

# THE ASIA PACIFIC AFFAIRS JOURNAL

Spring 2016

## Features

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Nonviolent resistance  
in Timor-Leste

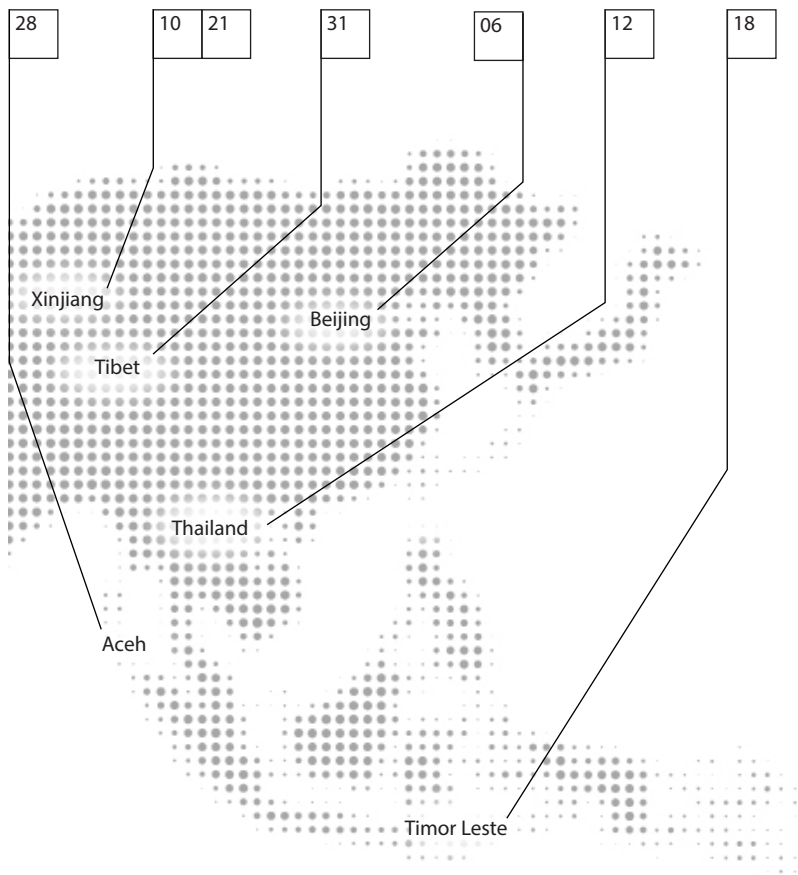
Nora J Keller

Tibet's cybersecurity  
challenge

Joyce Dong



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Cover Photo: Denise Tan  
Pictured: Shwedagon Pagoda  
Yangon, Myanmar

# Contributors

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Rachel is a graduate student at Columbia SIPA, pursuing a degree in International Security Policy. Her focus is on East Asian affairs and she is interested in the influence of international norms and ideas in the region. Currently, she is examining the intersection of security and culture in China.

## **WILL JULIAN**

**Graduate School of Arts and Sciences**

Will is a first year anthropology MA student. In his thesis he will examine the ways in which the influx of Han Chinese tourism is reshaping ethnic Kazakh identity in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, where he was a Princeton-in-Asia Teaching Fellow from 2011 to 2013. He has an interest in photography and documentary filmmaking, and hopes to integrate these media into his academic work.

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**Graduate School of Arts and Sciences**

Nora is a PhD student in political science. Her research focuses on the dynamics of civil conflict, secessionism and the ways in which non-state actors can affect the international system. Her dissertation will focus on how secessionist movements can affect the international system, for example through foreign sponsorship or contagion.

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**Teachers College**

Sophie is a student at Teachers College, working towards a Masters in Art and Art Education. She lived in China for eight years, working on education and public programming at the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing, and leading China Contemporary Art + Architecture Tours, which she co-founded in 2009. She is presently based in the Whitney Museum of American Art as an Education Fellow. She is also an arts contributor to *Randian*, *OCULA*, and *Art News New Zealand*. She used to DJ under the name "Sleeping Booty."

## **RUI HAO PUAH**

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Rui is a Masters candidate in Political Science at Columbia University. He writes on Southeast Asian affairs, economics and security. In the past year he has written for the *Diplomat*. Of particular interest to him is the intersection of policy and US-Southeast Asia relations. When he is not being academic, he enjoys traveling to new places and meeting people. Outdoor adventure and racket sports are his passion, along with fiction and culinary experiments.

## **RUNE STEENBERG REYHE**

**Harriman Institute**

Rune Steenberg is a postdoctoral fellow at Columbia University's Harriman Institute. He has done research in Kyrgyzstan and Xinjiang since 2007. In southern Kyrgyzstan, he examined social interaction around the annual walnut harvest and the networks of Uyghur traders from western Xinjiang. He has followed these networks to their villages of origin around Kashgar city, where he found marriages to be a central institution for their success in business and more generally social organization beyond markets and state institutions. At the center of Rune's research is a focus on conceptualizations of social relations and their expression and constitution in spatial, bodily, verbal and exchange practices.

## Editor's Note

Dynamic.

It's a term that gets thrown around a lot in discussions about the Asia Pacific region: the most dynamic region of the world; the new center of gravity for security, finance and trade. Grandiose statements such as these necessarily take for granted a certain global and generalized perspective.

While these sorts of comparisons are useful and often accurate, they also invite closer scrutiny. Progress defined by which metric? Security for whom? The idea of dynamic change seems to imply a single direction, yet those that study Asia know that it is anything but uniform. The world's most populous region is characterized by a sweeping range of ethnicities, ideologies and religious views. There is no one voice or set of stories that can capture it all.

In the journal this semester, we've swapped a regional perspective for a series of local viewpoints. This issue is devoted to considering the diverse spectrum of people, places and ideas that constitute the Asia Pacific region. If a place is the sum of its parts, we want to ask about those parts individually.

Our contributors have gone to great lengths to explore these issues with depth and poise. In the following pages we are proud to include a range of voices and analyses covering affairs from Xinjiang to Timor-Leste. We have articles devoted to cybersecurity among the Tibetan community, discourse among Uyghurs, the hurdles of finding a place in China's artistic community, as well as a firsthand account of a village in Thailand that hosts remnants of the Kuomintang's fighting force.

Above all, we have endeavored to find and publish stories that do not take surface appearances for granted. We know that digging deeper reveals surprising truths.

At the journal, we are trying to become more dynamic as well, expanding access to the publication in order to attract voices from across the Columbia University community and devoting more space for our authors to explore complicated issues with subtlety.

As always, we are interested in both your comments and ideas. Submission details and contact information for letters to the editor are printed in the back of the magazine.

Thanks for tuning in.

-Daniel Combs

Asia Pacific Affairs Journal, Editor in Chief  
School of International and Public Affairs

# Dance Dance Revolution

By Sophie McKinnon

“Can we record it again, please? You can still hear the accent in the word *cow*.” In December 2011, at a leading contemporary art space in Beijing, the visitor services team are testing the audio guide for an upcoming exhibition. A number of staff pick up a provincial lilt on one of the segments. The pronunciation gives too much away, and someone remembers the particularities of the Southern region where the speaker is from. Incidentally, it has a high minority population. Consensus is reached to re-record because, in the words of the front desk manager, “it sounds so odd, his Mandarin isn’t standard.”

Connecting the idiosyncrasies of provincial accents to minority issues in China might seem tenuous, but they are essentially imbedded in the same issue – that of visibility. It is possible that the absence of minority voice is most palpable in the cultural sector, where it functions merely as a decorative ideal of Chinese multiculturalism. The 2008 Beijing Olympics opening ceremony saw children from the fifty-five ethnic groups perform regional dances to a global audience of over a billion people. It was later discovered that not only were the songs pre-recorded and carefully lip-synced, but there was not a single minority child among them. The performers were Han ethnic majority, dressed to puppet the minorities rather than represent them in authenticity. The Chinese state didn’t see this as problematic. The minority groups and colorful

costumes were present, even if by way of a highly engineered filter.

Minority visibility in China since 1949 has always been closely tied to a national image of harmony and unity. Ethnic groups were (and still are) presented as a cohesive unit – “The Fifty-Five Ethnic Minorities” – rather than in a manner that seeks to uphold their unique characteristics. In context though, the mid-20th century was wrought with problems for minority status globally. African Americans were on the cusp of the civil rights movement, and South Africa’s ruling party was newly reinstating apartheid in 1948. In some ways, China’s political recognition of minorities was highly progressive. As China barrels forward however, the constraints on ethnic minority policies remain taut. It is not just about identity, but their identity in relation to the majority. During the Cultural Revolution (1965-76), when China’s vast population was mobilized in efforts to galvanize the state, art production found itself in service of nationwide propaganda campaigns. All sorts of lines were blurred, not only between Han ethnic majority and minorities, but between provinces, and even between men and women, to fully articulate the message that China stood together, undivided by autonomous goals. China’s strength is in the assimilated whole, not the parts.

Despite a decade of booming cultural resources and infrastructure, ethnic minorities are represented on a narrow

and strategically controlled spectrum. As thousands of museums are built new or overhauled, minority groups are still situated within the vast landscape of Chinese cultural hegemony, and at a time when national sentiment is gaining momentum through the arts. “Nationalities Halls” in museums all over China are lined with glass vitrines of minority costume but little else. Visitors to the Dai Minority Park in Yunnan are greeted by doll-like hostesses in ethnic dress, where they run the Minority Water Splashing Festival every day of the year. This “mardi gras with fire hoses” (described by Xiyun Yang for the New York Times in 2010<sup>1</sup>) is exactly the level of interaction with minority culture that appeals to China’s domestic tourists. Minorities are positioned politically as peripheral communities, often in rural settings, existing in a kind of folkloric idyll.

