
De-extremization Effort through Political Re-education Camps In China: A Case of Uyghur Ethnic Minorities

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Abstract

The rise of Islamic extremism has prompted global Islamophobia and general hatred for Muslims, which is felt towards both the religion itself and ethno-religious groups such as the one present in China. The spread and acts of Islamic extremism in China might surprise the global community but the concerning level of threat on the issue affected domestic security policies. In explaining the case study, the qualitative research uses a combination of descriptive and explanatory approaches while simultaneously merging the three constructivist theory approaches from notable scholars such as Alexander Wendt, Martha Finnemore and Peter Katzenstein. The research concludes that while there may be variations of methods to combat Islamic extremism, the implementation of political re-education camp for the Uyghurs seems to be the best and most effective method in both de-extremizing the minority group from potential Islamic extremist ideology and enforcing the Chinese government's interests. Justifications of the choice include the constructivist aspects of the international norms, repetition of historical and existing trajectories as well as the successful rate of cleansing troubled and infected people from negative ideologies based on the Chinese societal norms.

Keywords: Political Re-education Camps, De-extremization, China, Uyghur

Abstrak

Bangkitnya ekstremisme Islam telah mendorong Islamophobia global dan kebencian umum terhadap Muslim, yang dirasakan baik terhadap agama itu sendiri maupun kelompok-kelompok etnis-agama seperti yang ada di Tiongkok. Penyebaran dan tindakan ekstremisme Islam di China mungkin mengejutkan komunitas global, tetapi tingkat ancaman yang mengkhawatirkan pada masalah tersebut memengaruhi kebijakan keamanan dalam negeri. Dalam menjelaskan studi kasus ini, penelitian kualitatif digunakan dan dikombinasikan dengan pendekatan deskriptif dan eksplanatori sekaligus menggabungkan tiga pendekatan teori konstruktivis dari sarjana terkemuka seperti Alexander Wendt, Martha Finnemore dan Peter Katzenstein. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa meskipun mungkin ada variasi metode untuk memerangi ekstremisme Islam, penerapan kamp politik untuk etnis Uyghur tampaknya menjadi metode terbaik dan paling efektif dalam menyapakan kelompok minoritas dari ideologi ekstremis Islam dan menegakkan kepentingan pemerintah China. Pembeneran pilihan termasuk diantaranya yaitu aspek konstruktivis dari norma-norma internasional, pengulangan pengalaman sejarah yang ada serta tingkat keberhasilan pembersihan orang-orang bermasalah dan terinfeksi dari ideologi negatif berdasarkan norma-norma masyarakat Cina.

Kata Kunci: Political Re-education Camps, De-extremization, China, Uyghur

INTRODUCTION

Thrown under the spotlight, Islam has been criticized in different ways, although in most cases, ostracizing Muslims is prevalent in social lives. Critics include implying the negative teachings of the Qur'an which encourages the usage of violence, blaming Islamic figures and their teachings which extended to coining the term Islamophobia, or fear of Islam. Islamophobia subsequently created negative stereotypes of Muslims as being both undemocratic and passive. These causes again open provide favorable conditions for discrimination and oppression, especially where Muslims are minority.

Related to the discourse of Islamic extremism, China has also participated within the realms of it given the complicated situation has affected one of China's Muslim-majority ethnic group known as the Uyghurs.

The Global Times, a Chinese state-run newspaper stated that there were around 300 Chinese nationals who joined ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) yet the Syrian ambassador to China stated that there were approximately 5,000 Uyghurs from Xinjiang were fighting in Syria. Oddly, only some of the Uyghurs were fighting for ISIS while the rest fought under "their own banner" or simply for East Turkestan.

The influence of Islamic extremist groups and separatist movement all in one region, incited China to enforce its own version of counter-extremism method known as People's War on Terror (Chido, 2019) through enforcing religious restrictions and aiming to combat Islamic extremism. The initial main target of China's counterterrorism efforts is the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM). It is initially a separatist group but turned and framed into a terrorist organization, where Beijing alleges that it maintains influence in Xinjiang, but eventually affects the entire Uyghur population. The first method imposed is systematic state-led surveillance, where people are monitored through checkpoints, which limits their movements and freedoms to forgo religious activities such as attending Islamic gatherings, follow Islamic attributes such as men with goatee and women with headscarf (Uyghur Human Rights Project, 2018b; Wong, 2018).

