State challenge their authenticity or loyalty.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lipman appears in the appendix.]

Mr. FOARDE. Thank you, Professor. Very interesting food for thought, and for our subsequent question and answer session.

I would now like to recognize Kahar Barat, who comes to us from Yale University, where he is a lecturer in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. He is a specialist in inter-Asian and Altaic studies. His major research interest involves the publication of early 10th century Uighur-Turkic translation of the biography of Xuanzang, who traveled to 132 inner-Asian and Indian states during the late 7th century, A.D. The first volume of a projected three-volume work appeared in 2000, published by Indiana University Press, and Kahar has also published nearly 40 articles on a wide variety of topics. He has been a research affiliate at the Harvard Yenching Institute and the Center for Studies of World Religions, as well as the East-West Center in Hawaii. He has won numerous grants and awards and has taught at Harvard, and in China and Taiwan.

Welcome. Thank you for coming this afternoon. Please.

**STATEMENT OF KAHAR BARAT, LECTURER IN NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS, YALE UNIVERSITY, NEW HAVEN, CT**

Mr. BARAT. Thanks to the Congressional-Executive Commission on China for inviting me to present testimony about the religious

situation in East Turkestan. Also, thanks to the Uighur friends who shared ideas with me on this special issue.

The Uighurs' territory was the easternmost edge of the medieval Islamic Empire where religion was loosely organized, isolated, and backward. Missionaries brought Islam to Kashgar in the 10th century. But the Islamization of the whole of East Turkestan took more than 500 years, as the widely displaced oasis population was converted one by one from Buddhism and Christianity.

Preserving pre-Islamic and indigenous religious beliefs, the Uighur people created a moderate and liberal form of Sunni Islam. Under the patronage of Chagatai rulers, Islam gained a strong theocratic power. Central Asian Naqshbandiyya Sufism held sway for centuries, especially in the Tarim basin.

But then came the Manchurian invasion from 1759. The Manchus blanketed the area with colonial non-Muslim administration and limited the Islamic authority to a secondary position. During the early modern period, some progressive merchants such as Musabay and Muhiti brought Jadidist teachers from universities in Kazan, Istanbul, and Moscow to open western-style schools. Sixteen new schools opened in East Turkestan from 1885 to 1916. A textbook publisher opened up shop in Kashgar in 1910.

Mao Zedong's religious policy was of a typical Soviet type, trying to eliminate religion from society. The Communists trumpeted communism and atheism as progressive and Islam as feudal, backward, and superstitious. During that time each town was reduced to have one mosque, and big cities to have two to three mosques, open mainly for funeral ceremonies. A more devastating attack on religion came between 1967 and 1969 during the Cultural Revolution, when almost all mosques were destroyed, imams were persecuted, and millions of books were burned.

As a result of 30 years of enforced atheism, the majority of Uighur people became separated from Islam. Younger generations grew up knowing nothing about the religion, and the Koran was not available. Despite all this, there had always been a small group of old people who kept praying secretly and Uighur people in general maintained their faith at a minimum level. No boy remained without circumcision, no one was buried without prayer, and almost no Uighur ate pork, even though some Uighur cadres raised pigs.

After the introduction of the open door policy in China in the late 1970s, there was a short period of time in which Uighur Muslims could restore the mosques, some attended organized Hajj pilgrimages, and students went to al-Azhar and Islamabad universities to study Islam. For an unprepared Uighur nation, the return to Islam caused great excitement. Young and old Uighurs desperately searched for a way to learn how to pray. Mosques were soon full again. Privately funded mosques were built everywhere. The Uighurs who had studied abroad or returned from the Hajj brought a new understanding about Islam contrary to communistic distortions, that was more open, intelligent, and cosmopolitan. The Koran was translated into Uighur in 1985, as was Bukhari and other Arabic classics. Some young imams played an active role fighting against social problems and crimes such as alcoholism, drugs, and prostitution, which is still a disaster in China. But the

government viewed the new positive trend as a threat, and responded with a hard-line repressive policy. Such new religious freedom lasted only 10 years, from 1978 to 1988.

The nationalistic revolutions of Sun Yat-sen and Mao wiped out the imperial line and religion from China. What that might bring to this strong nation is a historical myth. Does Chinese society need religion? Why did Falun Gong develop? Ever since, Han chauvinism became the leading ideology in all administration. The economic growth and social changes in China simultaneously brought a drastic assimilation of all minority cultures and even Chinese local cultures. If the situation continues as it is, within a century we may see only 6 nationalities left, instead of the 56, and that will not bring anything positive to this society. Now the ethnic assimilation is attacking the minorities in both quiet and violent ways. The attack comes from two directions: "Either you give up your identity to become Chinese, or I will kill your language, religion, and culture to make you a Chinese." If ten generations will suffer from the reckless growth of population in China, a hundred generations will suffer from the trend toward a depressingly homogenous society.

What we have been seeing lately is the last scene of communism, with the anti-Islamic ethnic killings happening in Bosnia and Chechnya. China operated a similar war in its backyard, by supplementing the military presence in the Uighur area. Under the guise of going after "religious extremists," and "Islamic fundamentalists" associated with "separatists," they killed and arrested thousands of religious teachers and students. The 1995 Khotan incident was triggered by the arrest of Imam Abduqeyim Abdumijit. The 1997 Ili incident began with the police arrest of some Uighur boys and girls while they were praying at the Night of Power "Lailat ul-Qadr" during the holy month of Ramadan. Who is using the religion for what purpose?

Now all the state employees and students are strictly forbidden to practice Islam. China's propaganda machine has been using their traditional methods, fomenting ethnic hatred, demonizing the Uighur image, depicting Uighur resistance as international terrorism, and convincing the international community in many ways. Many Uighur people feel betrayed by the world when they see a single digit persecution in Tibet greeted by six digit condemnation while six digit Uighur persecutions receive not a single digit of sympathy. Neighboring weak countries deport Uighur refugees back to China, sacrificing the lamb to the beast. Life has become so confusing for Uighurs, that many have stopped going to mosque again.

In the meanwhile, while Hui Muslims calmly watched the persecution of Uighur Muslims, then they started looking for a way to negotiate with the government. After three major experiments with Islam, going from one extreme to another, Chinese leaders seem to have come down to their last bargain: the religion must be subjected to socialistic guidelines. Islamic practice is allowed only through officially trained imams armed with new interpretations. Recently, the Islamic associations have started to compile "new interpretations" of the Koran and standard Islamic textbooks. All 470 local Islamic associations are busy training young imams. A conference on new "interpretations" of the Koran was held in Urumqi

on September 9, 2003, foreshadowing the introduction of this new policy into the Uighur region.

We hope the U.S. Government will take appropriate action to stop religious persecution in China, and to improve the ability of the Uighur people to practice true religion.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Barat appears in the appendix.]

Mr. FOARDE. Thank you very much for those thoughtful comments.

I would like to now go on and recognize Gardner Bovingdon, assistant professor of Central Eurasian Studies at Indiana University at Bloomington. Gardner received his BA from Princeton and his MBA and Ph.D. from Cornell. He conducted two months of field work in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region in China for his dissertation, "Strangers in Their Own Land: The Politics of Identity in Chinese Central Asia," which came out in 2002.

Before his appointment at Indiana University, Gardner taught at Cornell, Yale, and Washington University in St. Louis. He has published numerous journal articles and book chapters on the politics and historiography of Xinjiang. He is currently working on a book about development of the Uighur separatist movement in Xinjiang.

Welcome, Gardner Bovingdon. Thank you for being here this afternoon.

**STATEMENT OF GARDNER BOVINGDON, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF CENTRAL EURASIAN STUDIES, INDIANA UNIVERSITY AT BLOOMINGTON, BLOOMINGTON, IN**

Mr. BOVINGDON. Thank you very much. Thank you to the Commission for organizing this roundtable on an extremely important and timely topic.

