Is China Islamophobic?
－A survey on historical and contemporary perspectives

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Introduction

The 21st century is marked with eminent accomplishments brought by scientific advances and enhanced concern for humanity and the environment. Nevertheless, stereotyped and often distorted images of Islam and Muslims persisted rather than abated. In the western world, Islam and those practicing it face the challenge of being stigmatized in many different ways. No subject in contemporary public discussion has attracted more confused discussion than that of relation between "Islam" and the "West".[1] In fact, it was said by Edward Said almost three decades ago that the term "Islam" as it is used today seems to mean one simple thing but in fact is part fiction, part ideological label, part minimal designation of a religion called Islam. In no really significant way is there a direct correspondence between the "Islam" in common Western usage and the enormously varied life that goes on within the world of Islam, with it more than 800,000,000 people, its millions square miles of territory principally in Africa and Asia, its dozens of societies, states, histories, geographies, cultures.[2] Said's viewpoint in essence accounts for the emergence of Islamophobia, the latest sentiment of firm intolerance toward Islam, and its gradual proliferation in contemporary Western countries.

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[1] Fred Halliday, "West Encountering Islam: Islamophobia Reconsidered", in Ali Mohammadi ed., *Islam Encountering Globalization*. London: Routledge, 2002, p. 14.
[2] Edward W. Said, "Introduction" in *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine how We See the Rest of the World*. New York: Vintage Books, 1997 (1981), p. I.

Islamophobic concerns have recently drawn much public attention. For example, the cover story of *Time* magazine (August 30, 2010) is "Is America Islamophobic? What the anti-mosque uproar tells us about how the U.S. regards Muslims". This special issue cautions that Islamophobia has become the accepted form of racism in America. More than 46% of Americans believe Islam is more likely than other faiths to encourage violence against nonbelievers.[3] Apparently, this Islamophobic complex is easily fostered by "threatening" phenomena, such as increase in numbers of foreign Muslim immigrants and mosques, as well as exaggerated hostility towards either radical or moderate Islam as if most Muslims are terrorists or most terrorists are Muslims. This sense of alarmism also reflects another simplification ambiguity of Islam: Muslim simplification is itself two-sided, on the one hand, a stereotyping of the "West", on the other the assertion of a unitary interpretation of text and culture.[4] Islamophobia is even sometimes described as a product of some specific Western areas or originated from anti-Muslim localisms such as Turcoscepticism, Eurocentrism and other ideological prejudice of exclusivism.[5] However, apart from this dichotomous comprehension of the West versus Islam, is it possible that Islamophobia or similar exclusive sentiments exist simultaneously in non-Western areas or is it proliferated in other non-Muslim countries? In particular, under the tremendous impact and influence of globalization, some cases of moderate symbiosis between Muslims and non-Muslims may be easily overlooked. Indeed, stereotyped Islamophobic bias and few radical Muslims' crimes against humanity shouldn't be regarded as a criterion to justify any consequence of interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims.

1. Ambiguity of Islamophobia: A Global issue or not?

The emergence of Islamophobia and its negative influence is seemingly a brand new phenomenon among contemporary America and European countries. In past decades, the term Islamophobia and its expansive concept had become the most

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[3] "Islamophobia in America", *Time* (August 30, 2010), p. 30.
[4] Fred Halliday, "West Encountering Islam: Islamophobia Reconsidered", p.14.

[5] Ebru Ş. Canan-Sokullu, "Islamophobia and Torcoscepticisim in Europe? A Four-Nation Study ", in Christopher Flood, Stephen Hutchings, Galina Miazevich and Henri Nickels ed., *Political and Cultural Representations of Muslims: Islam in the Plural.* Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2012, pp. 97-112; Fred Halliday, "West Encountering Islam: Islamophobia Reconsidered", pp.15-17.

controversial argument for explaining the intricate relationship between the West and *Dar ul-Islam*. The Islamophobic sentiment comprises racial, political, socio-cultural and psychological elements for stereotyping the anti-Muslim complex, characterized by intolerance, exclusion, violence, prejudice and discrimination[6], to justify the ideological legitimacy that Islam is a perennial threat to Western civilization, Muslims are uncivilized and backward, and Muslim immigrants could not possibly create a reciprocal symbiosis with non-Muslims in Western countries. In general, such "Islam versus the West" stereotypical dichotomy is reinforced to obscure a complex reality: Islam against the West, fundamentalism against modernity, static tradition versus dynamic change, and the desire to simply return to or preserve the past versus adaptation to modern life.[7] In many cases, Islamophobia is created naturally by misleading ideas such as "clash of civilizations" which has been over-exaggerated after the 9/11 attacks and other incidents just like the latest attack on the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris. Under the tremendous impact of globalization, Islamophobia has gradually been described as a narrow-minded perception that Islam is a death cult, not a real and "normal" religion.[8] As some Western-style prejudices shown, the growing Islamophobic complex exists not only in contemporary Western societies, and should arise typically almost everywhere when Muslims encounter non-Muslims.

