

Islam by smartphone: the changing shape of Uyghur religiosity

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Over the past few years, since the 2009 violence in Urumchi, localised violent incidents have become commonplace, often culminating in deaths of so-called Uyghur ‘terrorists’ at the hands of the security forces. What is the cause of this ongoing bloodshed? In the wake of the 2009 violence, the government seemed to promise a gentler approach to social problems in Xinjiang, but this policy – if it was ever implemented – was short-lived, and by 2011 ever-tightening controls on religious practice and belief had become the norm. Since this ‘anti-religious extremism’ campaign began, many of the incidents reported in Chinese media as ‘terrorist’ related, appeared according to credible investigations by RFA, to have been sparked by intrusive policing, and particularly by the practice of house-to-house checks on women’s veiling.

Since 2013, some of these violent incidents have apparently begun to take on the form of Islamic jihadi attacks that the Chinese government has so enthusiastically trumpeted to the world since 2001. Thus we saw the Kunming train station knife attacks in March 2014 and the Urumchi market attack in May 2014. A week after this attack, the government announced a one year strike hard campaign, which has seen numerous arrests, executions, and extra-judicial killings by the police, public relay of punishments reminiscent of the Cultural

Revolution period, and a particular push to crack down on the use of social media to spread Islamic extremism or any form of anti-government content. A brief but extraordinary flowering of religious discussions, images, videos, especially carried on the Weixin (in Uyghur: Ündidar) social media platform, was brought to an abrupt end in mid-2014 by this crackdown.

The anti-extremism campaign included peasant art competitions – wonderful if disturbing imagery reminiscent of Cultural Revolution Art. Other education initiatives include local officials organizing collective shaving competitions and “lifting the veil” beauty projects, compulsory daily dancing sessions for peasants, and the extraordinary public spectacle of imams dancing to the hit Chinese pop song and Internet meme Little Apple. All these state initiatives, and state views on the situation, are relatively easily observed from outside China, but - because access to this region for scholars is not easy - what we are lacking is a sense of the debates going on within Uyghur society about religion and politics and identity, a sense of what it is to be a Muslim in Xinjiang today. This paper attempts to give some sense of this rapidly changing discourse – as it is revealed through a form of social media: Weixin (WeChat). It asks: to what extent has this situation been brought about – as the government media claims – by the spread of Islamic jihadi ideals via social media? Or does the rise in religiosity reflect a widespread belief – as some Uyghur intellectuals are now arguing – that only through Islam can Uyghurs preserve their identity in the face of Chinese repression and assimilationist policies? What kinds of Islamic ideas and sentiments were actually circulating

amongst Uyghurs in 2013-2014, and how does this discourse relate to the endemic violence that now plagues the region?¹

Social media platforms

The last few years have seen exponential growth in smartphone users across China. Less than 3 years ago, in January 2011, the Chinese IT giant Tencent launched the smartphone app Weixin (WeChat in English). By 2013 it had become the media of choice for some 600 million users worldwide, 500 million of them within China. Amongst Uyghur users too, Weixin, or Ündidar as it is known in Uyghur, became an essential communication tool. From mid-2013 to mid-2014, possibly several million Uyghurs inside Xinjiang and in the diaspora were using this app, often several times a day, to chat with their friends and to participate in online groups or circles, sharing short audio messages, text, images, links, audio and video files. All this communication proceeded for over a year with apparently little control or surveillance, until the state apparently caught up with the new technology and implemented a crackdown in summer 2014.

During this period we actively participated in these social media networks, and it was largely through the medium of Ündidar – though also linked to other media platforms including Facebook, YouTube, Youku (优酷), Tudou (土豆) and individual blogs – that we observed a steady rise in the circulation of Islamic images, audio-video files, audio messages and discussion. The speed of the spread of this new discourse, and the increasing radicalisation of some of the content was remarkable and disturbing.

¹ Audio files discussed in this article can be accessed on the website for the Leverhulme Research project 'Sounding Islam in China': <http://www.soundislamchina.org/?p=1222>.

This paper takes as its subject the sounds and images and conversations that were exchanged on Ündidar between 2013 and 2014. In order to give a sense of the range of ideas, we will profile six individual users and one circle (朋友卷), selected from a network of over 200 people. The six individuals represent different age groups and gender, and various educational levels. They include business people, teachers, and manual workers, who come from different parts of the Uyghur region. Through this material, we consider the following questions: why are Uyghurs turning to Islam in such large numbers. What kinds of Islamic ideologies are being promoted via social media? Are they related to transnational flows of Islamic media, or are they particular to Uyghur society? Drawing on work by anthropologist Charles Hirschkind (2012), what ‘structures of feeling’ do they express? How can a close listening to these media items help us to understand the social and political reasons underlying the rise of this kind of discourse?