I want to preface my remarks on religious practice in Xinjiang by speaking about current news in the United States. I woke up this morning to Nina Totenberg talking about *Brown vs. Board of Education*, and I think it is very important, in this 50th anniversary year, to reflect on the implications of that landmark decision. I think we can be proud of the recognition that the formula "separate but equal" is unworkable. We can be glad, also, of the existence of an independent judiciary, charged with interpreting the law and capable of making judgments at odds with the stance of the Executive Branch, and possibly in advance of shifts in popular attitudes.

But another reason for thinking about *Brown* right now is that schools in many regions in the United States have become segregated again. Other news that concerns me includes recent discussion of the treatment of Iraqi prisoners, and late-breaking information about possibly frivolous prosecution of the army's Muslim chaplain, Captain James Yee. My point here is that this is no time for us to be smug or superior, but instead to reflect on our own problems as we think about problems elsewhere.

Nevertheless, I hope and believe that we can agree on certain bedrock principles, such as that persecution of peoples on the basis of religion or national identity is unacceptable, and that separate treatment almost always leads to unequal treatment. Yet discrimination and persecution of minorities are facts of our world. An independent judiciary is crucial to the protection of rights, and par-

ticularly to the rights of minorities. But a judiciary depends on an edifice of thoughtfully constructed and efficacious laws.

I am going to build on the excellent presentations that preceded mine by speaking generally about the system of autonomy in Xinjiang, and then turn more particularly to recent policies there.

As many people know, Xinjiang is one of five autonomous regions in the PRC. The rubric of autonomy commits China's Government to a special relationship with, and administration of, that region. However, as I am going to detail in a moment, it commits the Chinese Communist Party, the political organization still in charge of China, to almost no special procedural protections. The question then becomes, "How much autonomy is there in Xinjiang?"

Now, to theory about autonomy. We live in a world of sovereign territorial states. The principle of sovereignty codified in international law, the bedrock of the U.N. Charter, stipulates domestically that each state be acknowledged to have full and unchallenged control over the territory it claims. The provision of regional autonomy found in various states is an intermediate fix to the problem of large, compact, unassimilated minority groups. It is intermediate in the sense that it lies between the idealized state sovereignty described above, and full self-determination for the groups in question. That is to say, there is no independent yardstick for autonomy.

Those interested in evaluating autonomy of a particular case frequently begin by comparing a given state's paper commitments with the system as it actually functions. This makes sense in a legally minded constitutional democracy. In single-party states such as China, there is no necessary relation between laws as codified and actual administrative practice. This is so, in part, because existing statutes are intentionally vaguely written, and in part because there is no independent judiciary capable of reviewing the laws and promulgating authoritative interpretations of them.

The Chinese legal scholar, Yu Xingzhong, writing on problems with the system of regional autonomy in the PRC, points to the crux of the matter as he says, "China is still relying on policy, rather than law, to regulate its affairs." Our symposium, I think, demonstrates the perceptiveness of this remark. A single regional autonomy law hypothetically governs all the autonomous regions in question, and peoples, I should say. Yet religious practices permissible among the Hui are forbidden to the Uighurs. That is to say, Muslims in China confront separate and unequal treatment based on region and identity. It remains to ask why this is, and to ask, further, what is the nature of the unequal treatment?

Turning, first, to the whys. Asked about the principal political issues facing them today, ordinary Uighurs frequently express desires quite at odds with those positions taken by the government in Beijing on matters such as emigration, family planning, oil exploitation, language and cultural policy, and religion, the subject of interest today. It appears to many people that ordinary Uighurs have very little influence over politics in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. I will cite Chinese legal scholar Yu Xingzhong once again. As he says, the system reflected in the regional autonomy law "certainly does not correspond with what is usually understood by the term 'autonomy.'"

When we think about religious freedom, if we are raised in a liberal political order, we think, of course, of Lockean liberalism and political toleration. In the United States, of course, the U.S. Constitution is understood in the establishment clause to provide wide freedoms for religious practice. But there are limits, of course. Where religious groups advocate violence, they face surveillance, and possibly intervention. I think here of the Branch Davidians, and also of some Muslim clerics in the United States.

Chinese Communist Party officials can argue—and indeed they do argue—that the PRC Government follows similar guidelines. The Constitution protects certain freedoms which have been mentioned. I want to come back to the nature of those freedoms in a moment. And it merely cracks down on behaviors which endanger others or threaten state security.

The problem, as I see it, is that there is no independent judiciary to interpret what constitutes endangerment, what constitutes a threat to state security. We might remember that the very phrase “the threat to state security” was developed as a catch-all phrase to replace, in 1997 or thereabouts, the old term “counter-revolutionary activities.”

If we look more closely, we observe a crucial difference in the understanding of religious freedom between the two cases under consideration. As has been mentioned already, and I want to repeat this, the Communist Party and the Constitution have never advocated religious freedom. Instead, the several Chinese Constitutions have consistently supported only a freedom of religious belief. This is spelled out as the freedom to believe or not to believe, without interference with others.

Despite the unambiguous wording of the Constitution, neither believers, nor beliefs, have ever enjoyed absolute protection. I need only mention the case of Falun Gong to make clear that there are limits. There, the Chinese Government has made a clever move by declaring that Falun Gong is not a religion, but a cult, and therefore does not enjoy the usual constitutional protections.

I want to suggest that the failure to codify protections of religious freedoms or religious practice was not an oversight. The Party-state was, from 1949, concerned about the legacy of colonialism and missionary activities in China. It is understandable that they made this move. It was also, of course, concerned with the political uses of religion. It seems quite clear that it was the organization and concerted action of members of Falun Gong, rather than their beliefs, that officials found so troubling. Similarly, the Party is concerned about Uighur Islamic beliefs and practices because it is concerned about Uighur political aspirations.

Dr. Barat has already discussed at some length policies during the Maoist and early reform periods. Let me turn to the late reform period and take a slightly different tack. From 1978 on—that is to say, from the beginning of the reform period—the Party allowed some mosques to be reopened and did not prevent some new construction of mosques. It allowed some clerics to return to religious services and permitted the restoration of mosque attendance and religious holidays. But accompanying the modest loosening of some regulations has been tightening of others. For instance, the government stops the construction of mosques where officials judge the

number “adequate to people’s needs.” It has dismissed a large number of clerics, subjected remaining clerics to patriotic education and loyalty tests, and stipulated that all newly trained imams be trained and vetted in Urumqi. It has promulgated a doctrine forbidding illegal religious activity without codifying in law what constitutes legal activity.

And given my time constraints, I will not go into detail about this. We can come back to this in the question period.

What I want to say, in general, is that the distinction between legal and illegal activity is created and revealed by government action rather than being closely defined in law that authorizes government behavior. There has been a more radical set of policies seeking to eliminate religion at the root. Thus, students face compulsory classes in atheism from elementary school on, and the government has stated explicitly that, while citizens in the abstract enjoy full freedom of religious belief, Party members and students do not. As one policy text puts it, these people have only the single freedom not to believe, an expression I find rather amazing.

To sum up, how ought we to understand religious belief and practice in Xinjiang? I want to suggest that we cannot understand Islamic piety or practice in separation and isolation from politics. But at the same time, we should not simply reduce it to politics. I think, unfortunately, many officials and many external observers have done precisely that.

Of course, Uighur religiosity has political content, and state interventions have, indeed, politicized it further. But we should understand it first as an expression of individual and collective choice, a manifestation of long and deeply held values. We should hope to see, I say, a clear and consistent body of law protecting religious belief and practice applied equally across regions and peoples and interpreted by an independent judiciary.

I welcome questions.

Mr. FOARDE. Thank you very much, Gardner Bovingdon.

We will go to our question and answer period in just a moment, but I wanted to give our panelists a chance to catch their breath and say that the statements from today’s roundtable will be available on the Commission’s website, [www.cecc.gov](http://www.cecc.gov), and in a few weeks the formal transcript will be available after our panelists have had a chance to correct minor errors of grammar, and what have you.

Let us go on to the question and answer session. Again, each of us will ask a question and hear the answer for about five minutes, and we will keep going around.

I would like to kick off things by asking Dr. Barat, are there other traditions of Islam that are practiced widely in Xinjiang, for example, Sufism or Ismailism, any of the other ones? In fact, any of you can step up to that, if you would like.

