

RELIGIOUS AND DE-EXTREMIZATION REGULATIONS AND THEIR DISSEMINATION IN THE XUAR

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*A system creating propaganda is to be despised;
everybody hopes for it to end. The times in which
propaganda flourishes are considered unhappy times,
times that everybody hopes will pass very quickly.
(Mittler 2008, 466)*

The current situation of Uyghurs in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) is considered by many as one of the most pressing human rights violations of the last few decades. The Uyghurs, being an ethnic minority in China, are voiceless under the current political leadership, which suppresses anything deviating from the official course set up by the Party leaders in Beijing. The legal guarantees, stipulated by Chinese law, are nothing more than a pretend world in which the Uyghurs are only second-class citizens. This chapter looks at one of the Chinese government channels employed to raise public awareness among Uyghurs about the new laws and regulations. It discusses the content of an officially published Uyghur-written booklet *Din esebiyliki ademni nabut qilidu* (*Religious extremism kills/destroys people*) and analyses in what way legal regulations are explained to the “common” Uyghurs. This chapter also identifies various propaganda strategies within the official narrative of the Chinese government.

Keywords: Xinjiang, Uyghurs, propaganda, religious policy, ethnic policy

1. Introduction

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) is the most populous country in the world and has one of the biggest economies. However, in many ways, it is still a mystery

for generations of sinologists and political scientists. Projections of Western ideas and values about society and governance fail to predict China's near future and political trajectory successfully. Under Xi Jinping, what China wants and what role it intends to play in the global world is unclear. Relevant data that could help us understand it are either classified or scattered in myriads of formal and informal information channels. It is more and more difficult for foreign scholars to access Chinese archival sources and conduct field research, two valuable resources to learn more about China's past and present (Cunningham 2014). To extract the data from the available sources is tricky and not without danger because these sources are not verifiable in most instances due to non-existing independent and credible "second" sources of information.

This chapter focuses predominantly on the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) that has been in the spotlight for more than a decade as the most turbulent and restive region in the PRC (Dillon 2004, xi). The PRC government has called the region "the hotbed of terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism" (Liu 2014) and labelled the 2009 *Qiwu* Incident¹ and other violent insurgencies that followed as terrorist acts conducted by Uyghur separatists and terrorists. To avert any further revolts, Beijing introduced more restrictive policies under the new Strike Hard Campaign Against Violent Terrorism (*Yanli daji baoli kongbu huodong zhuanxiang xingdong*)² and the People's War on Terror. The change in Chinese policy to perceive the situation of Xinjiang is no longer an internal separatists' problem but is a part of the international war on terrorism and took place in 2001. It was supported by US Executive Order 13224 from September 23, 2001, under which the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) was classified as a terrorist organization in the following year on September 3.³ On September 11, 2002, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) added the ETIM to the UNSC Consolidated List,⁴ established under UNSC Resolution 1267 from 1999, which allows sanctioning individuals and organizations associated with Al-Qaida and the Taliban. These links between global terrorism and Islamic extremism empowered the Chinese government to justify its policies and crackdowns on "illegal religious activities" in the region of Xinjiang as counter-terrorism measures (Roberts 2018, 8).

¹ Uyghur protests, which turned into violent riots, began on July 5, 2009 in the region's capital Ürümqi. According to the Chinese narrative, these riots were organized from abroad by the World Uyghur Congress and its then-leader Rebiya Kadeer. Following the incident, hundreds of Uyghurs were arrested and many sentenced to death.

² The campaign launched in 2014 in Xinjiang.

³ See the Executive Order 13224 at: <https://www.state.gov/executive-order-13224>.

⁴ See the updated version at: <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/un-sc-consolidated-list>.

The Strike Hard Campaign significantly intensified after the new XUAR Party Secretary Chen Quanguo⁵ assumed his leadership in 2016 (Hurd 2018). Previously, Chen Quanguo served as a party secretary in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and was praised for the region's economic development and securitization of the area (Lavička 2021a, 62). The PRC implemented modern surveillance methods and state of the art technologies including iris scans, DNA sampling, and facial recognition cameras to curb any expression of discontent or disobedience and monitor every person's whereabouts (Shih 2017).