We can think about Ündidar (the social media platform as it is deployed by the Uyghur community of users) as a type of ‘technoculture’: a term coined by Lysloff & Gay to refer to ‘communities and forms of cultural practice that have emerged in response to changing media and information technologies’ (Lysloff & Gay 2003: 2). As they argue: ‘technologies become imbedded in cultural systems and social institutions, which, in turn, are reconfigured by those same technologies’ (Lysloff & Gay 2003: 27). The Weixin platform provides particular ‘affordances’ for the creation of community, specific to its capabilities as a media platform. It offers a choice between one-to-one messaging, closed circles, and posting to all friends. People can share text messages, images including their own photos, links, and emoticons. They can record and share their own audio messages and videos. Thus it is a flexible platform

– it ranges between the intimate (especially in its capability for voice messaging) and public – and arguably a democratic platform, in that it supports local production, encourages grassroots voices and creativity.

A focus on small media can also help us to understand individual and local realities. Media platforms like this provide situated agency, allowing users to creatively engage with the challenges of daily life, to explore questions of faith and identity, and find ways of dealing with political realities. As Dorothea Schulz argues:

Small media – whose circulation is not centrally controlled or directed – stretch the boundaries of the audience and introduce new senses of community, so that locality is defined by circulation (Schulz 2006).

Forms of small media like this are also crucial to our understanding of the creation, transmission and mediation of religious knowledge on a global scale, and the symbolic and political geographies of Islam.

‘What’s Up?’ Individual Profiles

Among our selection of six individuals, the only one who is not embracing Islam online is the oldest (F), a 54 year old, Urumchi-based wealthy business woman who posts mainly in Chinese. Instead, she shares texts messages and images complaining about the social

pressures now being brought to bear on Uyghur women in Urumchi to adopt the veil (Leibold & Grose forthcoming).

Fig. 1. 'I am the only woman without a veil'

The two other women in our sample are both members of a circle owned by a Uyghur woman based in the US. Just over half of the members of this circle are women. It includes people from Kashgar, Urumchi, Ghulja, Beijing, Guangzhou, Saudi, Turkey, Dubai, US, Europe, Kazakhstan, Guangzhou. These are highly educated, wealthy people. Most of them are religious, but they are careful; religious discussion and materials are very limited. They are involved in raising money for the poor and sick in southern Xinjiang, and frequently share quite gruesome images of injured or sick people, with phone numbers or even bank account details for contributions.

Fig. 2. Circle 朋友卷

One group member (D), is a highly educated woman in her 30s who posts in four languages. On just one day, she posts a children's poem in Uyghur Latinic script; a short text in Chinese: 'The darker the road, the brighter the light', and another in the Uyghur Arabic script: 'Ramadan, don't end. I wish for my sins to be taken away. Please take my sins away with you'. This last post is accompanied by an image bearing the Arabic word: 'Allah'.

Fig. 3 Allah

These women exchange intimate personal audio messages with their circles, which reference obliquely the ongoing violence and police controls. In late May 2014, after the Urumchi market attack, D posts an audio message: ‘every time I go to work it seems like everyone is looking at me like I am the enemy. You can’t condemn a whole nation for the actions of a few’. Another circle member (E), a mother and teacher in her 40s from Kashgar, posts images and short texts which promote idealised images of Islamic womanhood and notions of piety and self-restraint. This kind of post is very common amongst female users, and recalls Saba Mahmood’s discussions of the cultivation of Islamic sensibilities amongst Egyptian women’s sermon groups.

Fig. 4. A perfect woman

Our first male profiled individual (C) is a small businessman originally from the South of the region, now based in Urumchi. He also posts daily religious images and sayings.

Fig. 4. Allah is One

Much less cautious than the educated women who work in government posts, several of his posts directly reference the political situation, often in satirical ways. One poem entitled

‘They’ll arrest you’ (tutiwalidu), sets up a satirical opposition between Islamic morality and the current security measures being enforced in Xinjiang.