Mr. BARAT. I do not know that much. But generally, the whole region is Sufism and other sorts of things. Naqshabandiyya was traditionally introduced. The other parts, we recently heard some Wahabi or even Mujahid. Those words do not exist in the standard Uighur dictionary, but we heard that from people there. Uighur is part of the Sufi area.

Mr. FOARDE. So it is mostly Sufi. And there is no Shi'ia or no difference between Sunni and Shi'ia in Uighur Islam?

Mr. BARAT. China sent two students to Iran where they learned Shi'ia. That scared the Uighurs because we do not know Shi'ia. Now, who is introducing Shi'ia?

Mr. FOARDE. I will go on and recognize my friend and colleague, Dave Dorman, who represents Senator Chuck Hagel, and is the Deputy Staff Director of the Commission.

Dave.

Mr. DORMAN. Good. Well, first of all, thank you to each of you for coming today and helping us understand what is clearly a complex issue that we tend to look at too simply. So, again, thank you for that.

I would like to just ask each of you a quick question based on your testimony. I will start with Dr. Bovington.

I wonder if you could comment briefly on the extent to which Uighurs participate in either local or regional government, and if that occurs, how would you judge the efficacy of these individuals in either affecting the system or affecting policy in a way that would benefit Uighurs in that area, either in terms of religious practice or local political control?

Mr. BOVINGDON. These are good and important questions, and you will forgive me for saying they are too complicated to answer directly.

Mr. DORMAN. I understand.

Mr. BOVINGDON. In answer to the first part, Uighurs do participate in government in substantial numbers, particularly at the lower levels. They are not, I would say, represented according to their proportion in the population at the higher levels of governance. What is more, it is popularly believed that Uighurs are selected for government service on the basis of their pliability. That is to say, people who are more likely to press for policy concerns inimical to the aims of the Urumqi and Beijing Governments are less likely to serve in the first place, and much less likely to be promoted.

Second of all, while the law on regional autonomy stipulates that members of the group exercising autonomy in a region should be represented "in a certain proportion," as the language goes, in the government structure, it makes no similar stipulations about Party membership.

Indeed, when you turn to Party membership you find that Uighurs are drastically under-represented. As we know, to the present day, the Party at any level outranks the government at the same level. Therefore, in what is still an overwhelmingly Han organization, you find most of the power.

Mr. DORMAN. Dr. Barat, would you like to comment on that? I have an additional question I can hold for the next round, but if you would like to comment on that question, that would be fine.

Mr. BARAT. Those puppet Uighur leaders are under tight political restriction. In the last few years, the Hui secretary of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region has a high chance of being expelled, and another very high position which is political, the committee's Hui chairman, is also being expelled, having done very little wrong, basically because they did not listen to what the Chinese said.



Mr. DORMAN. Dr. Barat, I was just going to ask you, based on your very interesting testimony, for more information on the “new interpretations” of the Koran and other Islamic texts.

Could you explain to us in more detail exactly what that means, how often these “interpretations” take place, and is this a national phenomenon or is this something that only applies to areas of western China?

Mr. BARAT. This is a very new policy—it is not older than three years. It originated from Beijing and the Chinese Islamic Association. It has called the “new interpretations.” It has been approved by Communist leaders as a good idea and important to keep doing.

It has experimented in the Hui area. From this year on, this was first planted to the Urumqi Uighur area to do that. It reinterpreted every Hadith and Koran in a new way. I read some of the interpretations. They do not create a new interpretation, but rather they create an interpretation that has lots of guidelines.

You pick up the interpretations to fit those guidelines, and if nothing fits to that one—religion can be interpreted in a million ways, so it is very easy to pick up interpretation from the Hadith and Koran that only pick up the things that the guideline says, you are allowed to say this, that, and that. That is the one. So, it is a kind of new policy, new movement going on right now. This is China’s new policy.

Second, they are training the imams with the new interpretations and the new Koranic textbooks, something like that. I think that is a new policy. It has been introduced in the Hui area, and now transferred to the Uighur area.

Mr. DORMAN. Yes. Please go ahead.

Mr. LIPMAN. I cannot comment on the content of the new interpretations, but structurally they are being promulgated from the center, from Beijing, an institution that is located in Beijing called The Institute for Islamic Canonical Studies, or scriptural studies. It has been working for some years, using people who were both trained in religion and people trained otherwise in minority studies and in Chinese Islam relations, history, and so forth to create an interpretative structure which suits the policies, as Professor Barat said, the guidelines of the current regime. These are being promulgated officially by the state.

Mr. DORMAN. Please, Dr. Barat, go ahead.

Mr. BARAT. People call them “red imams,” and right now the religious teaching is separated into two schools. It is not Sunni and Shi’ia, but red and normal. Red imams must openly say the Party’s policies and propagate the Chinese policy to the religious community. That is their political duty. They are trained and licensed. It is their job to do it.

In one way they may prevent some extremist ideas or fanatical ideas. Maybe that is what is in their minds. But in reality, the bottom line in society, they are creating a gap in between the formal official version of Islam and the regular version of Islam.

Mr. FOARDE. Useful. Thank you.

Now I would like to recognize Susan O’Sullivan, who represents one of our CECC members, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Lorne Craner.

Susan.

Ms. O'SULLIVAN. Thank you, John. Thanks to the panel for excellent presentations. Since I work at the State Department, we have a particular interest in religious education of minors. It is something we bring up in our human rights dialog. John Hanford, our Ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom gives a great deal of attention to it when he is talking to his counterparts in China.

I am wondering if you could give me a little clearer sense of what you think the situation is for minors in terms of religious education. I understand there are some local regulations which govern religious training. There is religious training going on in the home, and these people are getting into trouble, just what it is. The Chinese are telling us that, nationwide, there are no restrictions on religious education, but we cannot really get a clear picture of what is happening in Xinjiang. So, anything that any one of you might want to say about that situation would be useful. Thank you.

Mr. FOARDE. Why don't we let Jonathan start, then we will go right down the row.

Mr. LIPMAN. I cannot say much about Xinjiang because my work has been in what is usually called "the interior." But the notion that there is no restriction on religious training must, of course, be modified by the regulation which has been promulgated, that it is illegal to teach religion to anybody under the age of 18. That is kind of a contradiction.

Ms. O'SULLIVAN. Right. That is a problem.

Mr. LIPMAN. And it generates some structural difficulties. In the Hui areas that I have visited, which run from the northeast all the way around the southwest, young people—including people under 18—do receive religious instruction, often openly, in the mosque. This is usually seen as a supplement to their ordinary public education, rather like religious school after school would be here in the United States.

I did meet in the northwest a number of students who were full-time students in the mosque, but they were older. They had already completed the public education curriculum and they were over 18.

To me, the more important question is, who is training the people who are teaching? It is fairly clear that the state is taking a greater and greater role in the training of imams, though this is much more marked in Xinjiang than it is elsewhere in China.

The number of Hui imams remains relatively stable. There has been no marked decrease. Those folks were not primarily trained by the state. In Xinjiang, however, as my colleagues will tell you, the situation is radically different.

Mr. BARAT. Private teaching was shut down many years ago and thousands of Talib students arrested, and teachers arrested. On the contrary, a funny thing happening is that all local Islamic associations right now, seminar by seminar, in some little town they gave already finished the fifth grade of the seminars to train young imams. Here, they are arresting the local original private schools. All are gone, no more. On the other hand, the state-funded Islamic associations are training young imams. I read some articles that two seminars lasted, like, six months. Some seminars are three months.

I think they are very busy working to supplement each mosque with their own imam, but the mosque has so many. So in order for each mosque to have its own red imam, they are very busy training their own people.

So in the Uighur area, private teaching is finished and all the Talib students who learned previously are in prison right now, or at least most of them. But new imams are coming up with the new interpretations and they are in new posts and on a new mission, which I explained before.