Danwei.org, a China-based blog, noted that in 2006, of the 200,000 books published annually in China, those written in minority languages accounted for just 1.94%. In 2013 a new government-led initiative was announced to create films dedicated to each ethnic group, but as BBC reporter Clarissa Sebag Montfiore identified at the time, they were little more than soft power cladding.<sup>2</sup> This approach had been exercised once before, in the early 1950s, when the state committed to collecting nationwide recordings of minority folk music and performance styles. Efforts such as these do much to preserve the idealized charms of



Museum of Handcraft Paper © archdaily.com, Shu He

minority groups, while also preserving the separation of minorities from Han culture, romanticizing them at arm's length.

Divides like this persist psychologically, but also geographically, as minority populations are concentrated in the South, West and North of China, outside of the major cities. Nationwide, only 7 percent of museums are dedicated to minority arts and culture, and none are recognized on a national level. This statistic does not account for the minority theme parks, which soft-serve ethnic traditions and festivals through cheerful variety shows. Those that are wholly focused on the culture of ethnic minorities, such as the Heilongjiang Minzu (minority) Museum, receive only a modicum of state support. Museums are lauded

for the value of their artifacts and collections, but many minority groups are defined by intangible forms of cultural heritage. As a result, a vast number of minority museums fall to "bottom tier" ranking, leaving their social status dwindling. In the 2010 article, *Multiculturalism and Chinese Museums*, Keun Young Kim writes that minority museums represent "a symbolic gesture of government recognition, and can hardly be seen as active acceptance of cultural diversity".<sup>3</sup> It seems these problems are endemic to the presence of minorities in the field, and also speak of struggling leadership or motivation within minority communities to seek out truly nuanced representation.

Socially and ideologically, China still leans on the notion of "standardization"

(*biao jun*) - referred to by the visitor services staff member in the audio guide trial - to maintain a kind of social consistency. A multitude of "standards" exist, ranging from time zones (all regions in China operate according to Beijing time) to pronunciation, writing, and even language and gesture when speaking in public. The standardizing system serves not only as a benchmark to smooth over disparities, but also as a powerful political statement about homogeneity.

While many minority groups accept the political circumstances, others (or extremist sects within other groups) have a distinctly political agenda, leading to a disconnect between issues these groups are opposed to (the gradual tearing down of Xinjiang province's ancient Muslim center, Kashgar, for



Opening Ceremony, 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, China. Photo by Tim Hipps, U.S. Army. Public Domain. Accessed via Wikicomons.

example) and how they are presented in the Chinese media. Acts of violence or aggression are maligned as volatile and threatening. Chinese visa service offices worldwide were flooded with pamphlets condemning the Tibet riots prior to the Olympics in 2008. Tibetan poet Tsering Woeser was put under house arrest when she published *Immolations in Tibet: The Shame of the World*, in 2013. To counteract this, benign choruses of ethnic groups are celebrated as peaceful flag bearers of the status quo. Minorities are acknowledged for their rich traditions, but have virtually no presence in the contemporary sphere. This may be an obvious observation. Why would a non-liberal state make provisions for populations that carry the risk of airing their concerns publicly? Despite this difficult environment, ethnic communities continue to find footholds in unlikely places, from small scale museums to folk rock music sound stages.

A delicate cluster of buildings sit in Xinzhuang village in Northwestern Yunnan Province, exquisitely

constructed and from some angles taking the concertina form of folded card. This is the Museum of Handcraft Paper, designed by Beijing Trace Architecture Office (TAO) in 2012. The project was initiated by Long Wen publishers, who are part of a growing movement to rethink approaches to heritage projection and rejuvenation. What begin as design experiments can sometimes result in fruitful and socially-rooted projects which challenge “the standard” and involve communities in the process. The Museum of Handcraft Paper honors the 700-year-old tradition of paper making in the region. It employed local construction crews for design elements of the buildings, used locally sourced materials, and provides working spaces for artists and guests. Is it not expressly dedicated to minorities, but it is a contemporary iteration of traditional and ethnically rooted practices, which gives villagers a place to communicate their heritage to visitors on their own terms. This medium preserves ethnic culture without binding it to a static historical moment. A triumph of the vernacular,

it feels like local representation at it’s most sensitive and poignant.

400 miles away, Yunnan’s Zhongdian County was awarded the much competed-for accolade of “Shangri-la” in 2001. Counties throughout the region knew that wherever the title fell, so too would hoards of tourists flocking to the mythologized capital. As a result, Shangri-la has what feels like two identities - the inner “old town”, with its somewhat Disney-fied main streets and standard tourist trappings through which visitors pass, and the town edges, where communities of Tibetan ethnic minorities live. Very few domestic tourists come into contact with the latter. Researcher Ben Hillman described this as “paradise under construction” in 2010,<sup>4</sup> which accurately expresses the issues and dynamics involved when minority traditions are enshrined in mythology.

To borrow an architectural metaphor, minorities lack load-bearing walls as their image is reformed around them. Hillman makes a case that minority communities will ultimately benefit from the exposure more than if they did not have this exposure at all, and that “new tourism could be a force for strengthening ethnic identities, even if those identities are simultaneously rooted in the development of the modern Chinese state”. Shanghai-based Chinese architect Lin Hong has been working on a project at the foothills of a nearby mountain range – in collaboration with local artisans and craftsmen – to keep minority communities and practices moving forward within the shifting climate. She believes that “the more people travel, the better is it for these regions – those with genuine curiosity will seek out a deeper understanding of true diversity”.



Development is required in multiple directions: providing platforms for minorities to be seen and heard, but also in ways that can be folded into the current infrastructure of change. The opening chords to an online video of Hanggai (which has 150,000 views on YouTube, which is banned in China) are barely recognizable as human. Hanggai have in the past few years developed a cult following both in China and abroad. They are described as contemporary folk rock, or folk punk, and are known for performing in Inner Mongolian ethnic dress and incorporating what is known as throat singing into their music.

Shanren are an ethnic rock group from Yunnan, who rely heavily on traditional instruments to create unique forms of ska and even reggae. Their 2014 album “Left Foot of the Yi” was released internationally, and specifically references minority tribesman. There is even a YouTube video of them playing at Pianos Bar in downtown New York City – they introduce the set as “Chinese disco” before launching into ankle bell jingling and whooping. Sam Debell, Shanren manager and occasional drummer, explains that some of Shanren’s success can be attributed to a broader trend among young people in China. They “still consciously strive for material goals, and subconsciously the lack of a cultural root is causing feelings of dislocation and pointlessness”. He goes on to connect the appeal of music, which is both soulfully attuned and specific in its representation, as opposed to the sweeping standard of the Han norm.

On the cultural side people seem to feel attraction to music that displays an explicitly Chinese identity. As Debell noted, “some Han Chinese feel a lack of ethnic identity is like a declaration



of not having a tribal identify...that’s why people are happy to feel like Shanren’s music is their own, although the shaping identity of Yunnan music is essentially a fight against being *Hanified*.<sup>5</sup>

While many top-down gestures to represent the diverse populations of ethnic groups border on minority tokenism, the broadening of the cultural

horizon has created opportunities for minority groups to reposition themselves in ways that didn’t exist before. The challenge moving forward will be for ethnic minorities to forge pathways in cultural spaces which legitimize them in a contemporary sense. Shaking off the singing-dancing show pony garb and – to return to the audio guide – allow themselves to be heard in earnest, not in oddity. 9

# Project Beauty

## Signaling Methods Between the Chinese State and Uyghur Women

By Rachel Hulvey

“Project Beauty” seems like a phrase that could have been lifted from the pages of a fashion magazine. One might presume it is another one of the countless advertising slogans designed to sell yet another cosmetic product. However, this campaign was created by a national government and is aimed at minority citizens. The Chinese government launched the \$8 million campaign to discourage Muslim women from wearing religious headscarves or veils. The state-sponsored media suggests veils cause depression and scare children, so it recommends women instead “show your pretty faces and let your beautiful hair fly in the wind.” Some might be concerned a government-sponsored program of this magnitude may have some influence. However, “Project Beauty” is not having the intended effect, as women are instead increasingly wearing religious garments. This study examines the case of young Uyghur women in Xinjiang, China and how religious garments are used as a signaling device. I will argue this signal is primarily being used to influence the community, rather than the government.

Xinjiang, China’s westernmost province, has been occupied and claimed by different forces throughout history.<sup>1</sup> In 1949, Mao Zedong sent troops to the province to integrate the territory into the PRC’s possession

through the use of force.<sup>2</sup> Mao found the territory attractive due to rich mineral resources, and leaders today continue to value the vast oil and coal reserves. Chinese leadership is especially concerned over stability as state investments continue to increase. Last May, Beijing announced that fifty-three state-owned enterprises were investing \$300 billion in 685 projects in Xinjiang, and these figures continue to rise.<sup>3</sup> China prioritizes internal security, but in Xinjiang, the lucrative nature of the region inspires an increased focus on stability and a desire to protect burgeoning investments in infrastructure and energy.

China’s 10 million Uyghurs, a Turkic-speaking minority, reside in Xinjiang. The population is predominantly Muslim, with strong ties to Central Asia. The territory was previously the Islamic Republic of East Turkistan and ruled by Turkic rebels. Integration into the Chinese system has not been smooth, and the desire for autonomy from Beijing persists. In 1990, the Soviet Union collapsed and many independent Muslim states were established, inspiring the Uyghur population to increase pressure for independence. Additionally, after the Chinese Communist Party consolidated rule across the territory, the government began encouraging citizens from the majority Han ethnicity to move to the region. The

demand for labor also increased as government and private investment in the region grew. Many of the higher paying jobs are given to Han Chinese and resentment builds as inequality between the populations increase. These factors have led to rising amounts of protests and violent demonstrations in Xinjiang.