Fig 5. They’ll Arrest You

Don’t put odd things on your phone or they’ll arrest you

Don’t put odd things on your computer or they’ll arrest you

Don’t tell the truth or they’ll arrest you

Don’t keep books or they’ll arrest you

Don’t grow a beard or they’ll arrest you

Don’t ask people to do good deeds or they’ll arrest you

Don’t stop people doing wrong or they’ll arrest you

Don’t spend money for good deeds or they’ll arrest you

Don’t meet with the families of arrested people or they’ll arrest you

Don’t carry veiled women in your car or they’ll arrest you

Don’t pray in public or they’ll arrest you

Don’t listen to the recited Qur’an or they’ll arrest you

There are too many things you can be arrested for

Just don’t do what they don’t like

Good and bad things are all in their hands

Now listen to the good news

Drink alcohol and you will *not* be arrested

Smoke and you will *not* be arrested

Visit prostitutes and you will *not* be arrested

Be corrupt and you will *not* be arrested

Cheat and you will *not* be arrested

Ignore your parents and you will *not* be arrested

Wear fashionable clothes and you will *not* be arrested

Praise them and you will *not* be arrested

Because they give you these opportunities

Report people who attend Islamic school and they will be arrested

Because they will offer you heaven

Be careful or you will spend your life in a dark cell eating steamed buns

A word from the hadith as a gift

If Allah gives you ill fortune in your destiny

All humanity cannot take that bad thing from you

If Allah gives you one good deed

All humanity cannot take that away from you

So be careful or they will arrest you.

Sound, experience, and community

Some of the most interesting and disturbing material is to be found in audio files and links shared by a labourer in his early 20s from the rural south (A). Many of the ways that religious experiences and ideologies are shared are not text-based – often the most powerful mediated religious experiences come through images and sound. Charles Hirschkind (2012), writing on sermon audition on YouTube argues that the forms of religious imagery and vocal performance accessed by Muslims on the internet shape new forms of religious sociality and impact upon religious structures of affect. Dorothea Schulz, writing on charismatic sheikhs in

Mali, West Africa, focuses our attention on sound, arguing that media technologies that privilege the experience of sound, address and simultaneously create communities of joint spiritual experience.

The specific capacities of particular media technologies to translate religious experience come out clearly in the ways many listeners comment on their listening experiences. For instance, they often liken the swiftness and immediacy of the sound of the spoken word to the sense of being bound tightly together and to the intimate atmosphere they experience during collective worship. (Schulz 2006: 220)

Some of the items he shares display a strongly nationalist form of Islam. One, a link shared in June 2013, is an audio file of a Uyghur language sermon delivered by a youthful, educated male voice. The recording is heavy with reverb, a recording style that indexes radical Islamic sermons from Saudi Arabia to Afghanistan (Frishkopf 2009). This sermon was definitely not recorded in a Xinjiang mosque. It links the nation's oppression at the hands of an atheist Communist regime directly to a national failure to follow 'correct' Islamic practice. The speaker's primary target in terms of 'incorrect' practice is Sufism. The problem of women's modesty is also a key feature in the list of failures of the Uyghur nation.

Sermon (Teblich)²

² The audio file can be accessed here:
http://www.soundislamchina.org/av/Jihad_tablikh.mp3.

... If any nation abandons Allah, he will abandon them. The families who abandon Allah will never receive help, but Satan will follow them. If you are wasteful (*israpkhor*), invaders will come to you and make you slaves, enemies will come and kill you. There will be rumours (*pitni - pasat*), and no decency in society, only prostitution, drinking, gambling, songs and music everywhere, and will bind the whole nation in chains. They will burn in hell after they day. If you believe, Allah will give you courage; he will make you fly in the sky. If he wishes, he will bring the flood and destroy you, just like the tsunami in Malaysia, or like the hurricanes in America.

If great Allah wishes, if people don't follow his way, he will bring an oppressive regime upon you, just as the Uyghurs now suffer. If people forget Allah, he can punish them in this life, and open the doors of hell. On the Day of Judgement Allah will open the doors of hell to the nation who forgets him. Allah will punish the nation who does not follow him. If he likes you then he will tell you that he is punishing you. If he does not love you then he will not tell you, and you will not understand you are being punished, just like us. We are under Allah's punishment now. We are like slaves under the oppressive (*zalim*) Communist regime. When will this nation wake up and open its eyes and hold the holy book in their hands, and restore their decency? When will they have hope (*wijdan*)? When will our girls protect their modesty (*ipet numus*)? Only then will great Allah will give our nation victory.