Mr. BOVINGDON. Let me just add to that excellent testimony that official sources that I have make it clear that while—let me back up. I said in my opening statement that it is not always clear what constitutes legal and illegal religious activity. Official texts that I have make it clear that the government considers educating children in religion to be “illegal religious activities.” I have in front of me a paragraph from a text that I translated that describes illegal religious activities once again infiltrating schools, mines, factories, and businesses, and mosques in Ili offering courses in religious propaganda to students of 5 to 15 years old. So it makes it quite clear that this is considered illegal religious behavior. The other thing that I would add is that even though it has been described as illegal and prosecuted as illegal for years, such sites continue to emerge, that is to say, to be exposed, on a regular basis. So, it is still going on.

Mr. FOARDE. Useful. Thank you very much.

Christian Whiton represents Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky, one of our Commission members.

Christian.

Mr. WHITON. Thank you, John.

A question in regard to trends. With the repression of Muslims in China, is that correlated with a rise in repression of Christians, and especially with the recent activities against Falun Gong? In other words, do you view the anti-Muslim activities by the government as independent, or do you think they are tied to those other activities—this uptick, if you can describe it that way, in anti-Muslim sentiment by the government? Any of you can answer that, but perhaps, Dr. Lipman, you can start.

Mr. LIPMAN. It seems to me that the power of the state to define what religion is lies at the heart of the problem. There are legal religions in China. The constitution guarantees religious freedoms and defines “religions” as including, for example, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and so forth. But any religious activity deemed a threat in any way by the state can be defined by that same state as illegal, because it is illegal religious activity. That is, it can be *zongjiao*, it can be religion, or it can be heterodoxy. By maintaining its own entire power to define what is and is not illegal religious activity, the Chinese state can be highly selective in how it deals with religious organizations so that Falun Gong, perceived as a threat, can simultaneously be persecuted at the same time that the Buddhist monastery at Shaolin, for example, is made into a major tourist attraction.

Certain kinds of religious activity in Tibet can be encouraged, while others are discouraged, simultaneously. I do not see any di-

rect connection between a crack-down, let us say, on Falun Gong and particular activities vis-a-vis Islam.

Indeed, within the state's relationship to Islam, we can find, as our testimony indicated, simultaneous repression in one place and liberalization in another, so that there is not a single trend vis-a-vis religion that I have been able to isolate.

Mr. BARAT. Religious persecution in the Uighur region, or East Turkestan, is Uighur ethnic targeting. So, I have not heard that hundreds of thousands of Talib Uighur Muslim students are in prison right now. I have not heard of Kazakh, Hui, Kyrgyz, or other minorities which are also Muslim, that they have students in prison. No.

Mr. FOARDE. You have plenty of time, Christian, if you want to ask another question.

Mr. WHITON. If I could ask a follow-up to Dave's question of Dr. Bovingdon. With the presence of Muslims in Chinese officialdom, does that extend to the People's Liberation Army as well? Do you see Muslims there, and are they allowed to practice their religion in the army?

Mr. BOVINGDON. There are clearly Uighurs, Kazakhs, and others serving in the army, but not, as far as I know, in large numbers. I would be extremely surprised to learn that they were allowed to practice. As I have already said, it is made explicit that Party members and students are forbidden to practice. I have never seen explicit reference to soldiers. But, once again, I would be extremely surprised to learn that they practiced Islam openly.

Mr. FOARDE. Does anybody else have a comment?

[No response.]

All right. Let us go on. I would like to recognize Rana Siu, who also comes to us from the Office of Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Lorne Craner.

Rana, welcome. Please go ahead.

Ms. SIU. Thank you. Thank you to the panelists for their presentations.

My question is about participation in the Hajj pilgrimage. What is the PRC Government's policy on this? Do you have estimates of Hui and Uighur Hajj participants?

Mr. LIPMAN. It varies from year to year. There have been slightly longer term trends that one can recognize. In that same early, one could say ecstatic, period of reform from 1978 to 1989, fairly large numbers of pilgrims from China did go on the Hajj, numbering at least in the thousands. The last time I was at the Islamic Association in Beijing, they talked of 3,000. That was about four years ago. A number of those—though I could not get exact statistics—were government-supported pilgrims. That is, the Islamic Association has a fund of money available to send pilgrims on the Hajj, and it does so. Indeed, one of the officials responsible for that was widely thought to have moved from the northwest to Beijing to take the job in order to make some extra cash from the contributions of those who wished to take their places in the government Hajj. That private people can also go on the Hajj is clear in Hui communities.

I cannot say about Xinjiang, about the Uighurs, but I have met Hui who have been on the Hajj at their own expense. They usually

take a different route than the government-sponsored pilgrims and they try to do it as inexpensively as they can.

Some regulation comes not only from the Chinese end, but also from the Saudi end, in which the Saudi Government limits the size of delegations. The Saudis have made some contribution every year for some hundreds of pilgrimages to be made by Chinese Muslims and those contributions have been funneled through the Islamic Association.

Mr. BARAT. For the Uighurs, the Hajj was started, if I am not mistaken, in 1956 or 1957. Then for 10 years, it stopped during the Cultural Revolution, until after the “reform and opening up” policy was announced, and then it opened again. China is using the Hajj and Islamic school Koran recitation conferences perfectly to please the Islamic world.

This is one of their propaganda tools, or very nice diplomatic means to show that China is good to the Islamic world. So, they are now both making money and sending Hajjis to the Islamic world for all kinds of purposes.

Mr. BOVINGDON. I would simply add to that—I am, unfortunately, unable to provide numbers—the Chinese Government was quite generous in the 1980s in providing funds for many Uighurs, including some officials, to make the Hajj. So this was, in fact, a high point for freedom to pursue that. It was also, of course, a period of great economic growth in Xinjiang, and large numbers of private individuals developed the wealth sufficient to make that trip. I think that continued until the early 1990s, and then I think political developments in the region made the government rethink it, so that the numbers are drastically reduced these days.

Mr. FOARDE. Let me move on and recognize our colleague, Ann Tsai, who is responsible for organizing today’s roundtable. Unfortunately, I have to begin on a melancholy note. This is Ann’s last issues roundtable with us.

After two years, she is going to move on to a new opportunity beginning next week. We are very sad to lose her, but we are very happy to have had the benefit of not only her collegiality and good company over the last two years, but also her fine work on this roundtable. Your turn for some questions.

Ms. TSAI. Thank you, John. I was not expecting that kind of attention here. Thank you so much, to all three of the panelists. Actually, I have a question on a slightly different route than we have been asking. I have a question about Islamic law and whether or not that is used at all, or to any extent, in Muslim communities, and what variation it might be used in China among the various Muslim communities.

Mr. BOVINGDON. I would say that Islamic law, as a law binding public behavior, and Muslim clerics, as interpreters of the law, were, if not the first, one of the first things that the Communist Party did away with when it took control in Xinjiang. As far as I know, neither of those has changed since.

Mr. BARAT. No other power. But three things are always consistent. One, is circumcision has to be done by an imam. And when you get married, when you are a Muslim, it has to be read by an imam. When you die, you must be prayed over by an imam. Those

three remain, as always. No other power. This has become partly religion and partly tradition.

Mr. LIPMAN. I think it is important, when we talk about Islamic law in the context of China, to recognize that there is a way in which the Chinese state has effectively given itself the power to regulate sharia, not as an alternative system of law, but as something that it had not been before, but it has become, namely *minzu fengsu xiguan*. That is, “ethnic customs and habits.” By regulating communities with ethnic customs and habits, Islamic leaders perform a service to public law and order, as long as that does not come into conflict with the interests of the state.

If I might be permitted an anecdote, in Xi’an city, a committee of local people, led by a courageous imam, began to agitate some years ago for an end to the serving of alcohol in restaurants in and around the Muslim quarter. This practice was offensive to Muslims. But, of course, there were restaurateurs, some of them Muslims, who were willing to serve alcohol to guests in order to make some money. And that committee, the Anti-Alcohol Committee, had a very popular run in the late 1990s in which they organized, and demonstrations were held, and sermons were given in mosques, and so forth, against the consumption of alcohol, which is, of course, forbidden by Islam.