This chapter looks at how the new restrictive regulations and policies are communicated and explained to people living in the westernmost part of the PRC, what themes are the most common, and whether there are any stereotypical portrayals of the Xinjiang region and the Uyghurs. In this chapter, I am discussing some of the techniques Chinese propagandists use to influence the targeted audience. However, in the case of Xinjiang, this emotional manipulation might prove to be more counterproductive than initially desired by the administration. The officially issued documents tend to include a large amount of propaganda ballast. However, by scrutinizing the textual strategies, wording, repetition of specific themes and omission of others, we can still distil some hints about the actual policies and Chinese governmental priorities towards particular topics. This text will try to show what Franz Schurmann said in his book *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* about working with Chinese sources, that “[c]ommunist documents cannot be read as if they were written in conventional language” (Schurmann 1977, 62).

This chapter examines one of the channels used for such propaganda dissemination. It looks at a cartoon-like booklet written in Uyghur titled *Din esebiyliki ademni nabut qilidu* (*Religious extremism kills/destroys people*).⁶ It compares its content with two normative texts, the Regulations of XUAR on Religious Affairs (RXR) and the Regulations on De-radicalization of the XUAR (RDR). The analyzed documents differ in their nature; the two regulations use condensed legal language, but the booklet “humanizes” the language and supplements the legal imperatives with emotional manipulation in both a textual and visual way by including “real stories” and illustrations. These documents, however, do not differ in the actual content, and their analysis and comparison can provide us with some insights about Chinese governmental thought work. This chapter selects only parts of the material and pinpoints some of the most common narratives about Xinjiang and Uyghurs found in the booklet.

⁵ *1955, Communist Party Secretary of the XUAR from August 29, 2016 to December 25, 2021.

⁶ The booklet was translated into Uyghur from Chinese original *Zongjiao jiduan haisiren*, with the similar meaning.

2. Propaganda and thought work

Before looking at the selected documents, I should clarify some of the terminologies this chapter contains. One of them is propaganda with the related term 'thought work.' Propaganda can be seen as "the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols" (Lasswell 1927, 627). Randal Marlin thinks of propaganda as an effort to mobilize a large audience through communication to influence beliefs, actions, and attitudes in a way that circumvents or suppresses the individual's ability to make a rational, reflective, and adequately informed decision (Marlin, 2013, 12). According to Terence Qualter (1962, 27), it is a

deliberate attempt by some individual or group to form, control, or alter the attitudes of other groups by the use of the instruments of communication, with the intention that in any given situation the reaction of those so influenced will be that desired by the propagandist.

Jacques Ellul, in *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, adds that propaganda seeks to "bring about the active or passive participation in its actions of a mass of individuals, psychologically unified through psychological manipulation and incorporated in an organization" (Ellul 1965, 61).

In China, propaganda plays a crucial role both in government and governance mechanisms since the establishment of the PRC (Rawnsley 2013, 147). The Chinese term for 'propaganda' (*xuanchuan*) means both publicity and propaganda, illustrates the principal differences of the concept in the West and China. Nowadays the term propaganda has a negative connotation in the "Euro-American context," while the Chinese translation of propaganda is not just neutral, it is widely used in many names of official governmental bodies. That is the main reason for the dichotomy between the English translation done by Chinese who prefer to translate the *xuanchuan* as "publicity," and the outside world translating the same term as "propaganda."⁷ The current meaning of the word comes from Latin. It derives from the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide) installed by the Catholic church in the 17th century to "promote" missionary work and the catholicization of foreign lands, including China (Menegon 2017, 27–28). However, by the 18th century, the term's usage was no longer limited to religious activities. It was adapted for secular and political purposes, already with negative connotations, leading to the current pejorative understanding of it as a tool to "spread biased information or falsehoods to promote a cause or serve an agenda" (Diggs-Brown 2011, 48–49).

⁷ In the 1990s, the official English translations of Chinese institutions started to use "publicity" or "information" instead of "propaganda," however keeping the Chinese name intact (Brady 2009, 440).