Out of humanistic concerns, Islamophobia should not and cannot be shaped as a secular but inevitable sentiment of ethnocentrism or other "natural" bias to every aspect of *Dar ul-Islam* and Muslims. Caution should be taken to avoid the comprehensive limitations of Islamophobia and prevent its oversimplified motivation from becoming an unnecessary standard sentiment when observing cases of significant interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims that has long established a symbiotic situation. It is in this spirit that the case of Hui Muslims (Chinese-speaking Muslims or Sino-Muslims)[9] in China is chosen to illustrate and highlight the stable

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[6] *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us all.* London: Runnymed Trust, 1997. "Summary", p.1.

[7] John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 226.

[8] "Islam in America", *Time* (August 30, 2010), p. 18.

[9] The terms of Hui-Muslims or Chinese-speaking Muslims, are also described sometimes as Muslim Chinese and Sino-Muslims. Such controversial definitions and usages present meaningfully the diverse ethnic situations of "Hui" population in both historical and contemporary China. However, now the "Hui" population and its ethnicity affiliation have been recognized by the CCP since 1950s as an ethnic minority — *Huizu* or *Hui minzu* (Hui nationality). Please refer to Chang Chung-fu, "*Huayijianxu xiade bianyuan youyi--lun dangdai Zhongguo Huizu minzu shuxing zhongde shaoshu minzuhua wenti*" 「華夷兼蓄」下的邊緣游移－論當代中國回族民族屬性中的「少數民族化問題」(Vacillating boundaries in a Sino-alien category: Issues of ethnic minority in ethnic attribution of Hui minzu in contemporary

and centuries-old symbiosis created by their interaction with the Han majority and other ethnic minorities. Although the evolution of such symbiosis is most of the time moderate and peaceful, occasional unrest and sporadic turmoil are bound to arise. Examples of such include Muslim rebellions (or uprisings) in Qing dynasty as well as blasphemous incidents in both Nationalist and PRC eras. These cases are only unpredictable disorders triggered by ethno-cultural barrier or other political reasons. In fact, the Hui-Han symbiosis in modern China has maintained its stability in different ways. Unlike the Muslim migrants driven by war and poverty seeking refuge and a new life in Western countries, Hui Muslims have settled in the core areas of Chinese society for hundreds of years. Instead of being regarded as exotic, Hui Muslims can be counted as locals or domestic residents with elementary features of "Chineseness" in their preserved Islamic traditions and practices. In view of this exception, the Western Islamophobic sentiment or notions such as "clash of civilizations" should neither be considered universal nor taken as a norm to elucidate the situation of Islam and its influence in China.

Nevertheless, the current ethnic relation between the Han majority and the Muslim minority has never been so tense and antagonistic. Separatism blooms in Xinjiang, further intensified by harsh political coercion and fierce ethno-cultural policy of the CCP. Crises ensued, resulting in the spread of a quasi-Islamophobic or anti-Muslim sentiment and subjecting the Turkic Muslims such as ethnic Uyghurs to a more endangered situation. For reasons of social stability and national security, the prevalent stance is that Islam should be restricted openly in contemporary Xinjiang or other "untamed" Muslim communities within China. The widespread western Islamophobia and similar anti-Muslim sentiment has infiltrated into China and affected how Han Chinese perceive and treat Muslims, both "radical" Turkic Muslims and "moderate" Hui Muslims. Undoubtedly, the previous stable symbiosis between Muslims and non-Muslims in China is now under threat, if not already in jeopardy.