The state found this congenial for a while, but in the late 1990s the committee was shut down. The scholar who has written about this subject the most conjectures—although there is no direct evidence of this—that the anti-alcohol campaign began to threaten the local authorities’ control of what constitutes civilized and modern behavior. That is, by maintaining an alternative view of modernity and of being civilized, namely that one ought not consume alcohol, the Anti-Alcohol Committee was usurping the functions of the state, and therefore the Anti-Alcohol Committee was shut down.

The reason for its being shut down, of course, is that it was branded an illegal organization, *feifa zuzhi*. So as soon as something becomes a threat to the state, for example, the prohibition of alcohol by Islamic clerics, it can be declared outside the realm of legality.

So, we have a fascinating problem in which the state can choose to allow Islamic law to function when it serves state interests, when it serves law and order, but can choose not to allow it to function when it constitutes a threat in one of many different ways.

Mr. BARAT. In 1997, 1996, around there, Uighur youth, young imams, organized a kind of collective gathering, and there they came up with a similar story to condemning alcohol as bad, because at that time—alcohol is a drug that has resulted in all kinds of bad things. It has become very bad in society. So the government cannot do anything, does not want to do anything. Now the religious people came and stood up and then called upon people to stop doing this because this practice is wrong, this practice is anti-religion. It worked so well, in 1996 and 1997 in the Ili region, that alcohol consumption was reduced 60 percent.

Mr. BOVINGDON. I would only add, if memory serves, that the government condemned and cracked down on meshreps in 1995.

Mr. BARAT. 1995, 1996.

Mr. BOVINGDON. And a particularly interesting episode is chronicled in the dissertation of one of our colleagues, who writes that these meshreps organized a soccer league in the Ghulja area and the soccer tournament that was to take place was closed down when the government occupied the soccer fields as a way of making sure it did not happen.

The argument there is very much consistent with what Professor Lipman said a moment ago, that the government became concerned when it was clear that there was some social capacity in these organizations that was not controlled by the state.

Mr. FOARDE. Thank you all very much. I would like to recognize the general counsel of the Commission staff, Susan Roosevelt Weld, for some questions.

Susan.

Ms. WELD. In a certain way, this is very similar to the last question. But we are taught that a pillar of Islam is charity. Early in Islam they developed trusts to do charitable things, like run schools, pay for hospitals, feed the hungry, and so on. I wonder if that pillar of Islam is expressed in either Muslim society in China—among the Hui or among the Uighurs. Is this something that would be threatening to the Chinese state? Or is it something that would be useful to the Chinese state to help cope with problems like the lack of public services?

Mr. LIPMAN. Charity continues as one of the basic duties within any Muslim community. The donations that are given to the mosque and to other local institutions still constitute an important part of the social services that are available within the Hui communities that I have studied. Zakat, the endowed property, also continues to exist, although I have never seen a formal endowment document. Such documents have traditionally existed in Muslim societies.

I have never seen one, but I do know that mosques and foundations own property, including, for example, real estate, apartment buildings, and so forth, the proceeds from which can help to fund local religious institutions, including schools and relief to the poor. It is still the case that donations of particular kinds, whether in cash or in kind, are given to the mosque, particularly around the month of Ramadan, and that charitable giving constitutes an important part of the obligation of every Muslim. We have no data of any kind on how many Muslims continue to fulfill that obligation.

In the Hui communities, I have never seen any evidence of state antipathy for such donations, as long as the mosque functions which they support, the religious functions that they support, continue to remain within the guidelines of state interest.

For example, Sufi tombs in Ningxia and in Linxia in southern Gansu have continued to be supported at a very high rate and to have new construction of many kinds. Beautiful new buildings and so forth have been built in these tomb complexes, all based on the charitable giving of the local Muslims. Just to give you an example, one successful operator of a sesame oil press in a village outside of Ningxia boasted that he had, last year, given 30,000 yen to the local mosque.

Mr. FOARDE. Does anybody else have a comment?

[No response.]

You still have some time, Susan. Ask another question.

Ms. WELD. I wanted to ask all of you, you mentioned foundations. Are those set up with a document?

Mr. LIPMAN. I have never seen such a document, no.

Ms. WELD. Are they a legal entity?

Mr. LIPMAN. As I said, I have never seen a document establishing such a foundation, but that a mosque owns real estate, I do have evidence.

Ms. WELD. There are laws now in China providing for both trusts and foundations. I believe so. I wonder if it is possible for an entity such as an Islamic group to use those vehicles.

Mr. LIPMAN. I have heard of various kinds of Islamic voluntary associations, though whether any of them hold zakat, whether they hold property, I could not say. But there are voluntary associations which can incorporate as legal organizations under the category of *minzhen*, people's organizations.

Ms. WELD. Thank you.

Mr. BARAT. Most of the charity monies in the Uighur region go to building private mosques. After the recent earthquakes in Kashgar in the southern Xinjiang region, I heard reports that such and such individual donated how much money, something like that. They, I think, gave it through local Islamic associations or mosques to send money to the earthquake region.

Mr. FOARDE. I would like to hand the microphone over to our friend and colleague Steve Marshall, who works on several important matters for us on the Commission staff, including Tibet and prisoners.

Steve.

Mr. MARSHALL. I would like to ask a question about education, about the family and the child with respect to Islam. Article 36 of China's Constitution says that nothing can interfere with the education of the state.

Parents obviously have a strong interest in their children's education, including their religious or spiritual education. Teachers in schools, ordinary schools, often have an interest in the spiritual education of children, as well as in their normal education. Can you say something about the position of the parent and the position of the schoolteacher with respect to their right or capacity to have some sort of influence on children and religion? Anyone?

Mr. BOVINGDON. Some of the same documents to which I referred earlier point out, for instance, cases of teachers who have refused to stop announcing that they believe in Islam and attempting to teach Islam, even on pain of being fired, which is a roundabout way of suggesting that anyone who openly professes Islam as a teacher and intends to teach it in the classroom, or is reported to have done so, can be fired.

I think no government in the world can intervene completely in family dynamics and prevent intra-familial religious transmission, but I do know that parents are quite afraid, (a) of running into trouble for teaching their children in the wrong context; and (b) conversely, of not being able to teach their children about Islam. This is a widespread concern about which people speak.



Mr. BARAT. State school teachers are absolutely not allowed to mention Islam any more at present. The Kashgar Pedagogic Institute professors are being expelled from the school in their old age because they went to the mosque and they attended prayers. Working for life as a teacher, and now expelled from school without their pension, without their retirement, imagine what is going on.

In 2002, the Hotan region's Educational Bureau decreed, when the new school started, every student, third grade and above, which is 10 years old, must write a 1,000 word political assurance before starting school. This is psychological torture. How can a 10-year-old kid can write a 1,000 word political assurance? I cannot write that much. And one of the homework assignments is did your parents teach you religion? No lying. If any parents teach religion, the student must write it down in their homework. The next day, their parents are in trouble.

Mr. LIPMAN. From both Uighur and Hui areas, there is considerable evidence that parents do try to give their children some Islamic education at home. This can range from a fully orthopractic training in prayer to customs and habits, if you will, pork avoidance, and so forth.

I have heard stories both in Xinjiang and in other provinces of China of people being fired from their jobs, of teachers, especially, being particularly vulnerable to charges of illegal religious activity because they went to a mosque.

But it can get more extreme than that. I did hear from one Uighur informant that, in his children's school, all the male teachers had to cut their moustaches, because wearing a moustache was seen as an Islamic expression.

There have been a number of new stories, though I have no independent verification of them, of young girls in Uighur schools being criticized, or even sent home, for covering their heads or wearing skirts that were too long. Now, of course, comparisons to France are invidious.

Mr. FOARDE. But inevitable.

Mr. LIPMAN. But inevitable. Exactly. The Chinese state has determined that putting this out as a national policy would be ineffective, but practicing it locally can be effective in preventing strong Islamic identity from developing in children. Most poignantly, I met a young Uighur man in Kashgar who told me he was extremely worried about his young son, who was three, because his wife is quite a pious person and had taught the boy to pray. This young man was extremely concerned about what would happen when the young boy went to school, where it might be exposed that he had been taught to pray. It was a matter of considerable anxiety to him.