Another form of protest is evolving among the younger generation. Women in Xinjiang are using religious garments to signal defiance and more subtly protest government action. Before Project Beauty, young Uyghur women were becoming increasingly secular, with many deciding to forego donning the hijab. The women were rapidly assimilating into Chinese society before the government tightened restrictions. The new laws prohibit practices central to the Muslim faith including fasting during Ramadan, growing a long beard and wearing head coverings. Women view these policies as restrictive and a direct attack on culture, faith and heritage. As a signal of protest, many women are adopting head coverings. Cities that were once bastions of cosmopolitan and modern dress are now seeing a strong surge in traditional Islamic garments.

International relations can be characterized as a struggle for power. Each country observes the gains of another and is influenced based on how

these gains affect relative security. A state does not infer aggression on balance of power calculations alone. Intentions must be observed and statesmen monitor behavior for cues to how an actor is likely to behave in the future. The field of signaling examines how states infer what others are likely to do and how desired images are projected to influence these calculations. For example, the German conquest of non-German parts of Czechoslovakia before World War II caused Neville Chamberlain, then prime minister of the United Kingdom, to alter his image of Germany. This action was a signal that Germany no longer desired only rectification of the Treaty of Versailles, but was interested in changing the status quo. Non-state actors can also leverage signals to project their desired image and influence governments.

The behavior by the Uyghur women is a signal of defiance to the Chinese government. Robert Jervis defines a signal as, “statements or actions, the meanings of which are established by tacit or explicit understanding among the actors.”<sup>4</sup> Signals are meant to reveal an actor’s intentions, but they are not inherently credible, as these actions do not offer evidence or confirmation the actor will live up to them. Credible actions are those that cannot be manipulated, such as information overheard from private conversations. States leverage signals through military maneuvers, diplomatic notes and statements of intent. In the case of non-state actors, Uyghur women use clothing as a symbol, rather than a direct statement. The young women signal a willingness to oppose Chinese government policies by adopting traditional garments, revealing a


dissatisfaction with the new laws and regulations. The shift in behavior is unusual and reverses a trend of modernization.

To achieve signaling to the Chinese government, Uyghur women practiced “decoupling”. Jervis describes this practice by noting that, “The freedom to establish the meanings of signals allows actors to influence the relationships that are perceived between some of their actions. They can create new signals or destroy linkages previously believed present.”<sup>5</sup> Previously, clothing was used as a signal of assimilation and compliance. Many young Uyghur women chose not to wear traditional religious garments and instead adopted modern dress. Now, women are attaching a new meaning to their clothing choices and couple religious dress with defiance. Decoupling is more likely to be successful if intentions are announced at the beginning of the process. However, since the Uyghur women are quietly revolting against the much stronger Chinese government, this option is not feasible.

It is important for signals to be used in a way that others understand. The signaling from the Uyghur women is ambiguous. The receiver of the signal, the Chinese government, does not know for sure if the women are returning to religious dress for cultural reasons or adopting head coverings as an act of protest to the new laws and regulations. One woman interviewed in *The New York Times* stated, “Whenever I go home to Xinjiang, I wear a head scarf to show that I cherish my culture.”<sup>6</sup> Cherishing one’s heritage and protesting the new laws are not mutually exclusive; there could be a group that is simply growing more religious. Ambiguity

allows actors to protect their images, but has a drawback of a higher probability of misunderstandings. Evidence shows ambiguous signals cause people to increasingly interpret information using pre-existing views. This distortion means the signal might not be received and interpreted the way the Uyghur women desire.

Many think the work of the Uyghur women is in vain. However, this criticism mistakes the intended audience and receiver of the signal. The Chinese government is one of the intended targets, but reception of the signal could entail negative consequences, as the government has established fines for wearing head coverings. Therefore, it is more likely the women are intending to signal within their community and inspire others to cherish the Uyghur culture and heritage and to not forgo religious practices. Women that were once boldly assimilating now have chosen to send a strong message to other Muslims in Xinjiang. The symbolism of adopting religious dress will not be lost within the community and these women are seeking to inspire resilience among the Uyghur population.

Signals are devices used to influence behavior by revealing or partially exposing intentions. Both states and non-state actors can leverage signaling, but non-state actors have a more pronounced difficulty communicating to the more powerful actor. The Uyghur women reveal the power of signals beyond traditional examples. Religious garments were employed to signal defiance and quietly protest government policies. As a signal that can be ambiguous, I argue this is likely intended to influence the Muslim community rather than the government. 

# M a e S

Text and photos by Will Julian

“Most of the hilltribes here smoke opium in the evenings. For us Chinese, it’s almost exclusively the older generation—those who came with the Kuomintang. Have you tried opium? Why not? It’s medicine: the world becomes a blur of comfort and quietude after a hard day’s work.”

# S a l o n g





Two weeks through my stay in Mae Salong, I still hadn't acclimatized to its peculiar language. A sleepy mountaintop town located near Thailand's northern border, its population is as enigmatic as its history. Settled by the remnants of one branch of the defeated Kuomintang military that had initially fled to Burma in 1949, the Chinese inhabitants of this village built a formidable opium kingdom here in 1961. The profits were used to fund a counter-attack against the PRC that never came.

Ultimately they traded in their aspirations of returning to China for the more prudent plan of helping the Thai government defeat its own insurgent communists. In return for their efforts they were granted Thai citizenship. Today the guns are gone from Mae Salong, and the former opium fields swell with what will become delicate oolong teas. At night the dark green hills are lit intermittently with the subtle glow of fireflies and the more prominent beams of flashlights: patrols on the lookout for opium smugglers from Myanmar.

By day the languages of the Lisu and Ahka hilltribes, as well as Thai, Mandarin and the dialects of Yunnan, mingle across Mae Salong's landscape, making it difficult to form a coherent picture of the community. While each of the village's groups mostly communes with itself, important intersections do occur.



On a hot May afternoon, I visited a small neighborhood populated by several of Mae Salong's most aged villagers. Chinese characters adorned the larger houses, offering blessings. Interspersed between these buildings were the more rustic Akha and Lisu dwellings. I sat with a wizened Akha woman, a middle-aged Lisu man and a Chinese woman whose late husband had been a KMT soldier. We drank tea together, sitting on makeshift stools beneath the awning of her small shop. Each of them spoke varying degrees of Mandarin, allowing us to communicate in a common tongue. In between our conversations, I listened as my interlocutors switched between languages with ease. On this languid afternoon, their warm and unaffected rapport seemed to perfectly mirror the town's mellow atmosphere.




Each of them spoke varying degrees of Mandarin, allowing us to communicate in a common tongue. In between our conversations, I listened as my interlocutors switched between languages with ease. On this languid afternoon, their warm and unaffected rapport seemed to perfectly mirror the town's mellow atmosphere.



With no real government of their own, and facing the risk of attack from the Burmese to the west, the PRC to the north, and Thai military to the south, the Chinese colonizers of Mae Salong developed deep and lasting relationships with the neighboring hilltribes. Brought together by a confluence of 20th century circumstances, what was once a friendship of necessity had evolved into a paragon of functioning cross-cultural relationships.



Somewhere within the house behind us, an old man coughed; another whooped with euphoric laughter. Beneath my feet, chickens peeped and skuttled across the cracked road, pecking at grain. Scooters whirred by, carrying two or three or even four schoolchildren in clean white and blue uniforms. The day was uncharacteristically dry, but dark clouds were rumbling over Myanmar. For all I knew within minutes a swirling downpour would submerge the gleaming valley below, and all that would remain to characterize this place would be the sounds of my temporary, aged companions, their voices shifting back and forth between the somewhat familiar tones of Mandarin and the languages local to this hilltop two hours north of Chiang Rai. 



# When Rebels Choose Peace

## The Nonviolent Transformation of Timor-Leste's Independence Movement

By Nora J. Keller

In recent years, we have become inundated with stories about ever more extremist militant groups; consider only recent coverage on the Islamic State or Boko Haram. In contrast to harrowing recent examples, Timor-Leste's twenty-seven-year internecine liberation struggle could serve as a hopeful alternative model, though both the country and the conflict are unfamiliar to many.

After fourteen years of insurgency and guerilla strategies against a mighty U.S.-backed Indonesian military, the Timorese resistance, seemingly overnight, turned to the use of strategic nonviolent action in the form of protest marches, sit-ins, and boycotts held in Timorese towns and cities and across Indonesia. In other words, the movement, which had previously relied on armed resistance, unilaterally de-emphasized violence, without prior negotiated agreements or surrender.

Proponents of nonviolent protest as an effective strategy often point to Timor-Leste as a hopeful example; after all, the small island nation did eventually attain independence in 2002. Yet, in order to draw useful policy lessons from the Timorese nonviolent transformation, it is crucial to determine the underlying mechanisms: Was the use of nonviolent direct action a conscious strategy on the part of the

main rebel organization, Fretilin (later renamed the National Council for Maubere Resistance or CNRM).

Even apart from the commemorative graffiti and artwork all around town, many features of Dili, the capital of Timor-Leste, call to mind the dark history of what was one of the deadliest conflicts of the twentieth century. Houses have been rebuilt haphazardly, sometimes retaining a bit of crumbling pre-war façade work. There is a conspicuous absence of people over fifty. The new makeshift port, built after the Indonesian military destroyed the old facilities put in place by the Portuguese, cannot handle a sufficient volume of cargo, resulting in an ever-present line of large tankers waiting off the coast of Dili. Against this backdrop, over countless cups of Timorese coffee in noisy Dili coffee houses, I conducted interviews with former militant and non-militant activists of the Timorese resistance, as well as key political leaders. Building on these in-depth conversations, as well as secondary material I obtained from my interview subjects, I outline how the nonviolent transformation is directly connected to Fretilin/CNRM. In fact, this tight connection was maintained despite the geographic separation between nonviolent actors, who operated in the towns and cities of Timor-Leste and

Indonesia, and the rebel fighters, either scattered through the jungle or held in Indonesian prisons.