2. Ethnocentrism or anti-Muslimism? Blasphemous Incidents in Modern China

In contemporary Western countries, Islamophobia has closed down spaces in which those who identify as Muslims and those who do not can encounter one another without mistrust and misinformation clouding their perceptions of one

another.[10] Contrary to the new Muslim immigrants in the West, Hui Muslims in China not only have been preserving their special socio-cultural heritage of Islam for centuries, but have also retained their own ethnic identity. Despite the influence of Sinicization from the Han majority, Hui Muslims adhere adamantly to Islamic livelihood and religious practices. Owing to cultural barrier and inadequate understanding of Islam, blasphemous incidents occurred sporadically in the Han-Hui symbiotic environment. These cases of ethno-cultural misunderstanding undermined the normal and harmonious relationship between Hui Muslims and non-Muslims in modern China. In fact, it is common and not surprising for traditional Chinese society to have scant knowledge of Islam. On the one hand, most Han Chinese practice folk religion, Taoism, or Buddhism which are all very different from Islam; on the other hand, Hui Muslims are after all ethnic minorities whose culture and religion are given little due attention. From such ignorance sprouts stereotyped perceptions, biased images and even prejudice. During the Qing Dynasty, some Han social elites, intellectuals and officers even insisted on the proposition that all Muslims should be reproached and Islam should be banned by the government due to its "paganism" essence.[11]

In modern China, exclusive sentiment to Islam and Hui Muslims has its root in the mental barrier of cultural recognition, which is different from what gives rise to the sense of Islamophobia in contemporary Western society. Although Hui Muslims can be found almost in every corner of China proper and maintain a close relationship with Han Chinese, their distinct religious practices and dietetic customs have kept them apart. The Muslims' adherence to the Islamic doctrine of "purity and truth" (清真, *Qing Zhen*) segregates them from the Han society. According to some anthropologists, the cultural aspect of "*Qing Zhen*" not only expresses the Hui identity, but also forms a rigid basis for consumption behaviors that shape the livelihood in a Muslim society.[12] Beyond doubt, the essence of "*Qing Zhen*" is the paramount guide for dietetic customs. Hence, pigs and pork consumption become very sensitive issues in the Hui-Han symbiotic society and reinforce the social division between them. Pork-eating Han Chinese has little knowledge of the Islamic

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[10] Evelyn Leslie Hamdon, *Islamophobia and the Question of Muslim Identity: The Politics of Difference and Solidarity.* Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2010, p. 10.

[11] Chang Chung-fu (張中復), *Qingdai xibei huimin shibian: shehui wenhua shiying yu minzu rentong de xingsi.* 清代西北回民事變：社會文化適應與民族認同的省思 (The Muslim rebellion of northwest China in Qing Dynasty: On the perspectives of socio-cultural adaptation and ethnic identity) Taipei: Lianjing Publisher, 2001, pp. 13-15; 37-47.

[12], Dru. C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991, pp. 278-283; Maris Boyd Gillette, *Between Mecca and Beijing: Modernization and Consumption Among Urban Chinese Muslims.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, pp. 16-18.

loathe of pigs which are "*Halamu*" (哈拉木)[13] and that consumption of pork is a taboo or prohibited by the religious doctrine. Even any imagined association of pig or pork with Muslims would be taken as a brutal desecration to Islam. Such wide schism in perception of pigs and consumption of pork between Han Chinese and Hui Muslims would inevitably and easily trigger ethnic conflicts.

During the Nationalist era, the most notorious and serious pig-related blasphemous incident was sparked by an article published in *Literature and Arts of Southern China* (南華文藝, *Nanhua Wenyi*). In 1932, this magazine carried an article entitled "Why Muslims (*Huijiaotu*) do not eat pork?" The author Lou Zi-kuang (婁子匡) argued that the ancestor of Muslim Chinese was Zhu Ba-jie (豬八戒), one of the chief characters with half-man and half-pig characteristic in the famous novel *Pilgrimage to the West* (西遊記, *Xi Youji*). Needless to say, such claim was considered an insult and provoked a flame of fury among the Muslims who organized protests all over the country. The most representative magazine of Muslim Chinese, *Yueh Hwa* (月華) even launched a special issue entitled *Defending the Falsely Accused* (辯誣, *Bian Wu*) in the end of 1932, which tried to clarify and rectify the misconceptions and misinterpretations of special cultural customs of Islam. This issue, together with other consistent statements advocated by the Muslim elites and even some considerate Han scholars, highlighted the ignorance of Han Chinese toward Islam. It also stated that the discrimination against Muslims was not in line with the spirit of "unifying the five nations" (五族共合, *wuzu gonghe*), which was the most important ethno-political foundation of the Republic of China.