The surveillance also acts as a guard to prevent unwanted Islamic attributes as well as a threatening instrument for perceived "juvenile" Uyghurs (Uyghur Human Rights Project, 2014). Other controversial method is the implementation of "re-education" camps, which have

stimulated widespread chaos among international community. The application of re-education camp is closely linked with de-extremification, in which the term was first mentioned by Zhang Chunxian in 2012 and eventually passed as local legislation on 2015 under Cheng Quanguo's reign as the Communist Party of China's (CPC) secretary of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) (Zenz, 2019b). However, it is to be noted that various reports have stated differences in period of enforcement which could be concluded as being initiated in early 2010s and applied three years prior. With regard to mass detainment, the regime do not differ between innocent civilians and targeted people which explains the expanded facilities to accommodate the growing number of detainees – approximately around 800,000 to 1 million people (or more) which accounts to around 10% of the group's population per 2018 (Hughes, 2018). Subsequently, most Uyghurs to an extent follow “moderate Islam, although categorizing them as moderate would imply that the religion itself is radical and belong to extremism.

Contrasting the claims mentioned above, the Chinese government has defensively rejected by stating that these actions are necessary, indicated by the alarming attacks of Islamic extremism globally.

Numerous Chinese news outlets and representatives in the international forums rebutted ‘Western’ claims on the persecution of Uyghurs in camps; describing how researches on the country's own domestic policy are untrue and has interfered internal issues (Xinhua Net, 2019). Hu Lianhe, a member of the CPC Central Committee admitted that these camps “have saved lives and combat extremism” and added that the Uyghurs enjoy full freedom (BBC News, 2018).

What is it about using political camps that seems so appealing to the government? Is there a special purpose of political re-education camps that could de-extremize the whole Uyghur population? Are re-education camps effective in its enforcement? Is re-education camp the only way, out of all the possible efforts, to de-extremize? The Chinese narrative should be understood before drawing judgmental remarks and all the questions above only increase the curiosity of the writer to analyze the case.

METHOD

The study uses qualitative approach, examining the causal relations between actions and consequences. The primary sources include government documents, commentaries, interviews and research

reports from different organizations (Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, 2018). Secondary sources often quote from primary sources too, although the only difference would be additional analysis or interpretation according to the desired outcome. The secondary data of this research is derived from e-books and e-journals. The final aim of the research is to draw conclusion based on the theory presented in the last chapter (Jhang, 2019).

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This research uses Constructivism as an analytical framework. Constructivism is an international relations theory that explains how world relations and affairs are resulted by social construction which differs from other materialists theories. The major assumption of constructivism refers to the construction of international system by human interaction and thoughts among each other (Behraves, 2011a). Constructivism further explains why a certain problem might be elevated or exaggerated in comparison to others under the same area such as border security, immigrations or other domestic and foreign policies. These perceived problems or threats, through political system, are interconnected to how actors or society is constructed by norms and values which eventually

creates an experience. It also explains how our constructed identities help us create perceptions of how ‘we’ are supposed to interact with ‘other’ and vice versa (Behraves, 2011b).

The notion of the theory is operated to understand the circumstances of the policy or campaign imposed and implemented by the Chinese government on the case study of this research. Chinese identity – influenced through comprehensive historical timeline – has transformed through different dynasties which is equivalent to its ever-changing interests, domestic and international. This is prevalent with regards in both systems’ influence, where China has resorted into applying the norms of international community in their own identity while preserving its Chinese-communist identity at the same time. Martha Finnemore’s alternative approach is definite in the case of China – as mentioned by Jackson and Sorenson – as to what international society or institutions make up into internalizing ‘inter-subjective’ norms and eventually understanding into state’s domestic and foreign policies (Jackson & Sorensen, 2006). The process is not simple and involves three steps that includes norm emergence, norm cascade and norm internalization.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Political Re-education Camps in China

Related to the brutal contestation of dominance done between the Uyghurs and Chinese government, the continuous cycle of resistance, oppression and consequential punishment of unaccepted actions have long been implemented by every state who abides their laws or common practices, which are similar to how the Chinese have ‘camps’ to punish anyone perceived as threat according to a particular period’s ‘accepted rules’. Chinese political re-education camps, per its term stimulates and encourages indoctrination of certain ideology, particularly famous with communist countries but has also been enforced by non-communist nations such as detention camps in India (Rahim, 2019). The terminology itself is often confused with internment, concentration or political camps, although the re-education camps might have mirroring similarities among those terms.