In China, propaganda and the mass persuasion not only transmit thoughts and attitudes desired by the Chinese Communist Party of China (CCP) among the citizens. The CCP system of persuasive and coercive communication is also designed

to provide the Party with a continuous flow of information concerning the sentiments of people [...] [so] that what ought to be known by the people is known and that what should be felt by the people is felt. (Yu 1964, 4)

Propaganda has been an integral part of the CCP agenda since its founding in 1921, when it was modelled after the Soviet example. However, propaganda methods were also inspired by other totalitarian states, including Nazi Germany (Shambaugh 2007, 26). The target group of official propaganda has transformed, and techniques were modified and modernized throughout the turbulent decades after the founding of the PRC. Nevertheless, the motivation behind it remains the same – to ensure the mass support of central government policies and its priorities in the regions, control public opinion, strengthen and justify the leading role of the CCP, and legitimize the regime. Gary Rawnsley argues that propaganda is possibly even more crucial nowadays for the government than before because China developed into a post-ideological society that requires a significant amount of thought work to “explain and justify the continuation of the CPC rule” (Rawnsley 2013, 148). The Chinese government keeps up with the times and applies modern technologies to make it more modern and market-friendly (Brady 2009, 434).

The most important institution responsible for the propaganda work, reaching with its sub-branches to all levels of governance, is the Publicity/Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (*Zhongguo gongchandang zhongyang weiyuanhui xuanchuan bu*, CCPPD), which is charged with ideology work (Brady 2010, 13). Its prominence within the structure is quite apparent; the current head of the department, Huang Kunming (*1956), is also a member of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, elected by the 19th National Congress in 2017. Although the most important, it is not the only institution dealing with propaganda/publicity (Shambaugh 2007, 30).

2.1 Detecting propaganda

The crucial question asked in this chapter is how to detect propaganda in the Chinese context and decipher the most common strategies utilized by the propagandists? In November 1937, the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA) in New York published an article entitled “How to Detect Propaganda?” which suggested that the propagandists use seven common techniques to influence the thinking of the audience in whatever directions they want (Fleming 1995, 3). The first mentioned tool is “name-calling.” Its strategy appeals to the reader’s fear and hate

by using bad names to discredit the opponent. Hence, the reader forms a judgement without examining the actual evidence (IPA 1937, 5). “Glittering generalities” is the second tool in opposition to the “name-calling.” The propagandist uses “virtue words” to praise and defend his (governmental) policies, therefore evoking reader’s feelings of love, pride, and brotherhood, but without providing the relevant evidence (IPA 1937, 6). The first two types of devices introduce the positive and negative models “towards which the people are to orient themselves” (Schurmann 1977, 67).

The third tool is the “transfer,” by which the propagandist shields himself with an authority that is prestigious and highly respected by the general public. Such authority can be a church, nation, or some international organization, e.g., the United Nations. “Testimonial” is another device by which the propagandist offers a “credible” testimony or counter-testimony to influence public opinion so the audience does not look for any other information resources. “Plain folks” strategy is quite common and often used in audio-visual propaganda materials. Leaders and politicians are portrayed as common people, engaging in everyday activities, such as cooking, gardening, fishing, playing sports, or enjoying cozy time with their families, something common people can relate to. Using underemphasis and overemphasis to “dodge issues and evade facts” (IPA 1937, 7) is the “card stacking” tool. Its main goal is to masquerade half-truths, omit unfavorable facts, and resort to lies and false testimonies to stack the cards against the truth to support the propagandist endeavors. The last device suggested by the IPA is the “band wagon” strategy to make the individual follow the crowd. The propagandist

hires a hall, fills a great stadium, marches a million men in parade [...] employs symbols, colors, music [...] appeals to the desire to ‘follow the crowd’ [...] directs his appeal to groups held together by common ties of nationality, religion, race, environment, sex, [and] vocation. (IPA 1937, 7)

In the following part of the chapter, I will show how these strategies, identified in the first half of the last century are still widely used by the Chinese government in the 21st century.

2.2 Art as a tool of propaganda

The analyzed booklet consists of a text accompanied by black and white drawings in an *Orbis Pictus*⁸ style. Therefore, we should briefly discuss how art is used as a propaganda tool in China in addition to the strategies mentioned in previous

⁸ A revolutionary textbook from the second half of the 17th century, written by John Amos Comenius. It was the first widely used textbook for children, which combined pictures with text.