Allah said, if you are a good Muslim, he will give you everything you want. He promises you victory. Allah cannot easily change a nation's fate, but they oppress themselves. Even though there is a right way to believe, we followed feudalism, Sufism

and dervishes, and did not follow proper Islam. And so we brought this on ourselves, and Allah is punishing us today. He made those oppressive, disgusting, inhuman rulers to control us. If Uyghur Muslims do not stand up against them and expel them from our holy land, then this atheist regime will destroy our religion and drive us from our motherland. They will take away our consciousness, our pride, everything; everything that we badly need now...

Other items suggest a very different kind of Islam. Another link shared by A, titled 'ghost sermon', linked to an hour-long audio file, which had been accessed by over 280,000 users. It is an amateur, mobile phone recording of a group of young men who appear to be visiting a holy woman, a village *bakhshi* who seems to have the reputation of having met with the spirit of a prophet. The men can first be heard approaching her and asking for religious instruction. She scolds them in a high-pitched, increasingly excited voice. The men respond to her highly charged preaching with emotional exclamations:

Ghost Sermon (Jin Tebligh)³

You are simple-minded! You can never understand this. Allah only gives this to a few people. There is a hadith about it. You are so stupid. How can you ask if I met a prophet or not? Do you have faith? ... How dare you ask this? ... When Allah likes someone he gives that chance to them. How can I reveal this to you? ... Ask forgiveness from Allah. You are close to being an unbeliever (*kafir*) ...

³ The audio file can be accessed here: http://www.soundislamchina.org/av/Jin_tablikh.mp3.

I will tell you one miracle. That girl over there is Hayrinisa. She can only speak with her husband, not with anyone else. She can talk to women but not to any man. That is Allah's miracle. [Men's voices: Ya Allah! Ya rabi!] She is dumb. She can only talk to her husband, not to other man. You must all follow Allah. You have committed many sins. You must pray. Allah sent the prophet to guide you. Have you followed Allah's way? Why do you fight each other? [Men cry, 'Allah!']

You are full of sin. Look at Hayrinisa, she can't talk to men. Now so many ghosts have accepted Islam, and what are you doing? Fighting? Making money? You can't take it to the grave. You must look after your wife. Don't let her go to the bazaar alone. Allah didn't create you to make money. He created you to pray. Allah gave you a great chance bringing you to this place to change your lives. Cry some more. Cry more. Tell your sins to Allah. Allah created this day for us to meet [Ya Allah!] You will never see me again [men sobbing, 'Bismillah, Ya Allah!'] Allah gave you eyes to see, ears to hear, faces to love each other, why are you doing stupid things? You can speak, walk, and use your brains. Fear your shoes! On the Day of Judgement they will bear witness to all the places you have been. Don't argue with each other. Allah doesn't like it. This is not the way of Islam. ...

Although her words provide a far less rational statement of ideology than the previous example, they evidently provide these young men with a powerful, cathartic experience of faith. This was the most widely shared audio link that we found, suggesting that items like this deserve to be taken as seriously as the more easily assimilated religious rationalism of the previous sermon. Examples like this impel us to pay attention to the affective power of the voice, and the particularities of the mediated voice. Schulz argues that speech and voice have

a special potential for mobilizing people's agentive and affective faculties. Voice and speech are considered (by people in Mali) to "touch" listeners in a way that is physically experienced, and thereby to move individuals from an attitude of passivity to action (Schulz 2012). Such views attest to and are inseparable from the wider Islamic culture of orality, centred on recitation of the Qur'an (Nelson), and the virtues of listening (Hirschkind 2006). They also impel us to focus on the sound qualities of particular media forms: audio files shared on smartphone, just like the earlier popular audio forms of cassette tapes, are particularly good at transmitting charisma because they help focus attention on the voice. The typically poor sound quality of these audio files – recorded by individuals on their phones, uploaded and shared – means that they are also good at signifying authenticity, conveying the urgency and affective impact of a charged moment of experience, caught and frozen in time and shared.

Another link, shared in May 2013, holds another emotionally charged audio file containing a 'letter to my mother'. This is an audio version of a much more professionally produced video that was also circulating amongst the Uyghur diaspora on various media platforms including Facebook and YouTube, and which we believe was made by Uyghurs abroad. It portrays a young Uyghur man writing to his mother to explain why he has joined the mujahidin. This audio file was shared by large numbers of young people within Xinjiang. The file features a young male voice, again heavy with reverb, speaking directly to his mother, followed by a simple but very musical 'tune' sung by the same young man. With its repeated falling riff and echoing voice providing a counterpoint, in melodic style it is linked to the transnational sound world of Islamic nasheed. It is unaccompanied – a solo male voice plus echo – so Islamically speaking 'not music', and religiously permissible.