Mr. FOARDE. Very useful. Let me pick up for a couple of questions relating to things in your opening statements.

Jonathan Lipman, you talked, I think, in the context of perhaps some Hui communities in Shandong about internal violence within Hui groups. Could you expand on that and enlighten us a little bit on what the dynamics of those are?

Mr. LIPMAN. Not in Shandong. There was a list. The Shandong incident to which I referred was three years ago and it involved violence between Hui and non-Hui.

Mr. FOARDE. Oh, I see. I see.

Mr. LIPMAN. The violence within Muslim communities to which I refer took place in southern Ningxia, and it involved the succession to leadership of a local Sufi order. Two different candidates were available for the leadership to become the Shah of the order, and violence broke out between these two groups, some of it quite extensive.

I have heard figures as high as 50 people killed. The army did go in and the violence was solved by the presence of the state, which then sent large numbers of so-called nationality cadres, *minzu ganbu*, to the area where they basically talked the problem to death for many months. By the end, when the problem was openly revealed in the public media, several of the leaders of one of the two groups were doing several years in prison each and the problem had been solved.

So, that is the kind of violence that might take place. Dru Gladney has also told a number of very interesting anecdotes about conflict between Muslim groups in places like Linxia in southern Gansu, and also in Yunnan. But I believe that that kind of conflict has not taken place in the eastern cities. You do not find it in Beijing or in Zhengzhou, or in the other large communities of the east coast.

I think it is highly localized and it does tend to involve either Sufi orders, or in a few cases that I have heard of, recent converts to a more Saudi-oriented form of Islam, which is usually, I think, perhaps erroneously called Wahabi.

Mr. FOARDE. Very useful. Kahar Barat, you referred twice to privately funded mosque construction. I am very interested in that, but mostly interested in knowing where does the money come from? How does a community of worship raise the money to build a mosque, and do they run into any difficulties with local authorities in getting the permits necessary to build?

Mr. BARAT. In an official report I read from Garmenside, they said they illegally built private mosques. That means that lots of village places had an increase in praying people, and they needed a praying house, so they donated land, maybe, a yard, house, small mud-brick houses, and possibly just privately funded mosques as prayer places. I think by now, today, they are all gone.

Mr. FOARDE. So you would not find any new privately funded construction going on at this moment in Xinjiang?

Mr. BARAT. No. The new, current construction, I told you, that was just a short, less than 10-year period. That is what happened. Afterward, now, everything has gone downhill. I do not think there is any single private mosque being built these days.

Another anecdote similar to this one. The Talib, which is the student protest movement, was involved. In early 1997, two Uighur families were murdered by bad people. At the same time, in the black market they found a U.S. dollar which was used by the Talib—Talib means religious student—who was somehow involved with black market money. Then relating to that dollar, which has a blood stain on it, the authorities said, “the Talib killed this family.” The Talib protest movement started and lasted nearly two years. That spread from Ili to Urumqi and Kashgar, and Hotan. I called and spoke to the policeman who defected. He said that

20,000 Talibs were arrested just because of the one dollar. During this mass arrest movement, they finally broke the case and the true murderer was a Chinese who had a name, who had an address, who was in the Xinjiang Province. They knew where he was. When the Uighur police asked the Chinese police chief, why do we not go to Xinjiang to arrest him, the Chinese police said, we do not have money to arrest him.

Mr. FOARDE. Thank you. Let me hand the microphone to Dave Dorman for more questions.

Dave.

Mr. DORMAN. I have just a quick follow-up question for each of you on your opening testimony.

Professor Lipman, to follow up part of John's question, I think in your opening testimony you referenced instances where the PRC Government negotiated successfully with local Hui communities.

Mr. LIPMAN. Yes.

Mr. DORMAN. You gave us the example of the Anti-Alcohol Committee, which I thought was going to be a successful example and turned out not to be. Could you give us an example? Were you referring to negotiations that would affect religious practice?

Mr. LIPMAN. No, though they may involve the location of religious institutions. The negotiations that I have studied—and I know there are others, but I have not studied them in detail—have involved urban renewal projects. That is, Hui Muslims lived in many quarters that were relatively self-contained in large eastern cities from Xi'an eastward, Zhengzhou, Jinan, Beijing, even Shenyang up in the northeast.

In those quarters, as part of the reform movement desire to renew Chinese cities, to take out the old markets, the old one-story houses, to build modern apartment buildings with flush toilets and all the good things of modern life, a number of the propositions were made that these quarters be razed. The local Hui, many of whom were quite poor, would probably not have been able to afford to live in the new housing that was to be built in replacement of the housing in their old quarter and would, therefore, have to scatter to the suburbs.

In some places, this did happen—Beijing is a good example—in which the rather compact Muslim quarter of Niujie, of Oxen Street, has been largely, but not entirely, scattered out into the suburbs.

In some communities, the local folks banded together, as legally as they could, to negotiate with the government, sometimes through the Minorities Commission, sometimes through the Religious Affairs Commission, to hang on to their quarter.

The success story that I know best is Zhengzhou in northern Henan. There, the local Muslims negotiated successfully with the government to build public housing projects in the old Muslim quarter so that the Hui would be able to afford them. So, now you have relatively nice, new apartment buildings built around the old mosques in the Muslim quarter. So, that is an example of a successful negotiation.

One that is ongoing and that I would commend to your attention is in the city of Xi'an, where until at least a couple of years ago, the last time I visited, there had not been any major renewal of that one quarter of the city. The rest of Xi'an has been done, but

the Muslim quarter, the *Hui minfang*, has not. The *Hui mingfang* of Xi'an is not a particularly hygienic place, but the folks who live there like it and they wanted to hold onto it. They have no objection to better housing, but they do not want to be scattered to the suburbs, especially since there are 13 mosques right there in the quarter, and several of them are historic mosques and the others are centers of the community. If the people were forced to move, they would not be able to do so with their mosques.

So, they are negotiating. This is a place where I have seen voluntary association work remarkably well. There is an Islamic Cultural Society that was set up by local residents to study these problems. They actually did survey research in the quarter and published the results in their own little journal to persuade the state and its local representatives to deal with them. They did it seriously and they did it legally. That is very important. They made sure that they got permission at every level to organize these societies in order to keep their quarter whole. They have succeeded so far, at least in preventing urban renewal from scattering them. They have not yet been able to negotiate, as the Zhengzhou Muslims did, a new quarter for themselves where they can afford to live.

Mr. DORMAN. Good. Thank you.

Professor Bovingdon, in your opening statement you referred to the striking differences—I think I may have added the word “striking,” not you—in allowable religious practices for Hui and Uighur communities. Has the PRC Government commented on these differences publicly or acknowledged them? If so, what does the PRC Government present as the reason?

Mr. BOVINGDON. I am not aware of the government ever having said, we treat Hui Islam and Islamic practice differently from Uighur Islamic practice. As far as I know, the standard strategy is simply to say that the government is cracking down on illegal religious behavior, which, as I said, is vaguely defined, such that it can be locally interpreted. But there has never, to my knowledge, been an explicit acknowledgement of different treatment.

Mr. LIPMAN. Could I add one sentence to that?

Mr. DORMAN. Sure.

Mr. LIPMAN. One of my scholarly friends from the northwest went to Beijing to become an official in the Islamic Association, which is a putatively independent religious organization under the aegis of the government. When I asked him precisely the question that you asked, he said—how to translate this—we administer Xinjiang somewhat more severely. *Xinjiang guande bijiao lihai*. “We keep an eye on Xinjiang with a considerably more constraining focus.” That is the closest I have ever heard. But, of course, it did not appear in a document, it was a private conversation.

Mr. FOARDE. Thank you.

Susan, another question? Please, go ahead.