paragraphs. Mao himself stated at the Yan'an Forum (*Yan'an wenyi zuotanhui*)⁹ that art has a specific purpose and cannot be detached from politics. Instead, it is an irreplaceable part of the proletarian revolution (Mao 1967). I consider the booklets a form of art but with a clear political purpose similar to its more famous "older brother," the propaganda poster. Their primary functions are similar, but the images in the booklets, as I will show later, can sometimes be ambiguous, and so they are further accompanied by explanatory texts. Moreover, propaganda posters often served as colorful decoration, and their aesthetic value overshadowed their political meaning. As Stefan Landsberger, the prominent collector and expert on Chinese propaganda posters noted, these posters were cheap and widely available. They could bring some color to otherwise drab places where most people lived (Landsberger 2013, 397). The booklet analyzed in this chapter, however, does not entirely fulfil all these characteristics. It is less elaborate in style and is black and white. All the illustrations are accompanied by a textual narration, not just by simple phrases as commonly seen in propaganda poster. The visual aspect of propaganda was a successful strategy to convey the desired message among the illiterate rural population and played an "immediate and didactic role" since the founding of the PRC in 1949 (Barnes 2020, 125).

Positioning the current Uyghur population in Xinjiang the same as the illiterate Chinese population in the 1950s would be highly controversial. It brings us back to what Mao called the Han chauvinism,¹⁰ which he promised to eradicate. Nowadays, 'illiteracy' does not often mean actual illiteracy. Instead, it implies the struggles some minorities might have with the standard Chinese *Putonghua*. The Whitepaper on Development and Progress Xinjiang published in 2009 by the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China (SCIO) stated that up to 70 % of ethnic minorities in Xinjiang have problems with standard Chinese and that such incompetence could pose a threat to the development of the region (SCIO 2009, Ch. 3). According to the former Xinjiang Party Secretary Wang Lequan (*1944) statement from August 2, 2002, minority languages cannot contain the vocabulary necessary for modern science and technology. Therefore, in order to improve the quality of life of the Uyghur youth when they grow up, all instructions have to be in *Putonghua* (cited in Becquelin 2004, 376).

The primary functions of the booklet are identical to propaganda posters as it informs the readers about new policies and laws, in Antonio Terrone's words, about "political imperatives and policy priorities" (Terrone 2016, 40). Both the pro-

⁹ The Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art was held in May 1942 in the Chinese Communist revolutionary centre in Yan'an in the Shaanxi province. It was decided that art should be about and for the Chinese working class and serve the political goals to achieve socialism.

¹⁰ Mao used this term in the Inner-party directive, drafted for the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on March 16, 1953 (Mao 1977).

paganda posters and the booklets can be instructing – stating what to do or how to do it. They can mobilize the masses (something often connected with various campaigns in the past). They can praise the government's actions, specific role models, military, police, etc. They can serve as a deterrent, warning people about punishments if they do something wrong. Moreover, they can also denounce and defame certain people, even the former role models. Of course, these materials can combine more functions on one page.

3. Analyzed documents

The two normative documents analyzed in this chapter are part of the so-called local regulations (*difangxing fagui*) issued by the provincial-level people's congress. The RXR was adopted by the 9th meeting of the Standing Committee of the 8th National People's Congress of the XUAR on July 16, 1994 and came into effect on October 1, 1994. The amendment came into effect on January 1, 2015. It consists of eight chapters and 66 articles in total. These Regulations apply only to the XUAR, demonstrating how vital religious affairs in Xinjiang are to the Central Government. The RXR was amended shortly after Xi Jinping assumed power and can be understood as an answer to the various violent attacks in and outside of Xinjiang in 2013 and 2014.¹¹ According to the Chinese government, these attacks were conducted by the Uyghur separatists and terrorists (Wu 2014).

The RDR was adopted on March 29, 2017, at the 28th meeting of the Standing Committee of the 12th People's Congress of the XUAR. It consists of six chapters and 50 articles. Similar to the RXR, the RDR applies only to Xinjiang, suggesting that extremism is a severe problem in the region. It defines extremism as "expressions and behaviors influenced by extremism, rendering radical religious ideas, and rejecting and intervening in normal production and life ... inciting hatred, discrimination or advocating violence" (RDR 2017, Art. 3). These regulations became widely discussed after the prompt amendment on October 9, 2018. In this revised version, Article 33 was rewritten to acknowledge and legitimize the existence of re-education camps, calling them vocational education and training centers (Lavička 2021b, 108).

However, for this short analysis, the second chapter on primary manifestations of the "extremification" (*jidianhua*) is of particular interest. It lists the behaviors which are considered extremist by the authorities. In the following paragraphs, I describe how these "signs of extremism" materialize in the booklet and are

¹¹ E.g., the 2013 Tiananmen square car attack, killing five and injuring more than 30 people, and the 2014 Kunming railway station attack, with a death toll of 35 and over 100 injuries.

presented both textually and visually to the audience. I also include some of the pages of the brochure to provide a clearer image.