Estimates of the total number of civilian and rebel deaths are unreliable; however, in one of my conversations at Café Esplanada with Mario Carrascalao, the military governor of Timor-Leste during occupation, he estimated that over one-third of the population perished under occupation.<sup>1</sup> While the applicability of the term "genocide" is disputed, the Indonesian occupation of Timor-Leste has been compared to atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge, those from the Yugoslav wars, and the Rwandan Genocide.<sup>2</sup> Within such a violent atmosphere, it is all the more puzzling that so many people were willing to put themselves directly in the Indonesian military's line of fire. Among comparable examples of similar nonviolent transformations (such as the Nepalese Maoists or the West Saharawi Polisario) Timor-Leste sticks out both in terms of the conflict's lethality and in its early transition to nonviolent action.

After the 1975 Carnation Revolution swept across Portugal, Timor-Leste's decolonization came quickly. Fretilin declared the independence of the *Republica Democratica de Timor-Leste* on November 28, 1975, and

the Indonesian military invaded the island five days later. Two UN Security Council resolutions (384 in 1975 and 389 in 1976) affirmed Timor-Leste's right to self-determination and called on Indonesia to halt its invasion of the island, to little avail. UN guidelines on the situation were quite clear, as territories following decolonization were consolidated according to shared colonizer; while Timor-Leste had been colonized by Portugal, Indonesia had gained independence from the Netherlands in 1949.

For the three years following the Indonesian invasion, Fretilin carried out a guerilla campaign and operated a revolutionary government in the jungle, where most of the population had fled.<sup>3</sup> The invasion pitted a strong Indonesian army, supplied in part by the U.S., against a guerrilla force that was armed only with small arms left on the island by the Portuguese (Mausers and HKG3s).<sup>4</sup> By 1979 about 90 percent of the fighting force had perished.<sup>5</sup> \* In the coming decade, most of the population lived in concentration camps set up in towns and villages administered by Indonesia, and civilian casualties and famine had become a daily norm.

Against this bleak backdrop, the very first nonviolent protest event took place in 1989, on the occasion of a Papal speech, and it was swiftly and ruthlessly dealt with by the military. Then, in 1991, a visit from a Portuguese delegation was cancelled, and a youth named Sebastião Gomes was shot in a subsequent protest march. During his funeral in Santa Cruz cemetery, thousands participated in a peaceful demonstration against his killing. The protest march was met with a mass of Indonesian security forces, who fired into the crowd indiscriminately, killing

hundreds.<sup>6</sup>

This massacre served to focus the nonviolent efforts both in Timor-Leste and around university towns in Indonesia, where Timorese emigrants studied. The movement was so well organized that it continued to function even when Xanana Gusmao, CNRM's revered leader, was imprisoned in 1992. After the 1998 democratic uprising in Indonesia, there was tremendous international pressure on newly elected President Habibie to deal with the Timor-Leste issue. Finally, the Timorese resistance prevailed after rejecting offers for increased autonomy status and was granted a referendum on independence in 1999. How then did this conflict's transformation come about, and what was the role of the rebel leadership?

According to Carlito,\*\* who was a protest organizer for Timorese students in Indonesia, every time a demonstration was planned, wheels had to be set in motion about two months ahead of time. A letter or tape would be sent from covert group to covert group, which demonstrates the high level of trust between the different members. Before each protest event, the CNRM leadership was notified weeks in advance, and plans would be approved. The direct link between the rebel group and the nonviolent movement can also be seen in their demands: The most important rule was that the strategic framework



and the demands made by the protesters were precisely in line with CNRM demands – chief on that list being a UN-administered referendum for independence. Protesters would fly CNRM's colors, chant their slogans, and openly declare their support.

In the 1980s, these covert youth networks grew, though few could have known the full extent of their eventual strength. During this period, new youth movement members were recruited through a cellular structure. According to Antero Benedito da Silva, who was active in planning demonstrations within Timor-Leste in the early 1990s, it was common for youth activists to know only one or two other active members until open nonviolent activism became commonplace in the late 1980s. They were unlikely to know who all of the activist leaders were.<sup>7</sup> After the training, recruits would receive information only through cassettes, flyers, or direct meetings with Falintil members.† They would have little knowledge of what was happening beyond their immediate cell, ostensibly so that they could not

\* Various interview partners thought this number too high and closer to 80%

\*\* Interview Subject requested that only his resistance code name be revealed

† Falintil was Fretilin's and later CNRM's armed wing

give up comrades under torture. Once active in the movement, people would recruit a further seven or so people, and new recruits were usually identified through family connections.<sup>8</sup>


The nonviolent movement was directly tied to the CNRM structure. It was situated as a part of the Clandestine Front, which had previously been responsible for intelligence and communication. Yet young people's involvement in the movement dated back to the very beginnings of the resistance. In the first four years of the invasion, those people who were hiding in the mountains received revolutionary education directly from Fretilin.<sup>9</sup> Upon return into the towns, there was a widespread sense of disorientation and lack of control: Many young people formed incoherent, vigilante-type groups which carried out small raids and vandalism.<sup>10</sup> Elisario Ferreira, a co-founder of one such group recalled: "In its beginnings, Fitun was just a gang with the objective of bashing and getting rid of new transmigrant arrivals from Indonesia."<sup>11</sup> As these youth gangs operated autonomously in the cities and provoked the Indonesian army without Falintil having the ability to intervene, the armed resistance in the mountains realized that these groups might create problems, but also that they represented untapped potential. The leaders of the armed resistance in the jungle created their own youth organizations that subsumed the gangs in the cities, and which had the explicit function of carrying out logistical and tactical commands from Falintil, the militant arm of CNRM.<sup>12</sup> These organizations formed the early foundation of the Clandestine Front, which later (under the CNRM) took on logistical functions to organize

nonviolent action in Timor-Leste and communicated with Timorese activists operating in Indonesia. The communication networks established during this early period would later be used to communicate between the rebel leadership in the jungle and the nonviolent organizers in cities.

The rebel leadership's ability to draw upon the population's vast potential as nonviolent activists was likely due to high levels of trust and good communication between CNRM's leadership and the population at large. The mass-based, nonviolent protest marches fit perfectly with the democratic underpinnings of CNRM, which made for a strong and coherent overall message. In the 1980s, even before nonviolent activism took off fully in practice, Xanana demonstrated the movement's commitment to democratic functioning, the importance of political leadership, and the importance of youth and unarmed members. In 1987, Xanana turned Fretilin into the National Council for Maubere Resistance (CNRM), an umbrella organization for members from all political parties. In addition to the Clandestine Front, the umbrella organization consisted of the Armed Front (similar in structure to Falintil) and the Diplomatic Front (operating in the diaspora). CNRM had an executive body with ten members inside Timor-Leste (including three Falintil commanders, five representatives of the clandestine front, and two Fretilin members).<sup>13</sup> According to Jacinto Alves, a former Falintil Commander, even strategic and tactical decisions would be taken by political and military leaders together.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, both the foundation of the nonviolent movement in Timor-Leste

and its operations were subsumed in the organizational structure of the rebel organization. In order to successfully carry out a transition from a largely violent to a largely nonviolent campaign, it was essential that the communication networks used for mobilizing protesters were tried and tested. Not only were they essential in calming the unemployed youth, but Fretilin's pre-war structure as a party with significant youth activities and quasi-democratic structures allowed for the relatively easy use of these organizational capabilities. Further, CNRM's adherence to democratic norms allowed the organization to leverage its nonviolent campaigns successfully and credibly towards the international community. In fact, when I asked my interview subjects, everyone from rebel military commanders to José Ramos-Horta, who led the Diplomatic Front from abroad, stressed the same two factors as essential for the success of the movement: First, the Catholic Church played a strong role in backing up the resistance movement once it embraced nonviolence as a strategy. Second, the Santa Cruz Massacre provided a tragic focal point that gained worldwide attention for the struggle.

This short overview of nonviolent innovation in Timor-Leste's resistance movement points to the importance of studying organizational development in rebel organizations. Fretilin's deep democratic roots and the communication networks that allowed for strategic cooperation between the violent and nonviolent components of the organization were important for the campaign's eventual success. It is important to pay attention not just to how rebel groups wage violence but to their organizational micro foundations and processes. 

# Custom, Counter-Narrative and The State

A conversation with  
Rune Steenberg Reyhe

The following is an edited version of an interview conducted by APAC.

The larger area that you would usually connect to the Uyghurs is Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, which is a very large area in the northwestern part of China. Xinjiang UAR was created in 1955. Before that it existed as a province of Republican China, and before that of Qing China. It achieved provincehood in 1880. Before that it had been called *Xiyu*, which means “The Western Regions.”

And if we go further back in history, it had been under the rule of different Sufi sects and lastly of the Dzungar Mongols up until it was conquered by the Qing between 1756-59. And since then, except for one short period in the late nineteenth century, when the area was conquered by a general from Khokand in modern day Uzbekistan, it has been under Chinese rule.

My research is about the region around the city of Kashgar and the western part of the Tarim Basin, which is one of the two main basins that Xinjiang is made up of. The Tarim Basin in the south encircles the Taklamakan desert, and that is where my story plays out and that is also where the Uyghurs see their cultural center and see their cultural cradle, so to speak.

The population had been mainly Uyghur up until 1949: about 75 to 80 percent Uyghur; 5 percent Han; and then the rest would be Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, nomadic people, and also some Uzbeks and Tajiks. The ways of using these categories within a classification system are of course relatively new, only introduced during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The whole notion of an ethnic group – of ethnicity – is quite new to the region. It’s even new to the western world in historical terms, but it was introduced into this region only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and it has only become a broadly used and accepted category in the second half of the twentieth century. But it has become a very, very important political category within Xinjiang, for the Uyghurs and within Central Asia generally.