Ms. O’SULLIVAN. I was wondering if any of you had some thoughts about the question of using this label of terrorism on Uighurs. Shortly after 9/11, we saw the Chinese put this label on a lot of different groups, Tibetans, Falun Gong, but with the Uighurs it has stuck in a way that it has not in other groups. The State Department is under increasing pressure to designate Uighur

groups as terrorist groups, or even to acknowledge that individuals are terrorists whom we know are not. I am wondering if you have any recommendations for us on things that we could do to protect the Uighur community from the misuse of this label, if there is anything that those of us in the international community could do that we are not doing now.

Mr. BOVINGDON. The only things that I would say, would be to make sure you have an independent basis of evidence and that you do not apply the labels willy-nilly. I know that many people in the U.S. Government already have taken these points very much to heart.

I think it is very important to point out that 9/11 has, unfortunately, provided a great opportunity for states to label all kinds of anti-state activity with this blanket term. It is very important not simply to fall in line with that, but rather to maintain objectivity, to check evidence trails, and to check the explicit statements of the people involved.

Plenty of Uighur leaders who have been labeled terrorists have said explicitly that they disavow terror, and the organizations in which they are involved have never advocated, nor to my knowledge been involved in, terrorist activities.

Mr. BARAT. The Chinese were 3 percent, by official record, in 1949. Today, they are 50 percent. Those 50 percent are employed, salary collected, protected, and weapon-holding people. That much of the pressure, seven million Chinese pressing into the Uighur region within 50 years. That is very heavy pressure for the Uighur people. And very little possible in the southern region, like Kashgar, Hotan, and those places, the peasants are leaving two months to six months for corveé labor. With that annual income here, you cannot feed a guinea pig. Same with the labor situation. There is very little, tiny bit of resistance with exhausted, poor people now labeled as terrorists.

We know in Bosnia how many people died. We know how many people died in Chechnya. But we do not know how many people died in East Turkestan. I always doubted the half a million, one million exaggerated numbers.

But as a Uighur scholar and years of observing, I believe six digits are correct, absolutely correct. But we need to investigate. The government needs to investigate. All human rights organizations should investigate this one.

These Uighur prisoners, by hundreds and thousands, they are staying in prison, squeezed in and dying. There are a lot and they are dying. If the International Red Cross does not do anything, the U.S. Government does not do anything, if the United Nations does not do anything, these people will die in prison, and there are so many. Among these persecuted people, there are some Chinese policemen also being persecuted because they did not bury it well enough. Workers there digging in the sand, they found out the masquerade, that the Uighurs are buried there. And then when this thing happened, the soldiers got persecuted because they did not do a good job, they did not bury them down deep enough, this kind of thing.

So, in the world, something happened in Bosnia, something happened in Chechnya, and now something happened in East

Turkestan. So, we should pay big attention and rescue these people. These boys and girls are dying.

Mr. LIPMAN. Let me just add one sentence which I wrote in response to one of the e-mails I got from Ann and Susan. The greatest threat to Islam in Xinjiang, according to the Uighurs with whom I have talked, comes from the vast immigration of Han, which they believe can destroy not only the environment of their homeland, but their religion and national identity as well. Obviously, domestic migration is a very vexed social issue in a lot of societies, and there is no easy way for anybody in the international community to have anything to do with it. It is entirely a domestic affair of the People's Republic of China.

But we should certainly be conscious of the effects that long-term immigration of cultural others, to put it kindly, can have on religious identity, on national identity, and so on. The comparison is often made by Uighur friends to Inner Mongolia, where the population is now 75 or 80 percent non-Mongol and where the Mongol heritage is preserved largely as a museum piece rather than a living culture.

People are very afraid of that happening. Islam, as a crucial component of Uighur identity, is perceived to be under threat for precisely that reason.

Mr. BARAT. China has a saying, "By killing the rooster, scare the monkeys." Now in these 10 years, what is going on is killing the Uighurs and scaring the other 50 minorities.

Mr. FOARDE. With that thought, our time is up for this afternoon.

First, I would like to thank our three panelists, Jonathan Lipman, Kahar Barat, Gardner Bovingdon. Thanks to all three of you for coming so far to share your expertise with us. On behalf of Chairman Jim Leach and Co-chairman Chuck Hagel of the CECC, thanks to all of you for attending this afternoon.

You will see the transcript up on the website in a few weeks. Please keep checking our website for information on the next CECC activities. We will do more roundtables and hearings yet this spring.

For this afternoon, let us put this one to a close. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 3:35 p.m. the roundtable was concluded.]

## **A P P E N D I X**

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## PREPARED STATEMENTS

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JONATHAN N. LIPMAN

MAY 17, 2004

The presence of considerable numbers of Muslims throughout the Chinese culture area has created difficulties of both perception and policy for every China-based State since the 14th century. Living in every province and almost every county of the PRC, the people now called Hui have managed simultaneously to acculturate to local society wherever they live and to remain effectively different—though to widely varying extents—from their non-Muslim neighbors. Most of them use local Chinese language exclusively, and they have developed their “customs and habits” in constant interaction with local non-Muslims, whom they usually resemble strongly in material life. Inter-marriage has made them physically similar to their neighbors (with some exceptions in the northwest), but their Islamic practice and/or collective memory of a separate tradition and history allow them to maintain distinct identities. In short, they are both Chinese and Muslim, a problem that must be solved within many local contexts, for there is no single isolated territory occupied primarily by Hui people which could serve as a model for Hui all over China.

Many of the characteristics of the Chinese Muslims can only be understood through the localness of Hui communities, despite their common Muslim religion and (state-defined) *minzu* identity. Their adaptations include learning local language and fitting into local economic systems, sometimes, but not always, in occupations marked as “Hui,” such as tanning, jade selling, and keeping halal restaurants. Chinese scholars posit two simultaneous interlocking processes—ethnicization (*minzuhua*) and localization (*diquhua*)—as responsible for the formation of the Hui within the Chinese cultural matrix, but those processes have not generated any uniformity among their communities. Even the centrality of the mosque, obvious in Muslim communities anywhere, has been modified by acculturative processes in some eastern Chinese cities.

Hui intellectuals emphasize the national quality of Huiness, its “minority nationality” core, while many ordinary Hui stress the local in discussing who they are. Religious leaders and pious individuals, of course, place greatest importance on Islamic religion as a unifying valence of identity, but they also recognize its limits. Despite the claim that “all Muslims under Heaven are one family,” most Hui clergy do not connect themselves easily or comfortably with Turkic-speaking Muslims in Xinjiang, either their culture or their (sometimes imagined) sociopolitical ambitions. After all, the vast majority of Hui, even those who have traveled extensively in the Middle East, are clearly Chinese in their language, material culture, and textual lives outside the mosque. However much they might identify with Muslims elsewhere—even unto donning Arab clothing and headgear for photo opportunities—Hui are not members of Malay or Turkish or Persian or Arab or any other “Muslim” culture in which Islam is a “natural” component of identity. On the contrary, they must distinguish themselves constantly from the overwhelming majority of Chinese-speakers, who are not Muslims, while still remaining part of the only culture and polity in which their identity makes sense—that of China.

Seen in that light, my study of the Hui suggests some conclusions regarding their place in contemporary China. First, “the Hui” do not exist as a unified, self-conscious, organized entity. Some would argue that no ethnic group conforms to these criteria, but our commonsensical notion of “the Tibetans” or “the Uygurs,” discussed in endless newspaper articles and web postings, indicates that many of us believe that they do, or should. The Hui have national leaders, but they are all empowered and thus, to some subjective extent, delegitimized by their intimate association with the state—through the national Islamic Association (Ch. *Yixie*), the Nationalities Commission (Ch. *Minwei*), state-sponsored madrassas, universities, and other government-approved organizations. The separatist Eastern Turkestan movement based in Germany and the USA, the independent Republic of Mongolia, and the Dalai Lama’s leadership of a substantial portion of Tibetans from exile—all headquartered outside of China—represent models for ethnic identity which the Hui (and, I would suggest, at least some other *minzu*) do not, indeed cannot, follow.