Article 9 of the RDR states that it is prohibited to propagate and disseminate extremist thoughts (§ 1), to interfere: with others' freedom of religion, e.g., by forcing others to participate in religious activities (§ 2), with activities such as weddings, funerals or inheritance (§ 3), with others from having exchanges, mixing with, or living together, with persons of other ethnicities or other faiths (§ 4), with cultural and recreational activities, and rejecting or refusing public goods and services such as radio and television (§ 5). It is also forbidden to generalize the concept of halal, and expand it into other areas beyond food, and then using the idea of something being non-halal to reject or interfere with others' secular lives (§ 6). It is forbidden to wear, or to compel others to wear, burqas and face coverings, or symbols of "extremification" (§ 7) and spread religious fanaticism through irregular beards or name selection (§ 8). Another sign of extremism is failing to perform the legal formalities in marrying or divorcing by religious methods (§ 9), or not allowing children to receive public education, or obstructing the national education system (§ 10). Intimidating or inducing others to boycott national policies and destroy state documents, such as resident identity cards, household registration, or even the Chinese currency, is prohibited (§ 11). It is further forbidden to intentionally damage or destroy public or private property (§ 12). Paragraph 13 prohibits publishing, printing, distributing, selling, producing, downloading, storing, re-producing, accessing, copying, or even possessing articles, publications, audio, or video with extremist content. The fourteenth sign of extremist behavior is to deliberately interfere with and undermine the implementation of family planning policies (§ 14). The last paragraph forbids any other extremist speeches and actions (RDR 2017, Art. 9). Such a vague formulation allows the local authorities to interpret the regulations as they wish.

The first edition of the *Din esebiyliki ademni nabut qilidu* was published in 2014 by Xinjiang People's Publishing House (*Xinjiang Renmin Chubanshe*)¹² and reprinted in 2015, with a price tag of 8 RMB. It is a thin booklet consisting of 60 pages with black and white illustrations and the accompanying explanatory text in Uyghur. However, the Uyghur text was translated from the Chinese original,¹³ which is a common strategy even for the newspapers published in Uyghur. The imprint of the booklet states that the publication is part of the patriotic education (*aiguozhui jiaoyu*). I chose this booklet from other available sources because it deals more with current policy implementation and law enforcement than the

¹² The publishing house was founded in 1951 and is under the control of the Bureau of Publishing of the Central Propaganda Department (Brady 2010, 20–21).

¹³ The author of the Chinese text is Zhang Yubo and the Uyghur translator is named Dilmurat.

other booklets, primarily focusing on official Chinese narratives about the history of Xinjiang. The general idea for the analysis is to see how the official narrative from official normative documents is transformed into this kind of material and what propagandist strategies are used.

The following pages include examples directly taken from the booklet. I am trying to illustrate some of the narratives that are repeatedly present in the booklet and therefore they are perceived by the Chinese authorities as crucial.



Figure 1

(Source: Zhang 2014, 35–36)

The picture on the left in Figure 1 reflects § 7 of the RDR Article 9, which bans the veiling and wearing of extremist symbols. It shows a “modern” Uyghur woman pointing at four other women wearing black burqas and explaining in the text that this Arabic dress is not original to Uyghurs. The text further reads that by wearing such a dress, women lose their freedoms and become brainwashed. As veiling became a widespread phenomenon in Xinjiang in the early 2010s, the government stepped in and initiated the Project Beauty (*liangli gongcheng*) campaign in 2011. The main goal of this campaign was to discourage women from veiling and covering their entire body, as in some other Muslim countries. Men were discouraged from growing extensive beards. The “symbols of extremism”

are usually associated with a star and a crescent. They are considered extremist because they were used on flags of the short-lived East Turkestan Republics in the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁴ However, they are still an important symbolic representation of the independent Xinjiang and the Pan-Turkic movement, something the Chinese government does not tolerate (Jiménez Tovar and Lavička 2020, 253). Failing to comply with the regulation would automatically make that person suspected of being infiltrated by dangerous extremist thoughts (VOA 2013). Nowadays, the only arbiter of acceptable attire, behavior, or even the ethnic culture, is the Chinese state (Leibold and Grose 2016, 102).