Situations did not improve under the rule of the PRC. Worse still, the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) which emphasized revolutionary loyalty and exclusive atheism abolished traditional customs and culture and banned all major religions including Islam. Long-held habits and ideas were branded as 'old' and 'backward' and to be replaced. Temples, churches, monasteries, and mosques were closed down or even destroyed, while believers suffered atrocities never seen before. Some Muslims (including akhonds) were forced to raise pigs, eat pork and even imitate pigs.[14] These crimes against Islam believers committed under radical political ideology between 1960s and 1970s could all be categorized as series of blasphemous incidents in contemporary China.[15]

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[13] This *jingtanyu* (經堂語) is from the Arabic word "*harām*", which means forbidden, prohibited, unlawful; taboo, offense, sin and hatred. See Jianping Wang, *Glossary of Chinese Islamic Terms.* Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001, p. 44.

[14] Gladney, *Muslim Chinese,* pp: 4, 138.

[15] For more detailed description of these blasphemous incidents, refer to: Chang Chung-fu, "The Dilemma of Ethnic Identity in Contemporary Muslim Taiwanese: On the Case of "Blasphemous Incident" in 2005", Conference Paper presented at "Muslim Minorities in East Asia: A Comparative Study of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan". Waseda University, Tokyo, October 22, 2010, pp .4-6.

The end of Cultural Revolution did not put a stop to blasphemous incidents. The publication of a book entitled *Sexual Customs* (性風俗, *Xing fengsu*) at the end of the 1980s and that of the comic book *Smart and Quick Wit* (腦筋急轉彎, *Naojin Ji zhuanwan*) which originally published in Taiwan but later re-printed by Sichuan Arts Publication in 1993 were both widely resented by the Muslims. *Sexual Customs* in China is analogous to Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. Hence, these two blasphemous incidents incited many and large-scale protests with rallies and demonstrations held in main cities. In contrast, the incident of "*Qing Zhen* pork" that occurred in Yangxin County, Shandong Province in 2000 stirred up a serious ethnic conflict between local Hui Muslim and Han people. Not like cases of *Sexual Customs* and *Smart and Quick Wit* in which had been got the moral support from Muslims around the country, all news and information of Yangxin incident was censored by the county government. As a result, it was restrained as a minor ethnic conflict between local Hui Muslims and Han Chinese.

In the modern history of Hui Muslims, blasphemous incidents though led to clashes with Han Chinese, served also to affirm their faith in Islam and strengthen their ethnic identity. Moreover, whether pork-related or due to misunderstanding of the local folklore of Islamic wedding and funeral ceremony,[16] these incidents reveal prevailing intolerance and ignorance among the Han Chinese towards Islam and Muslims. They harbor an ethnocentric sentiment that originated from the Confucian tradition, which distinguishes dichotomously the cultural "superior" Han Chinese and "inferior" non-Han Chinese. Unfortunately, the atypical features of Islam and the exotic ethnogenesis of Hui people render Muslims to be categorized as "inferior" to Hans. This is the essential root of blasphemous incidents that broke out occasionally in modern China and the anti-Muslim sentiments of Han Chinese. Nevertheless, Islam did spread in China and has been practiced for more than fifteen centuries. Hui Muslims have basically integrated into traditional Chinese society and established a stable symbiosis with the Han majority almost all over China. Then why should there still be ethno-cultural conflicts, why should blasphemous incidents be considered inevitable, and why should China be Islamophobic? Western scholars suggest that the Islamic piety model could have a central place in an inter-civilizational dialogue merely between two civilizations would be uncharacteristic of the history of Muslims, which is a record of interaction with a variety of peoples.[17] Despite such odds, the endeavor to promote inter-civilizational

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[16] An example of such cases happened in 1930 when an article containing some nonsensical descriptions about Muslims' wedding and funeral ceremony appeared in the magazine *Green Rose* (綠玫瑰, *lü Meigui*) published by the Music Society of Hunzhou. See *Yueh Hwa* (月華), Vol. 2, No. 32, 1930 (November), pp. 2-4.

[17] Karim H. Karim, "Muslim Encounters with New Media: Toward an Inter-civilizational Discourse on Globality", in *Islam Encountering Globalization*, p. 55.

dialogue between the majority Han Chinese and the minority Hui Muslims in China, especially among elites and scholars on both sides may create a rare, positive but essential chance to bridge the wide schism, and thus eliminate the possibility for the future unpredictable outbreak of blasphemous incidents.