Second, some Hui communities are more difficult, sensitive, volatile, and potentially violent than others. This could be due to historical memory of confrontation and desire for revenge, to bellicose or inflexible Muslim leadership, to local geographical or economic conditions which militate against harmony with non-Muslim neighbors and/or the state, to insensitive or downright discriminatory policy or behavior from functionaries at several levels of government. Negotiation between Muslim leaders and state authorities has succeeded in some cities and prevented the escalation of conflict in others, allowing Hui communities to thrive. On the other hand, in places such as Yuxi and Shadian in Yunnan, western Shandong, and southern Ningxia, Hui communities exploded in violence against one another or the forces of law and order. Similar and geographically proximate communities in Yunnan have had very different histories. How much more disparate must local Hui histories be in Gansu, Henan, Beijing, or elsewhere?

Third, we cannot ignore the power of PRC minzu policy and its underlying vision of “the minorities” (including the Hui) as primitive peoples who require the leadership of the advanced Han minzu in order to advance toward the light of modernity. This mixture of condescension and fear toward non-Chinese people has much power in Han society. There can be no question that some Hui resent this attitude and its attendant policies. But others do not, or at least mute their enmity with acknowledgement of Hui achievements and successes, in both the past and the present. An oft-heard contemporary claim, that “We Hui can always defeat the Han in business; they are afraid of us,” echoes edgy old Han proverbial knowledge— “Ten Hui, nine thieves.” Though this persistent ethnocentrism will always produce small-scale confrontation, even rage and violence, there are no Hui leaders or organizations calling upon all Hui, all over China, to reject the authority of the current system in favor of Hui hegemony or emigration. In this the Hui of China strongly resemble the Muslims of India, who persist in their homeland despite constant tension and occasional open ruptures with a majority society which, to some extent, denies the validity of their sense of belonging and brands them as dangerous and foreign. But unlike the Indian Muslims, the Hui have no Pakistan, no Bangladesh to which they can turn as a “more authentic” homeland, and they constitute an incomparably smaller percentage of the general population.

Finally, as far as most Hui are concerned, neither separatist movements nor Islamic fundamentalism should undermine the unity of China as a nation-state. The Hui can only be Hui in China, however orthodox or orthopractic they may be in their Islamic lives. Even if increasing international communication raises the consciousness of Middle Eastern issues and Islamic identity among the Hui, this will result in calls for “authentic” religion rather than separatism. The small communities of Hui living outside of China—in Turkey, for example, or Los Angeles—have not attempted to set up governments in exile but rather halal Chinese restaurants, conforming to the pattern of other Chinese emigrants in those parts of the world. Thus, despite the Hui being defined as a “minority nationality,” we must nonetheless regard them as unequivocally Chinese, though sometimes marginal or even despised Chinese. Some among them, especially young and militant imams, might claim that the unity of the Islamic umma overrides national (Chinese) identity, but this contention cannot be shared by most Hui. Like African Americans or French Jews, the majority of Hui participate as patriotic citizens in the political and cultural life of their homeland, even when antagonistic elements in the society or State challenge their authenticity or loyalty.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF KAHAR BARAT

MAY 17, 2004

Thanks to the Congressional-Executive Commission on China for inviting me today to present testimony about the religious situation in East Turkistan. And also thanks to the Uighur friends for sharing ideas with me on this issue.

The Uighur territory was the easternmost border of Islamic Empire where religion had been loose, isolated and backward. Missionaries brought Islam to Kashgar in the 10th century. But the Islamization of the whole East Turkistan took more than 500 years as the widely displaced oasis population was converted one by one from Buddhism and Christianity. Preserving pre-Islamic and indigenous religious beliefs, the people created a moderate and liberal form of Sunni Islam. Under the patronage of Chagatai rulers, Islam gained a strong theocratic power. Central Asian Naqshbandiyya Sufism influenced, especially the Tarim basin, for centuries.

But the Manchurian invasion in 1759 blanketed the area with colonial non-Muslim administration and limited the Islamic authority to a secondary position. During

early modernism period, some progressive merchants such as Musabay and Muhiti brought Jadidist teachers from Kazan, Istanbul and Moscow universities to open western style schools. From 1885 to 1916, there were already 16 new schools open in East Turkistan. A textbook publisher was established in 1910 in Kashgar.

Mao Zedong's religious policy was of a typical Soviet type simply eliminating religion from society. They trumpeted communism and atheism as progressive and Islam as feudal, backward and superstitious. That time each town had only one mosque, big cities had 2-3 mosques open mainly for funeral ceremonies. A more devastating attack came in 1967-1969 during Cultural Revolution when almost all mosques were destroyed, Imams were persecuted, and millions of books were burned.

As a result of 30 years of enforced atheism, the majority of Uighur people became separated from Islam. Younger generations grew up knowing nothing about the religion, and the Koran was not available. Despite all this, there had been always a small group of old people who kept praying secretly. Uighur people maintained their faith at a minimum level. No boy remained without circumcision, no one buried without prayer, and almost no Uighur ate pork even though some Uighur cadre raised pig.

Since the introduction of the open door policy in China, there was a short period of time in which Uighur Muslims could restore the mosques, some attended organized Hajj pilgrimage, and students went to al-Azhar and Islamabad universities to study Islam. To an unprepared Uighur nation, return to Islam caused a great excitement. Young and old desperately searched for a way to learn how to pray. Mosques were soon full again. Privately funded mosques were built everywhere. Many Uighur studied abroad or back from Hajj brought a new understanding about Islam on the contrary to communist distortion, which was much open, intelligent and cosmopolitan. Koran was translated into Uighur in 1985 as well as Bukhari and other Arab classics. Some young Imams played an active role fighting against the social pollution and crimes, such as alcoholism, drug, prostitution, which is still a disaster in China. But the government viewed the new trend as a threat, and responded it with a hard line repressive policy. Such new religious freedom lasted only 10 years from 1978 to 1988.

Sun Yatsin and Mao's nationalistic revolutions wiped out the royal clan and religion from China without hesitation. What that might bring to this strong Nation is a historical myth. Does Chinese society need religion? Why did Falun Gong develop? Ever since, Han chauvinism became the leading ideology in all administration. The economic growth and social changes in China simultaneously brought a drastic assimilation of all minority cultures and even Chinese local cultures. If the situation continues as it is, within a century, we may see only 6 nationalities left, not 56, that will not bring anything positive to this society. China's reckless growth of population had already brought a disaster to all minorities and even themselves, now the ethnic assimilation is attacking the minorities in both quiet and violent two directions: either you give up your identity to become Chinese, or I will kill your language, religion and culture to make you a Chinese.

What we are seeing lately is the last scene of communism where the anti-Islamic ethnic killings happen in Bosnia and Chechen. China also operated a same war at its backyard by supplementing the military presence in Uighur area. Accusing of "religious extremists," "Islamic fundamentalists" associated with "separatists," they killed and arrested thousands of religious teachers and students. The 1995 Khotan incident was triggered by the arrest of Imam Abduqeyim Abdumijit. 1997 Ili incident was also started by the police arrest of some Uighur boys and girls while they were praying during the month of Holy Ramadan. Who is using the religion for what purpose?

Now all the State employees and students are strictly forbidden from practicing Islam. China's propaganda machine has been using their traditional methods, created an ethnic hatred, demonized Uighur image, translated Uighur resistance into international terrorism, and convinced the international community in many ways. Many Uighur people feel that they are betrayed by the world. Neighboring weak countries deported Uighur refugees back to China sacrificing lamb to the beast. Life has become so confusing for Uighurs that many have stopped going to mosque again.

In the meanwhile, Hui Muslims calmly watched the persecution of Uighur Muslims; they then started looking for a way to negotiate with the government. After 3 major experiments with Islam, going from one extreme to another, Chinese leaders seem to have come down to their last bargain: the religion must follow socialistic guidelines. Islamic practice is allowed only through officially trained Imams with new interpretations. Recently the Islamic associations started to compile "new interpretations" of Koran and standard Islamic textbooks. All local 470 Islamic associa-

tions are busy training young Imams. A new “interpretation” of Koran conference was held in Urumchi on September 9, 2003 implying the introduction of this new policy into the Uighur region.

We hope the US government will take appropriate action to stop the religious persecutions in China, and improve access to Uighur people to practice true religion.