The picture on the right in Figure 1 further recounts § 3 of the RDR Article 9, which bans interfering with weddings, funerals, and other activities. It further explains that religious extremists are compelling people to believe that real Muslims should not sing and dance or watch TV. The story recalled below the picture talks about some “simple” people in southern Xinjiang who believed the extremists and stopped dancing at weddings and crying at funerals. It follows with a story of a woman who was working in Ürümchi. She went to Hoten¹⁵ for a wedding and was shocked to see all her former friends wearing burqas. The wedding ceremony was very quiet, quite different from the traditionally festive and enthusiastic Uyghur celebrations. The portrayal of a happy dancing Uyghur girl in traditional dress, with braided hair and a *doppa* hat, illustrates the stereotypical image of the Uyghurs and the reduction of their culture into exotic singing and dancing (Anonymous 2021, 134). This text bears characteristics of the testimonial strategy of propaganda by implying that it tells the real story of a specific person. The name-calling strategy of propaganda complements the testimonial by sneaking in the idea of the underdeveloped and backward southern Xinjiang, which is a common narrative. We can only deduce that this can go even further by stating that the South is poor and obsolete because most people are the Uyghurs, not Han Chinese. However, it is necessary to add that in terms of the GNP, the southern part of Xinjiang is considerably more impoverished than the northern part.¹⁶

¹⁴ The First East Turkestan Republic (1933–1934) and the Second East Turkestan Republic (1944–1949).

¹⁵ Hoten is an important urban center in southern Xinjiang, located on the south-western edge of the Taklimakan Desert. It is inhabited predominantly by the Uyghurs.

¹⁶ In 2019, the per capita disposable income of urban residents of Ürümchi was 40,101 RMB, while in Kashgar it was only 25,631 RMB (XSB 2020, 10–12).



Figure 2

(Source: Zhang 2014, 37, 41)

In Figure 2, the picture on the left reflects § 5 and § 6 of RDR Article 9. The fifth paragraph states that people must not intervene in cultural and recreational activities or reject public goods and services such as radio and television. Quite interestingly the televisions depicted in the picture resemble obsolete models from the last century. Moreover, the Uyghurs are portrayed wearing very old-fashioned clothes, and the Uyghur men have twisted moustaches. The sixth paragraph of the RDR Article 9 forbids generalizing the concept of “halal.” The text under the picture states that extremists tell the people that food, such as vegetables grown by the Han Chinese (eggplant, white radish), and other products, including televisions, or even houses given to Uyghurs, are not halal because they all come from the Han. In the 2010s, Xinjiang authorities launched the anti-halal movement because they feared that the Islamic tradition began penetrating secular China (Kuo, 2018). Various local governments decided to close many shops and services to “fight against the pan-halal tendency and safeguard ethnic unity” (Li 2018). Some cities ordered the shop owners to remove Islamic symbols and Arabic from their storefront signs (Wyatt 2019).

The text under the picture on the right explains that the “Three evil forces” (*sangu shili*)¹⁷ tell people that the Chinese government encourages Uyghurs to learn Mandarin to side-line the Uyghur language to make it eventually disappear. According to them, it is a part of a bigger plan to erase the whole Uyghur culture. Therefore, people should not send their children to public schools. Because of the “three evils” influence, some students start to run away from schools or refuse to continue their studies. They destroy their books and refuse to learn Mandarin. The text concludes that these people reduce their opportunity to become competitive in society and have a good life.



Figure 3

(Source: Zhang 2014, 11, 16)

Figure 3 refers to the RXR Article 40 and 41. Article 40 says that the content of religious publications and audio-visual materials must not: 1) undermine national unity, social stability, economic development, or scientific and technological progress; 2) incite national hatred or racial discrimination, or undermine ethnic unity; 3) promote separatism, religious extremism and terrorism; 4) affect religious harmony, causing disputes between and within religions; 5) endanger social morality

¹⁷ The proper translation would be “Three forces,” meaning terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism.

or great, Chinese cultural traditions; or 6) violate other laws and regulations. Article 41 forbids the “use [of] satellite ground receiving facilities to listen to, watch, or disseminate domestic and foreign religious radio and TV programs.” According to the accompanying texts, the “evil forces” use modern technology to spread religious extremism. Several people in southern Xinjiang, especially young people and teenagers, watch and store videos about terrorism on their mobile phones. The “three evil forces” encourage young people undertake Jihad to go to heaven. The picture on the right reiterates the content of Article 40, stating that extremism is like cancer to a human body. Therefore, viewing, downloading, owning, sharing, or selling such content is strictly forbidden and punishable by law. Like Figure 2, the computers and even the mobile phone showed in the picture are all very obsolete, the picture also depicts a video and audio tapes that are hardly used anymore.