Whereas in 1949 the area was 75 percent or 80 percent Uyghurs and 5 percent Han, now the picture is about equal, with a census from 2010 showing about 42 percent Uyghur and 40 percent Han Chinese, with the rest then again being mainly Khazaks, Kyrgyz or Dungan. So those demographics have changed immensely, and this has made “Uyghur”

an extremely central political category for people in the area.

While in the whole of Xinjiang the Uyghurs make up around 42 percent, in the area I’m looking at Uyghurs make up 92 percent of the population: that is in Kashgar prefecture. And in Kashgar city, the official numbers say that Uyghurs make up 80 percent of the population, but I would probably go for closer to 60 to 70 percent, because in the urban centers you have a quite large Han Chinese population.

For now, those percentages are relatively stable in the Kashgar area, and that is connected to political instability in the area. There was a time when there was a massive influx of Han Chinese workers, especially after the railroad was built to Kashgar in the early 2000s. But after several riots, attacks, stabbings, bombings, a lot of the Chinese have actually pulled out. And it is much more difficult now to get people there, because they are scared. They are afraid.

When I took the taxi sometimes it would happen to be a Han Chinese driver. It didn’t happen that often because I was mostly under way in the Uyghur part of the city and seeing

Uyghur people. It is not completely segregated, but you can clearly sense and see where the Chinese part of the city starts and where the Uyghur part of the city stops. Uyghurs go to the Chinese part of the city, but Chinese rarely go to Uyghur quarters unless they have some certain business there or unless they are government officials that need to go there on official errands. So when I got into a taxi with a Chinese driver he would almost always warn me against the local Uyghurs and say that they are dangerous and say, “watch out.”

So there are definitely tensions and these tensions are rising. People say the best time was the ‘80s, right after Deng Xiaoping introduced the new reform politics and local markets started to open, but there were no large firms from eastern China coming in yet, taking the business. At that point there was no general ethnic tension between the groups. But as things developed during the ‘90s, especially after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, I think quite a few Uyghurs at that point had the urge to create a Uyghur republic or just to participate in politics, as we saw in Beijing in 1989, and this led to several demonstrations, political movements and riots.

I think even back in the ‘80s the Uyghurs did have the feeling that they were being discriminated against in one way or the other, but they did not really have a collective symbol to rally around. And that is where Uyghur nationalism came into play. During the ‘80s and ‘90s, being Uyghur, and “Uyghur-ness”, actually developed very strongly as an anti-Chinese – or

some would phrase as anti-colonial – attitude towards the Chinese state. And this was ironic because it was the Chinese state which in a sense had introduced this category into the lives of these people.

Many people speculate whether this is a conscious, strategic choice by the Chinese government to really screw up a lot of things in order to keep the segregation in order, and to not give the Uyghurs a chance at all. I don’t think it is. I don’t think it is a very conscious choice. But what I do think is that in a strive for higher outputs, higher numbers in the statistics, the whole development of Xinjiang has been focused, not so much on the local population and of their participation, but rather on getting companies from eastern China to invest in the region, build up their own factories and networks. And so in the end the people who’ve profited from those billions that have been pumped in to Xinjiang have been big Han Chinese-owned companies from the eastern, highly developed and industrialized parts of China like Zhejiang, Shanghai, Guangdong and so on.

There is a policy of the Chinese government that has actually enhanced this, which is the Paired City, or Partnership Region, program, which connects different prefectures and cities in Xinjiang with areas from other parts of China. Investments come into the area from these partnership cities, and that also recreates the business networks from those provinces in the new place, in the different areas of Xinjiang. People who are from the same provinces tend make their investments quite close to each other, and stay in the same kind of networks. I think that has been a high priority

in government policies, because this was a way of expanding the market, as growth in Eastern China was beginning to slow down in the early 2000s. I think that the whole “Develop the West” program has to be seen in those economic terms: the Chinese government trying to expand the area of their markets, just as western capitalism has done. And I don’t necessarily think it is ill-willed.

The policy that is pushed very strongly in Xinjiang is to pump money into the region, to develop it. This has become the Chinese *Abra Kadabra* kind of solution to anything, which is not strange because China is a modernist state and that is pretty much how modernism perceives the world. Industrial, economic development is the core goal of a modernist state, both in the sense of providing a high living standard for its population but also in the sense of providing security. If people are full they will be quiet; they won’t revolt. Xi Jinxing has even expressed this very explicitly – as his concept of security being economic development, of those two things being very closely connected.

But this of course also means that the economic development is not as controlled. You throw the money out there and you make sure some people use it and get it, but you don’t control exactly who gets it. The way it was done in Xinjiang has profited people and companies from eastern China much more than the local population, and this just creates a lot of tension and a lot of bad blood.

The economic development and the tying up of the local economy into larger national and global economic systems doesn’t clash with Uyghur

notions of self or society or business or anything like that in any direct way. I think they are factors in transforming those notions, just as they have been in the western world too. But what does clash, I think, are the two very different ways of communication of Chinese and Uyghurs.

They way Uyghurs in Kashgar interact with each other is very, as they call it, smooth, and silky. It's very polite, very indirect in any kind of criticism or any kind of request. Modesty has a very high place, and not just amongst women, but amongst men as well. Of course it interacts with socialist narratives of modesty: the hard worker that doesn't brag but actually works himself to death for the collective. And it also goes back to Uyghur peasant culture as it was before the so-called liberation in 1949.

All this comes together in very interesting ways, but it produces something that's very different from the communication habitus of the Chinese, and it plays a role in keeping the networks of business people from really engaging and interacting. Eastern China is the production core of the whole world pretty much, the pumping heart of cheap commodities, and in Xinjiang the cheap commodities are what's central, because people's purchasing power is quite low. It's also very low in Central Asia, where a lot of the Uyghur traders take the products that they buy. These traders have difficulties, not in becoming petty traders just going over the border, but in setting up big deals, the big networks that you need. If you want to do a really big deal, if you want to

**The felt discrimination within the system is an impediment to the pursuit of a good life. Many turn to religion in a peaceful way in this pursuit, but this tends to further isolate them from the Chinese system and make them even more vulnerable.**

open a big company, you need a lot of capital, and you need good connections to the, and commercial center of China, to Chinese companies in the east and to the authorities in the Han-dominated government.

Han Chinese business men and government officials monopolize economic and political power in networks that are generally not accessible to Uyghurs. I don't see many people paying a lot of attention to this particular problem. The way the government would approach it is to launch campaigns against corruption. And in their bureaucratic speak, if we don't have corruption then of course this is not a problem because it isn't about your connections: If you can pay you get what you want; if you can't pay then you won't.

But in fact: it is very much about your connections. And these connections are forged in culturally specific communication. And the communication tends to break. I think where it really becomes a bigger problem is the power imbalance between those two groups. The Uyghurs sense that very strongly and they feel humiliated. They feel disrespected, dishonored. And I think a lot of the really bad sentiment derives not necessarily from Uyghurs not having enough to eat, or being really poor. I don't think people are necessarily dissatisfied with the level of economic development. They're not even dissatisfied with their own material status. But they do look to the Han Chinese and they see certain living standards. And this does create the justified feeling of inequality, and

the justified feeling of being treated differently, not necessarily by the government directly, but by the system. They have the feeling of being losers in that system, which they definitely are, both economically and politically. They see that and they feel that and then, using the discourse of ethnic nationality, they've gotten a critical prism to see this through.

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You can see it in concrete practices and policies. For instance, in 2013 and 2014 several policies against religion were implemented in Kashgar. Xi Jinping started two big policy campaigns: one was against corruption, and the other one was against Islamic extremism. In Kashgar, "extremism" was translated by local officials to mean almost anything that has to do with religion, and there have been several anti-religious policies implemented that Uyghurs felt very humiliated by.

First of all, they put every Muslim into the box of "extremist" if they tried to live out their religion. Secondly, they really mistook any kind of religions display for a display of extremism and fundamentalism. One was that a certain dance called *Sama* was prohibited. Another was that they made Islamic mullahs or imams actually dance a traditional Chinese folk dance on the central square in front of the main mosque in Kashgar. Some people laughed about it because they think these mullahs are quite full of themselves anyway, but still, Uyghurs in general felt that it was humiliating. There have also been beer festivals forcefully organized in Xinjiang. Certain names have been prohibited because they have too strong Islamic fundamentalist connotations. And

there has been a whole discourse about dressing and hijabs.

And that is essentially what drives the extremism, I'm quite sure. See, I don't know any extremists, I don't know anyone who would go out and kill anybody, and I don't know people who are driven to that extreme. But I know a lot of really frustrated people; and I know a lot of people you would probably say are clinically depressed, because of the economic and political tensions that they live in and the lack of perspective.

That is really what can bring anyone to the edge, I think. And that is the general feeling, especially amongst young Uyghur men. (For women it's a little bit different. There it's more about being torn between entering more strongly into Chinese society and getting the profits from that, or else staying with one's roots. And a lot of them choose not to integrate.) But for Uyghur men, while you could argue that it is still a choice – and of course it is at some point – the choice does not present itself as explicitly and as openly to many Uyghur men because they feel that even if they tried they would not succeed; and that is true in a majority of cases I would say.

There was a Uyghur photographer who just published a book about Uyghurs in the eastern part of China, especially those who had made it to some sort of fame or fortune. But a lot of Uyghurs also try and don't make it. And they know that. They feel that. And they understand the society well enough to react to that.

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So I don't know anyone who has been

driven to the point of becoming an extremist or anything like that, but I think that this is a part of what creates the instances of violence or provokes them or contributes to them. But, this said, there are many different kinds of violent instances in Xinjiang, and I think they have to be examined very differently. So what I just said now is probably true for big attacks like the one in Ürümqi in 2014, on the train station, where forty people were killed with bombs. And also for other kinds of coordinated attacks, as in Kunming with the knife attacks in 2014. But it's not true, I would think, for other attacks.