The following terms will be explained before pursuing to the focus of the research: Internment camps are used to confine ‘enemy people’ during conflicting times such as war. It doesn’t refer to the imprisonment of a state’s own citizens. When implying the confinement of a state’s own citizens, then ‘incarceration’ is the

correct term (Lachman, 2017). Concentration camps, per historical usage, has been widely used by German Nazis to punish the Jews (and non-Jews who oppose Nazism) and has also been commonly acknowledged as ‘death camps’ due to the number of deaths it resulted. In fact, the Holocaust Museum defines the term as “... a camp in which people are detained or confined, usually under harsh conditions and without regard to legal norms of arrest and imprisonment that are acceptable in a constitutional democracy” (Schumacher-Matos & Grisham, 2012).

Differences in understanding these terms still trigger heated debates but the researcher has attempted to draw the line between the often-overlapping terms. China’s case of re-education camps is arguably not new, but underwent major changes from then to now. Historical records show that re-education camps have been widely used in China during Mao Zedong’s reign in the 1950s, which established two types: ‘reform through labor’ (*laodonggaizao*) and ‘re-education through labor’ (*laodongjiaoyang*). The former is a part of the formal prison system, where criminals are convicted through legal proceedings, while the latter does not undergo legal due process (Zenz, 2019b).

These camps were established as punishment to people who were perceived as threat to the public. The kinds of people perceived as threat differs from time to time, during Mao's reign it was the "rightists' or counterrevolutionaries" and the 90's was the petitioners, "sex workers and drug addicts" (Dirks, 2018). The same system was again enforced in the 1990s under another name called 'transformation through education' (*jiaoyuzhuanhua*) which was initially aimed to convert *Falun Gong* sect followers away from their spiritual pursuits, but has subsequently implemented in Xinjiang as the right choice of de-extremizing Muslims from the potential dangers of Islamic teachings (Castets, 2019).

Adrian Zenz also implies that the method above is common to coerce people to detoxify (Zenz, 2019b). *Laojiao* was abolished in 2013 due to both international and domestic pressures, especially with high records of human rights violations. Albeit the case, the government still uses this method under different circumstances and terminologies which will be mentioned momentarily (Amnesty International, 2013).

Constructivism and the Justification of Political Re-education Camps in China

From the explanation of constructivism, it is suggested that a state could have multiple identities at once or one particularly identity is formed through a combination of multiple identities. The latter is created through the adoption of both existing and new norms. This section will be divided into various parts in a particular order, starting from the emergence of 'Islamic extremism' as an accepted 'dangerous' norm and eventually how it related to the choice of implementing political re-education camps.

Internalization of Global Norms into Domestic Politics

The decision of choosing political re-education could be analyzed from the constructivist point of view. This analysis will borrow sections from Martha Finnemore's top-down approach on norms internalization. Political re-education camps are 'assumed' to be a security policy, given its legislative status in XUAR (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region). The writer argues that domestic norms and international pressure affected China's stance on fulfilling 'potentially effective' de-extremization methods towards the separatist/terrorist Uyghurs and other Uyghur population. The explanation will be structured as the following. The impacts of the rise

of Islamic extremism undoubtedly affected global perception of Islam, as seen through the number of attacks committed by extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS.

The idea of Islamic extremism's association with its violent counterpart – terrorism – has also shifted in terms of legal standings, such as updating their status to criminals instead of insurgent militias which are often associated with military. The emergence of this norm is greatly influenced by the actors – or 'norm entrepreneurs' as Finnemore calls it – who endorse it, which usually starts as a domestic issue.

The writer assumes that the 9/11 terrorist attacks formulated the start of the contemporary era's norm emergence by western states. The norm itself is regulative in its approach by persuading the political leaders to perform constitutive action. Norm entrepreneurs have gone as far as promoting norms into international organization or even create organization to promote norms such as the case with United Nations and other organization. This process is known as norm cascade, or in other words the institutionalization of norms which garner greater common understanding than individual norms itself. Similarly, the context of Islamic extremism is promoted to the highest level of authority to persuade and

eventually coerce other states to follow such as through the formation of counter-terrorist organization, committees and rules.