Figure 4

(Source: Zhang 2014, 14–15)

The left picture in Figure 4 talks about a group of terrorists from Seriqbuya¹⁸ who began to gather to watch films about jihad in September 2012. They built their organization, trained physically and on April 23, 2013, they conducted a terrorist attack killing 15 people, including Uyghur, Han, and Hui people. The police took

¹⁸ A town located in Kashgar prefecture, approximately 180 kilometers to the east of Kashgar.

quick action and shot dead seven of the terrorists and caught another 18 of them. The picture on the right depicts a car attack involving a suspected suicide bombing on October 28, 2013 at Tiananmen Square in Beijing. According to the accompanying text, the investigation found that the driver, his mother, and his wife watched movies about jihad and decided to conduct a terrorist attack, even taking their baby with them. The Chinese government blamed the attack on the ETIM (Kaiman 2013). Both texts use the “testimonial” and the “name-calling” strategies. They show how people in Xinjiang are easily influenced by extremism and engage in reprehensible terrorist acts. To make the description more believable to the readers, exact numbers of offenders, real place names, and dates are included in the text. The Chinese police, in contrast, are portrayed as a swiftly acting force that does not hesitate to kill the terrorists to protect the rest of society.



Figure 5

(Source: Zhang 2014, 8, 10)

Figure 5 shows the denunciation of some religious leaders and even of some family members, such as parents. It also refers to Articles 12–14 of the RXR. These Articles ban religious home-schooling, including theology classes or scripture reading. The text on the left recalls a police case from June 2016, when the police department in Hoten arrested a Mullah who secretly offered religious classes to local people. He had a wife, but two more women lived in the same house and

shared the bed with him, living in polygamy. As the religious leaders often carry more authority than the local administrators or the CPC cadres, it is a governmental strategy to disgrace such personalities publicly and point out their moral weaknesses. The scene in the picture's background resembles orientalist image of the harem where women were sexually subjugated and exploited.

The picture on the right shows two happy Uyghur children studying in the public school and a sad Uyghur boy being sent to the religious school by his father. The accompanying text explains that nowadays, all Uyghur children have the opportunity to receive a good public education. Even the children from rural areas can study in the public schools for free, get a free lunch there, and receive financial support to stay at the dormitories if they are from far away. However, some parents sent their children to religious schools instead, so now, as grownups, they cannot participate well in society and are not financially independent, compared with those who studied in public schools.



Figure 6

(Source: Zhang 2014, 42, 47)

Figure 6 shows two pictures praising the government's efforts for helping the Uyghurs, talking about the affirmative actions towards them. The picture on the left tells the reader to learn how to use technology to be modern and that the Party and the government support minority education. The image on the right

stresses that compulsory education is free in Xinjiang and that minority students get extra points at the university entrance exams. Moreover, after graduation, the government offers them jobs. For those who cannot find jobs, the government pays for their re-education, after which they can find new jobs quickly. Chinese government is portrayed in a paternalistic fashion and emphasizes its core role in “civilizing” and modernizing Xinjiang since the establishment of the PRC (Zhang, Brown, and O’Brien 2018, 799–800). The Uyghur children are stereotypically portrayed wearing *doppa* hats in all the pictures, which does not, however, correspond with the everyday reality in Xinjiang.

4. Common themes

Several main themes reappear throughout the whole booklet. There is the narrative of “three evil forces” trying to split up and frustrate China by spreading various rumors. These “rumors” are, for example, that the Han Chinese steal the natural resources of Xinjiang (Zhang 2014, 43), that the Chinese government bans Muslims to go to Mecca (Zhang 2014, 27), and forces people to learn *Putonghua* instead of Uyghur. Another common theme is the lack of education among the rural Uyghur population in the southern part of Xinjiang. According to the official narrative, this disadvantage makes people prone to accept extremist ideas, illegally leave the country, or sabotage official policies.