3. Fomenting Hostility Online: Tragic Incident of Grand North Mosque in Xiji, Ningxia, 2014.

If blasphemous incidents are manifestations of the "vintage" type of stereotyped anti-Muslim bias, Islamophobia prevalent in the modern world should be regarded as a new term for long-standing prejudice or racism. It is spread widely and wildly by progressive technology of media, especially the Internet, to proliferate insatiable sentiments of hatred and hostility towards Islam and Muslims. The 9/11 attack and frequent Muslim terrorist acts plaguing the world add fuel to the fire. Irresponsible provocation to Islam on the Internet has become a new strategic weapon in the battlefield of Islamophobia. The role and power of the Internet in fomenting hatred and prejudice cannot be overstated. Unlike fear campaigns of the past that relied on more traditional means of communications, the blogosphere has allowed ordinary folks with a bone to pick to disseminate their message far and wild. All that is required is a laptop and an internet connection.[18] With the recent boom of the Internet and soaring number of users in contemporary China, this new tendency is manipulated by anti-Muslimists or Islamic antagonists, as evidenced by the tragic stampede that happened at the Grand North Mosque in Xiji, Ningxia.

In the morning January 5, 2014, 14 people, most of them being children, were killed, and dozens were injured in a stampede at this local mosque in southern Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. As reported by the state media, the accident was caused by poor organization and insufficient supervision of the mosque authority in handing out traditional oil cakes to people attending a formal ceremony to commemorate a late eminent religious leader. The official news mentioned little about the real nature of the religious rite, but put the blame on the oil cakes distribution chaos that ended in tragedy. Subsequent reports revealed concerns from the government, including the Central Committee of CCP in Beijing. Meanwhile, for the sake of public safety, regulations regarding administration of mosque or other religious sites were tightened to prevent similar calamity.

In fact, distributing foods to participants of religious ceremony at the mosque is a long-held local tradition and the ceremony held at the Grand North Mosque is also a

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[18] Nathan Lean, *The Islamophobia Industry: How the Right Manufacture Fear to Muslims.* London: Pluto Press, 2012, p. 50.

regular activity of a local branch of Jahriya Sufi Orders[19] (門宦 *menhuan* in Chinese) whose followers are highly localized in Xiji and other counties of Ningxia. That day, thirteenth day of the twelfth month according to the lunar calendar, marked the fifty-fourth anniversary of the death of Ma Zhen-wu (馬震武 1895-1960) who was the eighth "sheikh"(saints or *Shaykh*, *Murshid* in Arabic or 老人家 *laorenjia* in Chinese) of Jahriya. Such commemoration ceremony is called Ermaili (爾麥理 in Chinese or *amal* in Arabic).[20] The usual custom is for participants of Ermaili to receive a piece of oil cake and a piece of meat courtesy of the ceremony organizer. In other words, the ceremonial event at the Grand North Mosque was a public and permissible religious activity and the distribution of food items was a customary religious practice. Hence, neither these religious traditions nor the religion itself was to be blamed for the tragic stampede. Rather, it was the crowd's negligence of public order and safety that caused the accident.

However, discussions and opinions on the Grand North Mosque Incident that appeared on the Internet contained controversial and provocative remarks from the cynics. On the one hand, non-Muslims taunted those "ignorant" Muslim participants at the ceremony who turned into a chaotic mob merely for getting the "cheap pastry souvenir" causing unnecessary casualties. Satirical comments even allegorized Islam, its practices and believers as uncivilized, stumbling blocks on China's march towards modernization. On the other hand, Muslims' views were equally negative as if all Muslims in China were to be held accountable. They also considered the incident dishonorable and a severe blow to the public image of Islamic piety and virtues. Apart from lives lost in the stampede, persistent disapproval of the obnoxious Muslim way of life from the Han majority toward the Hui minority could also be counted as another casualty of the tragic event.

Worse still, within the Islamic circle, the comments posted revealed sectarian antagonism distinctive in northwestern China. The Sufi Order is known for its centralized, hierarchical religious authority vested in the charismatic sheikhs.[21] Exotic Sufism thoughts are adopted by localized institutes, and their "unorthodox or heretical" practices have been under fierce attack from modern reformists or venerated scriptualist members such as Ikhwan and Salafiyya. While Qadim (traditional Islam) and Sufi Orders belong to the "Old Teachings", Ikhwan and Salafiyya are categorized as "New Teachings". For more than two hundred years,

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[19] The original meaning of order is *Tariqa* (way, system, religion) in Arabic.