I know a little about the attacks in Kashgar last summer, and also near Aksu in the fall, and they were both families who went and attacked a certain infrastructural point that to them symbolically carried the weight of their decades of felt discrimination. I know a little bit about those families, because they have been reported on by *Radio Free Asia*, which is in no way a neutral voice, but they have some insights into who those families actually were:

In the case of Aksu, where this took place in September 2015, a group of Uyghurs entered a Chinese coal mine, went into the dormitories, where there were about 500 mainly Han Chinese. There were about twenty or thirty Uyghurs as well, but this group entered the Han Chinese quarters and killed around thirty to forty people, including the boss of the mining company. When the police arrived they killed the police chief and two other police officers before they fled into the mountains. The authorities searched for them for almost two months. They were found in a cave and taken out with a rocket into the cave. The whole



thing. Everybody died. It was two or three families that were related. There were quite a few women and children with them in the cave.

And we have seen similar instances: these are very often families or larger extended families that have felt really strong discrimination by the local authorities, and that have felt wrongfully treated and then react under the symbol of Uyghur nationalism or Islam. They are pushed beyond their limits and react to that. And I think that kind of reaction and that kind of violence is very important in a political sense.

I think this is what a lot of the violence in Xinjiang is about. It is not mainly provoked or supported by outside forces. It comes to a large extent from the inside. I think even those attacks that are supported from the outside, they are not created externally. They need local seeds. They need some sort of grass root movement to be able to implement.

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I think from the perspective of someone in Kashgar, you have the struggle to make a living, and the struggle also for some sort of recognition and a positive self-image. And the barriers to that are manifold and they are not all government-made or Han Chinese. But the felt discrimination within the system – which is a legitimate feeling, it is real within the system – is an impediment to that search or that pursuit of a good life. Many turn to religion in a peaceful way in this pursuit, but this tends to further isolate them from the Chinese system, and make them even more vulnerable. The social structure we see is definitely

more a reaction to the socioeconomic realities that people live within, and not very driven by nationalist sentiments. You can see this in the fact that people have their rivalries between the neighborhoods, between towns, between villages, and as long as people are not confronted directly with the state there is no strong sense of Uyghur unity. It doesn't play a large role in their everyday lives, but it does play a role in their self-understanding and it does play a role every time they are in touch with the state or indeed with Han-Chinese companies and organizations, not least banks and telecommunications companies. And this has a self-strengthening effect because we all know how it feels to be in touch with bureaucracy. We see that all around us all the time: we have to deal with a lot of bureaucracy ourselves, and we get frustrated when we feel like we are not being treated like real people and have no room to maneuver and pursue our own needs and interests. And in the experience of a lot of Uyghurs that feeling is phrased in ethnic, nationalist, sentiment – especially people who are not as literate in the PRC bureaucracy as they would be if Chinese were their mother tongue, or if the Chinese culture were their culture. So there is a further estrangement through that gap as well.

I met this Chinese police officer in Aksu when I was there during the spring of 2015. He was extremely fluent in the Uyghur language and he could express almost anything he wanted in Uyghur. He grew up in a Uyghur neighborhood and his father had also grown up in a Uyghur neighborhood. His grandfather had moved to Xinjiang as a young man as part of the state farms, the *Bingtuan*, which are still a central institution for bringing Han Chinese to Xinjiang. But

the family had moved out of that and this man's father had grown up playing with Uyghurs when he was a kid. He too had grown up playing with Uyghur kids in his childhood. The family had always gone to their neighbors' weddings and feasts, up until the early 2000s. Then they stopped being invited.

Now he is still living in the same place, but his kids are not playing with the Uyghur kids, and they don't speak Uyghur. And he was really sad about this and quite upset about it, and he said that things were getting worse and worse. By the time he was telling me this he was getting sentimental about the good old times, and he really expressed regret. However, at the same time, he was now working for the police because of his good Uyghur skills. He had gotten a position as part of the action troops: special groups that go into Uyghur houses at night to search for hidden weapons and to bust secret meetings and so on. They would routinely go into people's houses. They would start at midnight and go until four in the morning, going from house to house and waking the people up, counting how many people there were, checking their identities in their search for potential terrorists, and for weapons and so forth. This man was very disturbed by this, but of course he was doing it anyways. He told me that he wanted to retire the next year.

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I think Islam in Xinjiang has become a lot stronger since the 1980s and '90s, a lot stronger. It has become more of a force. I see both that and ethno-nationalism as ways to establish some sort of self-respect, establish an area where you can be first-rank and not

**The social networks are where micro-level discourse grows and where anti-structures can be created, but they are also where the coping takes place, the coping with the difficulties that anyone faces in life.**

even though people build up counter-narratives, they're not immune to those pervasive views. They do enter into their own picture of themselves. And I think the stronger these pervasive views are, the stronger counter-reactions you will see and the more people will really distance themselves from the large popularity.

Of course that is even easier in a case like the Uyghurs where their customs of communication, their language, their way of eating and so on – what you could with a conventional shorthand call their culture, their concept of society – are in many ways quite in contrast with the Han Chinese. This doesn't in itself mean that there should be

a conflict, but is a convenient line to build the conflict around. The moment you feel discriminated against, or the moment you feel excluded, you build your own counter-discourse, build your own counter-narrative. I think that is definitely happening on a very large scale in Xinjiang at the moment. I think this is also an important part of what is happening in Europe today, where young Muslims fail to or refuse to integrate and in the extreme cases end up in violent opposition to the "host society."

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Social networks are essential for a lot of Uyghurs living in Kashgar, for creating social security, especially

in an environment where they feel discriminated against, where they feel that they don't have the upper hand, where they are at the mercy of another system and another population group, and defined in the sense of ethnicity, language, and culture. It is a tool to try to claim agency and participation, status in society, self-esteem. Honor as it is understood by Uyghurs is also respect, self respect, and thus not sinking into depression and utter frustration.

The social networks are an important part of it. That is where that micro-level discourse grows and therefore of course that is also where anti-structures can be created, but they are also where the coping takes place, the coping with the difficulties that you face, that anyone faces in life, but you face more strongly when you belong to a less privileged part of society than say, you and I do as white males in western, so-called democratic capitalism, or as Han Chinese males who have gone to a good school do in China.

These networks are extremely important and they do uphold some kind of identity, and it is a phrased motivation amongst Uyghurs. But these concepts of identity are not in themselves a motivating factor. They might be formulated as such, in discourse, but the concepts of identity don't in and of themselves have a drive to live. They change all the time anyway; they are in constant transformation. They change in reaction to the state system, to the laws that are set up. I have seen changes in marriage customs just in the time that I've been looking at Kashgar – customs that have reacted extremely quickly to changes in policy and lawmaking of the state.

second-rank, where you can be on top of things, because you feel that the general society is devaluing you in comparison to all others.

I think that is probably the main factor, as I see it, for failed integration of whichever groups. It's that within the common discourse, if you don't have a space that you can inhabit in a positive way, get some kind of positive self-understanding, then you will seek to create a counter-narrative within a world that is somehow discursively set off from that great social narrative. And of course this happens all the times in different kinds of groups within society, and this is a part of pluralism. But in some instances, especially when the humiliation and the devaluation is very strong and very pervasive,

The *Nikah* ceremony, for example. From when I started going to Kashgar in 2010, through 2013, it was a very long ceremony, where a lot of young men participated, and it was often held by mullahs who were sort of “star mullahs,” who were invited just for this, who actually made their living from these speeches. And they talked a lot about moral religiosity: how you are supposed to treat your wife; how you are supposed to treat your children and your neighbors and so on.

And this was a new thing in comparison to the ‘80s and ‘90s, when those ceremonies had been quite short, and mainly visited by elder men. And one of the reasons for this change was that the preaching at the mosque had been severely restricted by the Chinese government. The Friday prayers were now censored and had to be given in written form to the local authorities, so as to be approved of before they were held. You couldn’t say anything of interest, and so that religious education was being moved into the *Nikah* ceremony, which added new functions and meanings to it, made it much, much longer, changed the people who participated, the way it was being set up, the way it was being held.

Then, in 2014, a state of emergency was declared in Xinjiang after several attacks by radical, presumably Uyghur groups all across China. The government and local authorities implemented a new law saying that only the imam of the Friday mosque could do the *Nikah* ceremony, which meant that all those superstar mullahs lost their means of income. Now one person was responsible for reading the *Nikahs* in a very large area, and

he could hardly cope. People had to wait in line, and this shortened the ceremony down to maybe five or ten minutes. There were still had a lot of people coming, but not the same kind of clientele, because they knew they were not going to get what they were looking for.

Before, everything in the normal Uyghur wedding had been recorded on videotape, and then the video would often be cut together and distributed. And those *Nikah* ceremony speeches had been quite relevant and something that people watched. But now, after 2014, I saw that the cameras would be turned off for those ceremonies, because even though the imam didn’t really say much, he still recited the Koran. And who knows, next year or the year after, if that might become outlaw too? Then they might be retrospectively punished.


So the so-called cultural customs, they are developed in dialogue with the state laws and state systems. And it is really interesting to see when you look at one custom closely, as I did at the marriage process, and the wedding as a central celebration within the marriage process, how that really changes in reaction to all those other elements of society.

We don’t know why the Chinese government makes the policies they make; we can only guess. We don’t have any records, so we don’t know if these policies were in reaction to the *Nikah* ceremony and what that had become, as a place of religious teaching. I saw it as such, and I interpreted and described it as such, but we don’t know if the Chinese officials see it that way. It is part of the general crackdown

on religious activities and attempt to marginalize religious activities all over Xinjiang, because (mistakenly in my eyes) the government seems to see religious activities as a place for the development of extremist ideas.