Socialization is the most effective tool of norm cascade, but seems to have loopholes in understanding how or what variables coincide with the process of structural changes. Wendt's four variables of structural, relation and identity changes have the ability to provide answers. The process is assumed to undergo the following scheme.

Homogenization is the shared acceptance of terrorism as global problem although the number of annual deaths is inherent to justify it. Interdependence is the cooperation and mutual agreement of combating religious extremism through various efforts including de-radicalization, de-extremization and their respective methods of choice. Common perception refers that states are at stake if continue to be under the circle of serious terrorist threats. The principle of self-restraint is yet to be applied by state governments due to differences in accepting its efficiency and affectivity.

Institutionalized norms are also socialized in accordance with the needs of international legitimacy or alleviating states' self-esteems. The final process is known as norms

internalization, which refers to the acceptance of norms as a whole and taken-for-granted global society. State's usually conform to those norms through imitation (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). This eventually affects how the norm of 'Islamic extremism' is seen as dangerous and adapted as global threat. Related to Wendt's cultures of anarchy, threat is only perceived as dangerous when it believes, perceives and accepts it as one.

Elaborating further into China's case, the success of the global joint force on combating terrorism, which in this case falls under the stereotypical notion of Islamic extremism, also affected the social stability of Beijing. China, known to be constitutionally dependent on its 'communist with Chinese characteristics' ideology (often related to atheism and folkloric culture) has trouble grasping Islam and its own indigenous culture under one unity. This is best described through the ongoing conflict in the XUAR region, which is derived from the incapability of achieving goals that led to persistent conflict.

Several attacks targeted towards the general population and Chinese government has led to the adoption of War on Terror campaign. It has led to the extent of adding other similar elements and together the emergence of three evil forces: terrorism, religious

extremism and separatism. The three evil forces has also been accepted and implemented as a regional and national security issue thanks to the internalization of international norms and values, which then enables agents to influence the existing structure of domestic institutions.

This brings us to the first important part of the research, counter-terrorism and extremism, which are both another product of constructed threat that managed to manifest it from low-politics to high-politics in a matter of years, which also went through a series of accepted norm socialization globally from the initial American War on Terror campaign. Threat is only perceived as dangerous when it believes, perceives and accepts it as one through either socialization, imitation and other supporting factors. The collective identity of states adopting global war on terror campaign through the inter-subjective understanding of danger, threat and potential losses (assumed as the shared norm) is also applied in the extended existing case of XUAR contemporary issue; the revival of Islam.

The Influence of 'Communist' Norms in Implementing Political Re-education Camps

Concerning the spread and legitimacy of global norms, domestic

norms are particularly related to intra-state experiences towards local groups or government which perpetuated the acceptance of certain policy as normal and appropriate. Domestic norms have also played major roles as justificatory legal basis of ethnic persecution under de-extremization process. A key term of the relations includes assimilation process. Historical records show that while there is a contested historical validity, the process assimilation between the two wasn't easy, as seen from the exclusivity and Middle Kingdom mindset prevalent throughout Chinese domination over the region.

This identity explains the Chinese's corporate identity, differing between itself and other, while role identity is placed on the basis of protecting the civility and purity of its Chinese-ness from others, yet has the honorary mission of unifying the whole China by its own means and purposes. Alongside the previous argument, the historical stretch took account of Mao Ze Dong's 're-education through labor' camps, which were seen as the best resourceful tactic in handling people infected with 'disease' before assimilating them back into the 'healthy' communist-driven society. The roots of the camps are none other than communism and Confucian ideas

adopted as public norm and state identity.

The presence and growth of religion, especially Islam, in communist China is posed as a challenge because both do not coexist by the nature of the ideology. Communism is widely accepted as anti-religious or the system itself thrives on atheism. The ruling party of China, Communist Party of China, is an atheist institution itself which banned its bureaucrats from practicing religion (TRT World, 2017).