[20] See Jianping Wang, *Glossary of Chinese Islamic Terms,* p. 27 regarding the interpretation of the term Ermaili.

[21] Jonathan N. Lipman, "White Hats, Oil cakes, and Common Blood: The Hui In Contemporary Chinese State". In Morris Rossabi ed., *Governing China's Multiethnic Frontiers.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004, p. 23.

pluralistic "old-new" sects (or *jiaopai* 教派 in Chinese)[22] shape the very unique phenomenon of sectarianism in the northwestern areas, which is one of the most significant characteristics of Islam in China. The Grand North Mosque Incident added fuel to the long-standing rivalry between Sufi Orders and "New Teachings"; and critiques from modern reformist Muslims became more violent and vehement. They attacked the Sufism practices including sheikh worship and distributing superstitious substance to followers at Ermaili, which was seen as a pretext for collecting money immorally for incumbent sheikhs and their families. Such "evil" motivations behind Sufism practices should be blamed and condemned.

The heated exchange of opinions and comments on the Internet did not escape the attention and concern of the CCP. For the sake of the so-called social harmony, any radical critiques, ferocious statements or open attacks on rival sects are to be banned and censored by the government. However, the Internet world is a quasi-gray zone where hostility and hatred to Muslims would be fomented and where harsh rivalry between sectarian antagonistic Muslims could be unscrupulously proliferated, creating a grand vacancy beyond our imagination. At least, the tragic incident of the Grand North mosque and its relevant internet effects are just being made this tendency to be more possible.

4. Xinjiang Crisis and Proliferation of Extreme anti-Muslimism in Contemporary China

In recent years, the intensified conflict of Xinjiang violent separatism (the independence movement of East Turkestan) has aroused unprecedented public interest. Although international attention to Xinjiang has grown in tandem with the increased opening of the region, tourists, journalists, scholars, businesses, congressional delegations and international organizations since the mid-1980s,[23] the desperate

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[22] In contemporary science of religion, it is hard to give an accurate definition of the term *jiaopai* used in the Muslim society of modern China, or to distinguish its actual meaning from similar concepts. Jonathan N. Lipman and Dru. C. Gladney tried to use terms such as religious faction, order and solidarity to denote *jiaopai* in their earlier works. On the one hand, Michael Dillon used "religious factions" and "sects" to denote *jiaopai* so as to give a more comprehensive perspective of the entire situation that includes both sectarianism and schism. On the other hand, scholars in Taiwan preferred to use the term "denomination" for *jiaopai*. In this paper, terms like sects and sectarianism are both used when referring to the general aspects of *jiaopai* in China's Muslim society. For Dillon's discussion on the combined explanation, please see: Michael Dillon, *China's Muslim Hui Community: Migration, Settlement and Sect*. London: Curzon Press, 1999, pp. 91-92; Ma Tong, *Zhongguo Yislan jiaopai menhuan zhidu shilie* (A brief history of Islam faction and the menhuan system in China). Yingchuan: Ningxia People's Publishing Society, 1986; and Chang Chung-fu, "Diversity in Islamic Sectarian Antagonism - Revival of Modern Reformism and Its Rival *Long Ahong* in Linxia." Paper presented at the conference on "The Everyday Life of Islam: Focus on the Islam in China" held at Cornell University on 27-28 April, 2012.

[23] James Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment*. Washington DC: East-West Center Washington, 2004, p. 10.

situation faced by Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang remained largely unknown. In fact, they were subjected to ethno-cultural discrimination, socio-economic exploitation and political coercion that never existed before. Unlike the Chinese-speaking Hui Muslims but same as the majority Uyghurs, Turkic Muslims are more easily incited by sensitive ethnic sentiment and engaged in protests against anti-Muslim acts. In particular, the brutal clash during the 2009 Urumqi riots and the revenge attacks enhanced the tension between Han Chinese and Uyghurs, deteriorating further their ethnic relations.