I guess it is a place where they can spread. During my time in Xinjiang there was a lot of spreading of Wahhabi- and Salafi-inspired ideas, not of the whole package, but of what you might call reformed religious ideas. Religion and morality were discussed widely in a very pluralist fashion. I saw that a lot. People took me to semi-secret meetings where they had religious teaching, and where people distributed books all around. Everybody would have pieces of the Koran on their smartphone that they would show you, and that has all completely changed. It has been cracked down on so harshly. People are afraid of even carrying their smartphones now. They’ve gone back to using old-school phones because there might be some trace of something on the smart phone, and because there are a lot of stories about police scams where police will say, “Oh we found this Koran verse on your cell phone.” And then of course the only way to escape punishment from that is to say, “It is not my phone.” The police officer says: “OK, I guess it’s not your phone. So go ahead,” and then he collects the phones and he sells them.

There have been a lot of rumors of this. I’ve seen pictures of it and I’ve seen it happen – not that the police confiscate telephones directly, but that people have been accused of having stuff on their phone that they didn’t have.

There is just a lot of fear. And now the discourse has completely changed. 

# Troubled Peace, Illusive Justice in Aceh

## A Failure for Transitional Justice

By Rui Hao Puah

In dramatic *force majeure* fashion, and at an unbearable human cost, the Indian Ocean Tsunami of December 2004 leveled Bandar Aceh, the capital city Aceh Province on the Island of Sumatra. In doing so, it provided the impetus for a nascent peace process between the insurgent group *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (The Free Aceh Movement, or GAM) and the Indonesian government.

Since GAM was founded in 1976, the separatist group waged a nearly constant insurgency in Aceh. The fight was particularly acute from 1989-1998, during which time Aceh became a military operations area for the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI). Multiple unsuccessful cease-fires were held between 1999 and 2002. The 2004 tsunami struck amidst ongoing fighting in Aceh, and some scholars believe that it played a significant role in creating the conditions for peace, by focusing international attention on the situation in Aceh. At the time, Aceh was subject to martial law imposed by the central government. Both GAM and TNI sustained heavy losses during the Tsunami. The scale of human suffering prompted both sides to negotiate in better faith.<sup>1</sup>

Foreign humanitarian aid poured into

the region in the Tsunami's aftermath, breaking the information blackout that had been imposed by Jakarta and creating external pressure to find an end to the conflict. Actors on both sides of the conflict took the opportunity to quickly de-escalate tensions. GAM played an important role by unilaterally declaring an end to hostilities, despite its unwillingness to abide by cease-fires in the past. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono worked to rein in hawkish elements of the TNI during negotiations with GAM, and vice-president-elect Muhammad Kalla designed a peace process that granted substantial economic aid to the rebels.<sup>2</sup>

The cease-fire between GAM and the central government was sealed in a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two parties, signed in Helsinki on August 15, 2005. The Helsinki MoU allowed for the formation of local Acehese political parties (prohibited in the rest of Indonesia), gave amnesty for GAM fighters, called for the setting up of a Human Rights Tribunal to deal with future violations, and set in motion the establishment of the Acehese Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, subordinate to a

national level commission.<sup>3</sup> At the heart of the agreement was an effort by GAM to acquire expanded autonomy for Aceh within an Indonesian state.<sup>4</sup> This spelled an effective end to the conflict, because a regression to violent insurrection would lose GAM the last of its credibility and justify a harsh and merciless security response from Jakarta.

Since 2005, Aceh has seen relative stability. Aside from sporadic violence, Bandar Aceh has been able to accommodate the presence of foreign aid workers. Aceh's post-tsunami humanitarian landscape was dotted with almost 500 humanitarian organizations with a panoply of agendas and affiliations.<sup>5</sup> Although the aid infusion provided much needed capital for disaster reconstruction, it has been divisive for the community, creating friction between Acehese who work inside the international NGO community and are paid relatively higher salaries and those that remain outside and critical of it.

Additionally, an imbalance between aid budgets allocated to post-conflict versus post-disaster projects has caused deep discontent. Less than 10

percent of donor aid is allocated to post-conflict communities, which are often inland and therefore suffered less water damage from the Tsunami.<sup>6</sup> These inland communities struggle to understand why their conflict-ravaged bodies, psyches, or property seem to be valued at a lower rate than those of their tsunami-affected compatriots.<sup>7</sup>

Post-tsunami Aceh may be a poster child for successful disaster reconstruction, but the province is still plagued by the vestiges of its violent and unsettled past. There is an overarching and collective failure to address past violence through legal or political means. This real and perceived lack of transitional justice is a complex and simmering issue that undermines Aceh's already fragile peace.

### Legal Avenues for Tackling Human Rights Issues

The Helsinki MoU laid out the foundations of two legal channels for redressing injustices: a Human Rights Court (HRC) and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Both have shown little promise, owing to the Indonesian state's largely dysfunctional national framework of human rights protection. Aceh is not unique in this regard. Human rights violations in Indonesia have regularly gone unchecked since 1965-66, when extra-judicial killings were carried out against supposed communists in far-flung regions of the archipelago such as East Timor, Papua and West Papua.

The establishment of the HRC was further mandated by the Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA), which was passed in July 2006 and meant to serve as the primary legal framework for the self-government of Aceh. The

law directed that a HRC in Aceh be established within twelve months. Ten years later, the HRC has still not been established. Additionally, the LoGA is incapable of holding more than a few human rights violators accountable, as the majority of these violations in Aceh took place prior to 1998, during the DOM era (*Daerah Operasi Militer*, or Military Operations Zone). The LoGA, however, only permits courts the authority to rule on cases occurring after the passage of the law itself (in 2006).<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the historical human rights abuses that hang like a cloud over Aceh continue to go unprosecuted.

The TRC called for in the Helsinki MoU has been muddled in legal confusion since late 2006, when the Indonesian Constitutional Court revoked Law 27 of 2004 by citing that the law provided amnesty and hence legal immunity for perpetrators of gross human rights violations.<sup>9</sup> Hence, the legal basis for the establishment of a national TRC has been annulled, rendering useless the "Aceh Truth and Reconciliation" by-law (*qanun*) that was successfully passed in December 2013 by Aceh's parliament.<sup>10 11</sup>

Other avenues have been closed off as well. Activists had hoped for the National Commission on Human Rights, established in 1994, to be a third alternative to investigate past human rights violations. But the commission is toothless. It has no power of enforcement and can only make non-binding recommendations to the Indonesian government that often go unheeded.<sup>12</sup> Activists have also lobbied for revisions to the Law No. 39/1999 on Human Rights in order to strengthen the commission, but it remains uncertain as to how long

it would take or whether such revisions are possible at all.<sup>13</sup>

### Narratives

National-level bureaucratic failures to ensure legal remedies to past injustices continue to act as an impediment to genuine, lasting peace in Aceh. The Indonesian government has tried to obfuscate and stall its way out of a legal admission of guilt that would undermine its legitimacy. The legitimate demand for justice has been muscled out of the history books by a dominant narrative: that of a historically continuous GAM vs. TNI struggle that ended only after a hard-won and fragile peace.<sup>14</sup> This monolithic public narrative ignores the role of the Tsunami and other exogenous forces that contributed to peace in Aceh, and holds that peace can only be maintained by not raking up the past. In doing so, it fails to provide the necessary means of legal redress or political reconciliation that victims of past abuses need.

Elizabeth Drexler, an anthropologist who studies political violence, argues that in 1999 it was extremely difficult for Acehnese people to publicly criticize GAM, which had gained popular legitimacy from its image of being victimized by the TNI's harsh and repressive tactics.<sup>15</sup> Yet it was widely known that GAM was in collusion with the TNI: The accusation that the TNI provided weapons and ammunition to GAM during the insurgency had become common parlance. Toward the end of the armed struggle it was believed that most of the original members of GAM, who had fought during the conflict of 1976, were by now in Malaysia and Batam. Common knowledge held that

the contemporary Acehese rebels had little to no connection to the historical GAM that emerged in 1976 under the leadership of Tengku Hasan Muhammad di Tiro.<sup>16</sup> Still, many Acehese continued to support GAM because it was the only movement that articulated their aspirations for self-determination, embodied in the concept of *Aceh Merdeka* (Acehese Independence).

### Profiting Through Peace

It seems that GAM (or rather rebels operating under the guise of GAM,) have profited from the struggle at the expense of the civilian population of Aceh, which has suffered abuses from both the insurgent group and the central government. While there arguably may not have been a peace process if the Indonesian government did not have a clear counterparty to negotiate a peace deal with, it is not clear that GAM has served the interest of the Acehese people. GAM fighters and representatives did not hesitate to exploit positions of influence at the expense of the Acehese civilians. Representatives of GAM exercised considerable leverage over the distribution of humanitarian funds following the Tsunami, diverting funds to their own people rather than to genuine victims of the conflict.<sup>17</sup> Reconstruction programs rewarded those identified as (ex-)GAM while programs to compensative victims who are neither TNI or GAM have not been prioritized.<sup>18</sup> Individuals claiming to represent GAM have continued to systematically extort “taxes” from the local population.<sup>19</sup>

### Current Failures


In the eleven years following the 2005

peace deal, Jakarta has failed to bring justice for the victims of the Acehese conflict. The lone successful prosecution was the 2000 “Bantaqiah Trial,” named for the principal of a religious school in West Aceh where more than fifty people were massacred.<sup>20</sup> However, only low-ranking soldiers went on trial, while the decision-makers behind the massacre went untouched. Such failures to administer justice are symptomatic of the wider and deeper failure to achieve transitional justice in Aceh. A highly skewed yet dominant historical narrative continues to systematically deny compensation to legitimate victims and prevents the indictment of guilty criminals. Meanwhile, recalcitrant elements of GAM and guilty factions of the TNI hide behind the refrain that “justice has not been forgotten,” and maintain that “now [is] not the time to seek it.”<sup>21</sup> They continue to be protected by the principal public image of a hard-won, fragile peace, and a dormant conflict that will erupt the moment the details of past violence are unearthed.