Throughout the brochure, it is also stressed that Uyghur culture is unique and should be protected from “foreign” influences. Correspondingly, Islam in China is specific, Sinicized, and peaceful compared to other Muslim countries. Only the extremists are changing the meaning of the Koran (Zhang 2014, 9) to force people to go on jihad and kill innocent people (Zhang 2014, 19). The booklet states that it is necessary to prevent the penetration of radical Islam from other countries such as Afghanistan or Pakistan and fight illegal migration to these countries. Afghanistan and Pakistan are portrayed as developing countries with starving, unhappy people influenced by extremism (Zhang 2014, 20–24). Quite surprisingly, Saudi Arabia is described as a role model. The booklet states that although the country is the source of Islam, it is highly developed and modern, and women there can work as television anchors, be professional athletes, and walk freely in the cities. Particularly surreal is that the same picture also shows bottles of alcohol and cigarettes (Zhang 2014, 25), which is even more surprising because smoking regulations are strict and alcohol is completely banned in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, breaking the law is punished by hundreds of lashes. In several instances, the booklet describes Pakistan as a failed state and the hotbed of the “three evils.” It depicts Pakistani population suffering a great deal of hardship and oppression due to religious extremism. Such portrayal suggests that China-Pakistan relations

must be disrupted. In reality, however, Pakistan is one of the Muslim countries which are mostly silent about the treatment of Muslims in China (Kelemen and Turcsányi 2020, 232), and even praising Beijing's treatment of Muslims in China and the detention of Uyghurs as a counterterrorist and deradicalization measure (OIO 2019a; OIO 2019b).

"Glittering generalities" and "card stacking" are common strategies used in the booklet to praise the role of the Chinese government in modernizing the region. The government is portrayed as an eager supporter of Uyghurs' struggle to modernity represented by various forms of affirmative actions in education, employment, housing, etc. (Zhang 2014, 48–49). At the same time, the booklet stresses the uncompromising stance towards any activities considered illegal by the administration and it reiterates the "strike-hard" attitude of the security forces in the region (Zhang 2014, 53). As the CCP wants to retain the only real authority in the region, the booklet tries to discredit any possible competitors, such as the local religious personnel and even the family elders, who are portrayed as two-faced, or brainwashed and hindering the improvement of living conditions in the region.

5. Conclusion

This chapter tried to outline one of the propaganda channels that the Chinese government uses to inform the Uyghurs about new laws, regulations, and restrictions especially. It studied one specific Uyghur booklet about religious extremism in the region and compared its content with provisions in two normative texts: the Regulations of XUAR on Religious Affairs (RXR) and the Regulations on De-radicalization of the XUAR (RDR). It also identified various propaganda strategies still used in the 21st century in official Chinese narratives, which are in line with the seven typical propaganda techniques put together in 1937 by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis in New York. The most commonly used strategies were "glittering generalities" and "card-stacking" to highlight the positive role of the party-state in the region. At the other end of the scale was "name-calling," denouncing the backward and uneducated people and even some religious leaders for their supposed two-faced behavior. Another frequently employed method was the "testimonial," telling "real stories" to make the whole text more believable. Quite interestingly, some content of the booklet goes *ad absurdum*, such as the portrayal of the Saudi Arabia as a liberal country and accompanying such depiction with pictures of alcohol and cigarettes.

It is evident that in 21st century China, the spread of information through this kind of visual propaganda still plays an essential role in certain parts of China, and definitely in Xinjiang. One reason can be the inherited distrust towards non-Han groups living in the PRC, especially on the peripheries. The booklet reiterated

on many occasions that radicalization is often related to uneducated and rural Uyghurs. Therefore, the Chinese government puts significant efforts to educate the people and integrate them into a homogenized, modern Chinese society even against their will. This argument follows Stevan Harrell's statement that "the ethnic minority people are seen as inferior and peripheral, but also civilizable" (Harrell 1995, 13). Visual or even cartoon-like propaganda is often associated with the illiteracy of the target group. Therefore, instead of promoting interethnic harmony, the propaganda does the opposite by highlighting the differences among the ethnic groups. It offends their cultural values and subsequently leads to discontent among the target population and their resentment toward the governing agencies (Terrone 2016, 40).

This chapter is a small addition to Chinese propaganda studies. It is envisioned as a part of the future larger project that will seek to understand how normative documents are transmitted and adjusted into various channels to reach the target audience in Xinjiang.

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