In view of the increased frequency and severity of terrorist attacks in Xinjiang and other parts of China, the Chinese government is determined to annihilate the most unstable factors in Xinjiang. Officially, these factors are categorized as the so-called "three menaces", namely ethnic separatism, international terrorism and religious extremism. Any possible source or support that instigates the "three menaces" should be regarded as the most urgent targets to be completely eliminated. During past decades, the Chinese government has in fact pursued seemingly contradictory "soft" and "hard" measures to undermine Uyghur nationalism in Xinjiang. The soft measures are designed to win favor from the Uyghur population so as to facilitate their acculturation and assimilation into Chinese society, while hard measures are implemented to clamp down on elements believed to be fostering dissent, advocating independence, or carrying out terrorist strikes.[24] However, such hard measures have obviously become harsher and harsher. Every restriction demonstrated in political control focuses inevitably on rigid dichotomous considerations, including patriotism vs. separatism, ethnic minority vs. Han majority, and moderate Islam vs. radical Islam. Unfortunately, under the shadow of "three menaces" and for the sake of terminating religious extremism, the Chinese government openly treats Islam and its practice as a potential threat for proliferating religious extremism among Muslim communities in Xinjiang. For the authority and most Han majority, such consideration corresponds with the idea of taking precautions against possible calamities provoked by Muslim extremists. Nevertheless, what religious extremism denotes or embraces is controversial and ambiguous. Certainly, not all extremist or terrorist acts have their only root in Islamic fundamentalism. In fact, under the overwhelming impact of globalization and modernization in recent years, fundamentalism and its form, when viewed in the political arena, have become very complicated and sensitive to both Muslim ethnic minorities and Islamic countries.[25]

As a result, regardless whether the measures implemented are soft or hard, the

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[24] Justin Rudelson and William Jankowiak, "Acculturation and Resistance: Xinjiang Identities in Flux", in S. Frederick Starr ed., *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland.* Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2014, p. 301.
[25] Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, pp. 2-5.

latest and common stance of Han Chinese residing in Xinjiang or elsewhere is to restrain severely Islam both its practice and spread, and to treat without leniency Uyghurs who lack the traits of "Chineseness". Such ethnocentric sentiment would easily heighten into a more exclusive prejudice of anti-Muslimism in China. After all, contemporary Islam has become a global issue, the Western Islamophobic mindset and practice also provide a reason/excuse for Han Chinese, who have all along harbored intolerance and stereotyped views of Islam and Muslims, to support the hard measures. In addition, the deteriorating Xinjiang crisis further escalates such ideological anti-Muslimism to a dangerous situation unseen in China. Indeed, the crisis in modern Xinjiang should not put Islam or Muslims in China at risk. Only through sincere endeavors of open-minded acceptance/tolerance of all Muslim Chinese and preservation of their Islamic socio-cultural identity would the nightmare of ethnic conflicts be thwarted.

Conclusion

Although contemporary Islamophobia sprouts first in Western countries, globalization has fostered the spread of anti-Muslim sentiments and intolerance to Islam. Even the centuries-old symbiosis established between the Han majority and the Muslim minority in China could not escape from such impact, as evidenced by the outbreak of blasphemous incidents in China under the Nationalists and the Communists. These unpredictable incidents were indicative of intolerance to Islam and anti-Muslimism promoted by the cultural barrier and Han-ethnocentrism. The stampede tragedy that occurred at the Grand North Mosque of Xiji and its aftermath also revealed the diverse ways of fomenting hostility and hatred on the Internet. Besides long-standing anti-Muslimism among Han Chinese, there also exists complicated sectarian antagonism among Muslim communities in northwest China. New media, especially the Internet has become another battlefield for spreading age-old inter-sectarian hostility and antagonism among Muslims themselves.

In the broad sense, the phenomena mentioned above should be deemed analogous to Islamophobic sentiment observed in Western countries but never really prevalent in past and modern China. However, the deteriorating Xinjiang crisis in recent years has inevitably escalated anti-Muslim prejudice to a more dangerous and precarious situation in China. The current disproportionate policy for restraining regular Islam in contemporary Xinjiang should not become the basis for further subjugation and suppression of Islam in China. The concerted effort of the entire Chinese population toward greater conciliation and tolerance toward people of

different cultures and religions provide the only chance to avoid clashes and conflicts. Embracing moderate Islam as a part of Chinese civilization and allowing ethnic Muslims to preserve their socio-cultural identity in China would ensure and sustain the centuries-old symbiosis between the Han majority and the Muslim minority.