In most post conflict situations, TRCs are designed to name and prosecute shadowy, unknown agents guilty of committing gross atrocities and consolidate them – along with the legacies of painful betrayals, lingering suspicions and desires for vengeance – under the rubric of “authoritarian legacy,” to be consigned as lessons of classroom history.<sup>22</sup> This is not what Aceh needs. An adjudication process to hear the facts would achieve little because the facts are already known amongst the local populace; they are merely unspoken. Rather, Aceh needs inspired leadership brave enough to take on the mammoth task of ensuring culpability and pursuing it to its fullest legal extent. Current politicians who

ignore the history of abuse under the necessary but unpardonable excuse of “moving on,” – choosing instead to focus on democratization and economic development – are complicit in actively suppressing awareness of what Drexler describes as the “dark pattern” of distrust and collective historical amnesia. Collectively, political leaders are failing to address these important issues.<sup>23</sup>

Partai Aceh (PA), led by Muzakkir Manaf, a former GAM commander, still dominates Acehese parliament with over 36 percent of seats. However, its support has dwindled since the 2014 election, when it lost four parliamentary seats. National parties such as Gerindra, Nasdem, Golkar and Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN) have secured beachheads on the Aceh political scene. GAM’s hold on electoral pattern is loosening, and there is potential for Acehese voters to directly exert pressure on the national government. However, breaking the GAM-centric historical narrative will require more than electoral pressure. Determined and inspired leadership is needed, preferably from GAM itself. Current politicians show little willingness to stake their careers on opposing Jakarta in the name of justice.

In Aceh, as with East Timor and Papua, peace has ironically delayed justice. As memories of the conflict fade and attention from the international community wanes, it would take external intervention or a large internal shock to set in motion a nationally-driven process that sufficiently recognizes the rights of victims to seek justice. Aceh is now part of Indonesia, and all meaningful change must by default emanate from the center. 

# Hostile Cyber Forces

By Joyce Dong

If you are a Chinese minority, you are at high risk of cyber threats. While cyberattacks and economic cyber espionage originating from China regularly make headline news when directed against U.S. government and private institutions, the same activities rarely receive attention when they target Chinese minority groups, such as Tibetans and Uyghurs. Individuals and groups affiliated with the Tibetan cause – from the Tibetan diplomatic offices to social networking sites commonly used by Tibetans – are frequent targets of cyber threats. State and state-sponsored actors have launched a range of attacks using low-level techniques, such as sending phishing emails, to more sophisticated techniques of Distributed Denial of Services (DDoS) and Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) attacks.

Chinese minorities are highly susceptible to cyber threats, as minority groups might not rank cybersecurity as a high priority and do not have the sorts of highly advanced defensible capabilities that are commonplace for sovereign states and large private companies. Additionally, the cost of offense is small for cyberspace perpetrators, who can launch malware that can remain undetected for a long time. Minority groups are even more vulnerable to state and state-sponsored cyber activities. Under the banner of “cyber repression,” state or state-sponsored individuals also use digital means to coerce and intimidate minority groups by limiting certain online behavior.<sup>1</sup> As cyberattacks against minority groups such as Tibetans and Uyghurs see no signs of abating, these populations face

multiple challenges and have taken it upon themselves to mitigate their level of risk.

The 2009 discovery of GhostNet, a malware-based cyber espionage network, revealed one of the most prominent cases of cyber espionage and attack activities launched against high-level personalities of the Tibetan community. The network was exposed following a ten-month investigation, called the Information Warfare Monitor (IWM), a public-private joint venture that included Ottawa-Based consulting firm SecDev Group, as well as the Citizen Lab from University of Toronto. GhostNet targeted high-level political institutions, including the Private Office of the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan Government in-Exile and Tibetan missions in New York, London and Brussels. The IWF investigative report explains that GhostNet lured computer users to download a Trojan known as Ghost Rat, which gave them access to the users’ computers.

In August 2013, Citizen Lab subsequently revealed that the Tibetan community was being targeted by the Surtr family of malware. The malware was being embedded in Word document attachments that were sent through a mailing list to members of the Tibetan community. According to the Citizen Lab report, “The email in question purported to be from a prominent member of the Tibetan community.”<sup>2</sup>

In addition to targeting specific individuals, cyber perpetrators have also sought to expand the scope of their victims by attacking the social

networking site, untib.com (*United Tibet*), a widely used platform among Tibetans. The social networking site was forced to go offline due to a cyberattack in 2016. According to Tashi, a member of the technical team at Unitib, “...the targeted attack was done using a fairly large botnet and lasted over ten days. Over 8000 IP addresses were identified in the attack that used an automated script to create more than 20,000 fake accounts and tried to DDoS the platform.”<sup>3</sup>

## Lack of International Attention

Online attacks on minority groups suffer from a lack of media coverage and public awareness. Cyberattacks do not lead to loss of life or physical harm, and this contributes to the difficulty in rallying international condemnation of cyberattacks against minority groups. While this is by no means an attempt to advocate for physical violence, the lack of physical harm and corresponding dismal public outrage against online attacks on minority communities often provides hackers unfettered freedom to launch persistent attacks, at low cost, and get away with it.

The cybersecurity risks facing minority populations are compounded by the fact that many such groups do not have sufficient cybersecurity defense mechanisms and do not have the financial means to afford hiring technical consultants to protect their data privacy and information. Minority group associations encourage members to adopt “digital hygiene” behavior to deter cyberattacks, but this might be insufficient given that computers are very easily compromised when cyber

threats against these groups could be highly advanced and unknown. With limited economic resources allocated to cybersecurity defenses, minority activist groups, such as *Students For a Free Tibet*, have initiated fundraising programs to spearhead digital security training and awareness programs.

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**Minorities are highly susceptible to cyber threats, lacking the highly advanced defensive capacities of sovereign states.**

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As if the persistent onslaught of attacks targeting the Tibetan community were not complicated enough, Thomas Brewster, in an article for *Tech Week Europe*, highlighted that cybersecurity firms have exacerbated the woes of the Tibetan community who have to deal with unorthodox practices of cybersecurity organizations masquerading as Tibetan organizations.<sup>4</sup> These cybersecurity firms create fake Tibetan websites and social platforms as part of watering hole campaigns to attract Chinese hackers to their site. Russian-based cybersecurity firm Kaspersky, for example, imitated a Tibetan activist organization in order to collect fresh signatures to add to its malware databases, which it used to better analyze and understand the perpetrator's hacking behaviors. However, many Tibetan activists such as Tibetan Action Institute find this practice disturbing, as these cybersecurity firms ultimately use this data to improve the software that they sell to Chinese companies. These companies profit from the Tibetan cause and muddy the waters of genuine humanitarian actors supporting the Tibetan community. As Lhadon Tethong, director of the Tibet Action Institute said in the article, "It is a good strategy, but it brings up a load of ethical questions."<sup>5</sup>

### Remediation Techniques


Despite the vast and persistent amount of attacks targeting Tibetans, attribution in cyberspace continues to be a problem. There are a variety of cyber actors, such as the Chinese state, state-sponsored and/or patriotic hackers. As an illustration of the difficulty of ascertaining the likely perpetrators - IWM managed to trace the GhostNet's IP address location to Hainan, but still emphasized in its March 2009 report that "...we do not know the exact motivation or the identity of the attacker(s), or how to accurately characterize this network of infections as a whole."<sup>6</sup> While it remains difficult to attribute responsibility based on technical grounds, Jason Healey's "spectrum of state responsibility," offers a useful analytical framework to determine whether an attack was more likely state-sponsored or not. This policy framework provides a higher level of certainty that these attacks were state-sponsored by examining a combination of factors involving the following:<sup>7</sup>

- (1) The political motivations of the perpetrators – attacks linked with China's national policy that "Tibet is an inalienable part of the Chinese territory."
- (2) The high number of targets affiliated with the Tibetan cause and repeated behavior over time.
- (3) The correlation of the attacks following the physical repression of the Tibetan community after the 2008 riots in Lhasa.
- (4) No one else benefits.

Tibetan activist groups have sought to partner with academia in order to improve digital hygiene amongst the community. Tibetans have received

training and educational guidance to learn best practices to guard against cyber threats. In Dharamsala, home to the Tibetan government-in-exile, monks have launched a digital hygiene campaign by promoting "detaching from attachments." They advocate for their community to reduce reliance on attachments and instead to share information via alternative platforms such as Google Docs or Dropbox.

Other defensive strategies involve using stronger passwords, paying more attention to phishing emails, and relying on shared documents. In addition, the rise of security firms with a social/public interest mandate such as San Francisco-based Cloud Fare also augurs well for minority groups. As part of its Project Galileo, "to protect politically and artistically important organizations and journalists against attacks that would otherwise censor their work," CloudFlare offers its "highly advanced DDoS mitigation technology for free to any qualified vulnerable public interest website," as well as to minority rights organizations.<sup>8</sup> Google's 2013 initiative, Project Shield, is another security provider that offers protection to websites dealing with news, human rights and election-related content.

The cyber threats faced by Chinese minorities are an ongoing and persistent problem often overlooked in the cybersecurity field. Minority groups face difficulties in generating awareness of their abuse and lack technical support to deter and mitigate cyberspace threats. Nevertheless, an attitude of active self-reliance, a diligent adoption of "digital hygiene" practices and the growth of socially-aware cybersecurity providers all offer hope for ensuring that minority groups can advocate their causes freely with the awareness that they are protected in the cyber world. 



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