Initially, Mao's approach on religion during the first years of the communist nation was the creation of Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB). The bureau recognized five main religions (Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism and Taoism), banned any religious activities besides the ones recognized and appointed the state as the head of every worship house. When the first constitution was approved in 1954, the government gave religious freedom to adults, yet uncertainty rose because there isn't any available statement regarding the provision's guarantee for the protection of religious practices or how it would be treated. The purpose of this uncertainty, according to Lamb, could be either intentional or not, which stems from how Marxism rejects religion, claiming it as "superstitious" which could lead to the

obstruction of economic development and welfare.

The same uncertainty, in fact, benefits the government to enforce violence on religions during the Cultural Revolution since there is no guarantee for protection or sanction to the offenders. The event of Cultural Revolution became the pivotal turn of religious eradication, banning all sorts of religious activities and organizations. It also emphasized that China's 'four olds' should be changed to 'four news'. The four olds (old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits) should be eradicated because it is seen as a tool used by the wealthy to corrupt the poor into gaining power and authority. The four olds is then transformed into 'four news' (new ideas, new culture, new customs, and new habits) (Haglund, 1975).

To achieve the latter, Maoist teachings focuses on how one must strive to identify their mistakes and correct them to be an ideal man according to the Maoist values. Religion is also regarded as old and traditional, which also explained the similar rejection of traditional elements after the fall of Qing dynasty and overall acceptance of communism. The Maoist-Communist ideology could sometimes be acknowledged as religion itself, since it also filled the void space once occupied by traditional religions

(Haglund, 1975). Cultural Revolution was obviously aimed to preserve the communist ideology in China and eradicate religion. The aspect of submission to God found in most religions – other than hindering economic interests – also threaten Mao's rule as the great leader.

This particular event led religious believers to practice religion in secret, in fear of persecution (Lamb, 2014). After the death of Mao, Deng Xiaoping's reform on religious freedom by constitution was adopted in 1982 under the Article 36 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (Lamb, 2014). The article states that people enjoy religious freedom; discrimination is banned and state, public organizations and individuals are forbidden to force others to believe or not to believe in any religion (Albert, 2018). The article suggests that it guarantees the protection and freedom of all citizens to practice religious belief and activities.

The writer assumes that religious freedom could only be achieved once Mao Ze Dong died, where many saw the unfortunate event as an escape from communist trap, but also the revival of unknown domination which possibly disturbs the flow of state's interests. Yet, today's situation is deemed as a reflection of Cultural Revolution, where political figures

publicly stated that people who follow religious pursuits as opposed to Marxist ideas will be punished (Fullerton, 2017). Since communism has failed religious followers through massacres and destruction of worship places during Mao's reign, many turned their backs and embraced the void that communism did not provide: the sense of comfort and safety in religions. The pliable social reform in Deng Xiaoping's reign saw a large increase in religious believers (Goh, 2018).

The increase and spread of religions prompted fear of potential dangers to Xi's Moist-Communist dreams. In order to suppress that, there has been a reform by Xi Jinping (who took account of Deng's policies) but also implemented Mao's favorite measure to suppress oppositions or threats: arbitrary detention (Cohen, 2019). By definition, it is understood as the detention of individual or groups without evidence and generally violates national or international laws (also violates the numerous ratified multilateral human rights treaties). Other sources have described how the Chinese constitution prohibits the usage of religious organizations to "...disrupt social order, impair the health of citizens, or interfere with the educational system of the State".

ICCPR allows states to put restrictions on groups that threaten the

aforementioned, but only according to law (Congressional-Executive Commission on China, 2018a). Although the constitution guarantees religious freedom, it prohibits religious organizations to perform activities that threaten public order; the party thrives on to implement authoritarian or dictatorship rule and mass control religious activities. This suggests that the norms accepted by the party doesn't follow the constitution or institutional changes, rather it permits 'logic of appropriateness' under the collective understanding of practice and routine. Both are deemed to be more superior to the ones written on paper, and paved way for the legitimate use of violence.

The case of China's re-education camps severely violated PRC's domestic legislation and international laws (Cohen, 2019). Unlike the reluctances of both Japan and Germany in repeating history mentioned as case studies by Katzenstein, China in fact uses the same historical trajectory or an existing system to carry out its goals. Unfortunately, only one source contributes to the 'successes of Mao's 're-education through labor'. An article published in 2007 states that approximately 730,000 thousand convicts have been released in 2006, where 400,000 received government aid and less than 3% from that number

had reoffended. Government aids include finding jobs and houses, encouraging enterprises to hire ex-convicts while also encouraging ex-convicts to create their own businesses (Xinhua News Agency, 2007).

The article suggests that these government aids and programs help to reduce the number of crimes and offenses. Similarly, today's political re-education camp mirrors the aforementioned, yet the only difference lies on the number of detainees and zero judicial rulings beforehand. People who graduated from these camps were assimilated along with the development of labor skills needed by the country. Third, the usage of political re-education camps is deemed effective in terms of exaggeration. The exaggerated notion of numerous potential 'what ifs' pushed the constructed security dilemma.

De-extremization through Political Camps as Social Reconstruction of Ethnic Identity

Political re-education camp, in constructivist terms, is understood as the manifestation of legitimate violence performed by state to achieve certain goals, usually ideological, political or cultural purposes. The legitimacy came from communist values and global Islamic extremist threat which have been merged as a

unifying factor to enforce regulative norms (in this case, common practice and routines are preferred than theory). Constructivism provided a critical assumption called 'the logic of appropriateness' which is used to enforce and implement the use of force or other forms of methods to attain interests.

The enforcement of de-extremization through re-education camps is acknowledged as appropriate because of the underlying justifications mentioned above, recalling that previous methods do not specifically possess the intended interests and outcome. Other methods such as restriction or softer measures do not give deterrence effect to extremist organization, not does it pose as warning to potential perpetrators and ordinary Uyghurs. Moreover, re-education camps have similar characteristics to how schools are: specific curriculums meant to be learned under the supervision of teacher, has to be completed per terms and punishment is given to those who don't comply with the rules.

The specific curriculum is then tailored to an extent to be quickly understood and accepted by students, as well as closing it from the possibility of questioning or debating the new found knowledge. Most schools today implement similar traits, but differ in the technological use as another source

of knowledge thus could be a defying force to counter existing curriculum and do not follow militaristic approach of education. Sadly, not every state provides censorship-free internet access, which is often used as form to conduct state-led propaganda.

Re-education camps were chosen as part of de-extremization process, mainly because of the interests the government wants to achieve. The choice of re-education camps is followed by the description of interests which have been previously researched and used to support the argument as explained by the following sources. Nury Turkel's published writing about a hearing on "China's Repression and Internment of Uyghurs: U.S. Policy Responses" suggested three motives behind the enforcement. She argues that first, "racial discrimination among Uyghurs is normalized, to the extent of possible cultural cleansing", though other minority are not mentioned.

Religious affiliation of Uyghurs should be condemned, pertaining that it threatens the national security of the majority Han Chinese and consequently forces the Uyghurs to accept one culture. The de-extremification process is simply aimed to reconstruct one's identity, by affiliating it with global issues and norms. Islam, through its manifestation of actions is deemed as dangerous, unresponsive towards the

unifying attempts of the state while at the same time educating the Uyghurs of the dangers of their Islamic identity, what harmful things it could do and should 'repent' by assimilating and submitting themselves to the majority.

Like formal schools, education is apparently successful in terms of accommodating many subjects into the curriculum, which includes denouncing the Islamic religion, show loyalty to Xi Jinping and the communist government as well as learning Mandarin. Second, "territorial consolidation forces mass migration of Han Chinese to XUAR and giving them incentives". This is even adopted into a program where thousands of Han Chinese are 'supposed' to integrate well with the Uyghurs by living in the same house where both parties could experience both cultures (Kang & Wang, 2018). Contradicting the previous intention which seems suspicious, it argues that it is just another motive to spy on Uyghurs and measure to what extent they adopt their Islamic identity.

Third, "global campaign, which enacts China's role in the international community", especially with the hopes of trade dominance and cooperation among neighboring nations under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which geographically needs XUAR as a getaway (Uyghur Human Rights Project, 2018a). By economical means,

perhaps BRI stands out as the biggest driving force behind the creation of political camps, where Patrik Meyer in his paper reveals that BRI is also used as a double standard propaganda weapon to promote both Islamic faith as part of China yet undermining its activities as illegal (Meyer, 2016).

Furthermore, poverty alleviation is the next believable motive China has added onto its goodwill duties. Since XUAR's population is perceived to live below the poverty line, the presence of camps is benefited when detainees are trained and employed to be apart in industrial production. Although that might be the case, Adrian Zenz argues that there are five goals aimed through the detainment of Uyghurs in political camps, among them is to (1) promote economic growth, (2) higher incomes from wage labor and (3) prosper the region as the core of global BRI influence (Zenz, 2019a).

Uyghur Human Rights Project also indicates that the presence of separatist movements will only worsen relations of both parties and therefore started the de-extremification process inflicted upon the entire population (initially special people and groups, though not anymore), as part of the counterterrorism campaign (Uyghur Human Rights Project, 2018b). Other interests include (1) guiding religions into a socialist society, which ensures

that every religion and their followers submit to the interests of the Party, (2) 'sinicizing' religious, actively incorporating Chinese cultural identity (often a mixture of Communist and Confucian values) into the everyday rituals and habits, (3) religion is used as an instrument for enforcing the Party's interests and activities.

Religions are used as a bridge to connect and communicate with other states, for diverse aspects such as economic purposes and political interests (Congressional-Executive Commission on China, 2018a). Similar to the interests of reviving the communist identity within the Chinese society, Islam is only seen as threat when it seeks to rebel against its rulers and acts as foreign domination. This domination could disturb how religion should comply and obey the communist society. Therefore, de-extremizing the Uyghurs in political re-education camps from the dangerous roots and even Arab-extremist traits – that could fall under showing similar characteristics in ideology (often rigid and intolerant) or appearance – could instill love and obedience to the state (Basuki, 2019).

Implementation of Social Reconstruction into State Identity

The formation of collective identity deemed successful by the Chinese government is then

implemented through the official narrative of China's state identity, in which the writer selects a few identity narratives based on the case of de-extremization through re-education camps. An analysis by Andreas Forsby identified the various types of identity narratives within the Chinese government under different presidential reigns, although these narratives pictured through Social Identity Theory and discursive analyses. The possibility of irrelevancy between this research and the data provided from Forsby's analysis is expected, however, forging the thread between their similarities might be present as well.

Forsby then argues that the theory could be incorporated into constructivism as means of the dynamic changes of identities based on its interest and equally mutual relations during a certain time. While constructivism in general bases its analysis on the international level, some constructivist scholars have built a narrower perspective, which sets as a kick off for this research. Based on his analysis and narrowed perspective on the research's case, China creates two identities: Unified China and Civilizing China; in which both are applied to the unification and development of Chinese people through various methods and pushing its economic growth beyond the border. The

narratives of both identities is a reminder of the ever-changing interests, relatively domestically or foreign.

Civilizing China, provides a clear state identity which resonates as 'China is a unified state comprising different ethnic groups; China must undertake a civilizing mission towards its peripheral groups while striking hard against separatism, fundamentalism and terrorism'. Another state identity called Unified China is the reinforcement of the same anti-three evil forces. Unified China leans more closely through an introverted/universalistic approach. It considers China as a civilized, multi-ethnic and modern society as well as the driving force towards unification in all aspects, including social and cultural beings throughout the whole territory. This identity narrative is then only challenged by its radicalized out-group minorities.

Borrowing a sociological term, out-group is simply defined as people who do not belong nor identify as part of their group, while in-group refers to the sense of belonging of individuals (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-a). Merriam-Webster then added that "... out-groups are usually objects of hostility and dislike" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-b). Regarding the case of mentioned in the previous sub-section, if Uyghurs continue to fight for their identity,

then they will be categorized as an out-group, but if they assimilate well into the Sino culture like the Hui Chinese, they are accepted with open arms. The latter identity was popularized under the presidential reigns of Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao and now Xi Jinping and largely established during the 21st century (Forsby, Wivel, & Flockhart, 2015).

CONCLUSION

The article is aimed to answer the reason behind China's choice of persecuting the Uyghurs in political re-education camps. It suggests that there are factors that influence China's decision-making process. The writer chooses constructivism as a tool to understand how the abstract and normative elements such as norms and values affect the existing system or construct another structure per the actors' interests and global trends. The use of constructivist theory here is described through the approaches presented by Wendt, Finnemore and Sikkink and Katzenstein, by analyzing how (1) global norms are spread and internalized to justify actions needed by a state, and (2) domestic norms. In the case of china, communist values are revived, because of its success in suppressing potential threats. Both are used to pursue either security policies or underlying interests.

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