Letter to my mother (*Anamgha yezilghan xet*)⁴

Spoken: In order to fulfil my obligation to Allah to protect his religion, I have betrayed you by leaving you. I will probably be accepted and martyred, please forgive me, but I am sure we will meet in heaven. Dear mother of a mujahidin, you are not alone. So many mothers have now sent their sons to the front line and they are praying for us. Never feel regret. This is not a real separation. The real separation is the choice between heaven and hell. You made us men. To protect the dignity of our mothers and sisters, to kill the unbelievers, we choose this way. With this letter I ask for consent from the mothers who send their sons to jihad.

Sung:

If someone says you can live 100 years like a rabbit,
I reply I am happy to live one day like a tiger.
Please mother, understand your son is now a mujahid,
I should be brave in spirit.
The rocks and stones will be my blanket.
As long as I live I will continue to do jihad.
Pray to Allah for us.
I will be happy to die on the battlefield as a mujahid.
Maybe some day you will hear a quiet voice.
If that voice says your son has died,
Mother, then your son is living joyfully in heaven.
Never doubt that the martyrs
Will find joy in heaven.

⁴ The audio file can be accessed here:

http://www.soundislamchina.org/av/Anamgha_yezilghan_xet.mp3.

Such examples demonstrate that transnational ‘jihad culture’ is being translated and distributed on Uyghur social networks. Traditional nasheed – sung poetry praising Allah – have a long history, and established recording industries across the Middle East and South East Asia cater to a significant sub-culture who consume them (Pieslak 2009; Rasmussen 2010). The sub-genre of political or ‘jihadi’ nasheed can be traced back to the late 1970s and early 1980s, a period of violent struggle between Islamists and governments in Syria and Egypt. The Islamists in Egypt criticized the mainstream media for its immoral content and depicted it as part of a campaign against Islam, and nasheed formed an important aspect of their cultural counter-offensive (Said 2012: 865). A pamphlet titled “44 Ways to Support Jihad”, written by the Islamist theorist Anwar al-Awlaqi, states:

... A good Naschid can spread so widely it can reach to an audience that you could not reach through a lecture or a book. Naschids are especially inspiring to the youth, who are the foundation of Jihad in every age and time. Naschids are an important element in creating a “Jihad culture.” (translated in Said 2012: 863)

Yusuf al-Qaradawi, considered as one of the leading “poets of the Islamic da’wa”, published a book on music and Islam in 2001. In it he distinguishes between secular and religious singing and considers nasheed permissible because they encourage “the decidedness of the heroes for Jihad and war and incite to cohesiveness towards the martyrdom” (Said 2012: 870).

Such nasheed are also commonly used as soundtracks for videos produced by Hamas, Fateh

and Hizbolla in the context of the Palestinian struggle. They are also used by ISIL in videos which depict ISIL victories in battle or the killing of hostages (Pieslak 2009). It is noteworthy that the video accompanying this nasheed, which circulated Uyghur diasporic online networks in 2012-13, instead depicts Chinese state violence against Uyghurs, featuring footage of the 2009 riots and subsequent police crackdown. In terms of performance style, this Uyghur recording is closest in to the audio recordings of sung poetry called tarana which have been circulated by the Taliban since the 1990s (Baily 2001), first by cassette and more recently by smartphones, and used to glorify the mujahidin and promote the necessity for jihad. Thomas Johnson notes how Taliban tarana draw on and manipulate cultural identifiers, historical memories and familiar icons to present their message to target audiences. Their repetitive musical refrains drive home these forms of cultural intimacy with affective force (Johnson 2011: 26-7).

State response

By early August 2014, most of the profiled individuals were sharing messages about the new security crackdown on social media. This crackdown included – in rural areas but not in Urumchi – regular checks of people’s smartphones as they passed through police checkpoints. It is striking given the presumed high-tech capabilities of the Chinese state, that the crackdown took this most primitive, hands-on form. ‘D’ posted on her circle a warning of the danger of arrest if the police discovered an illegal app on your phone, and helpfully provided a list of illegal apps. ‘Please spread this message’, she wrote, ‘and avoid trouble for yourselves’. Another young man (B), an IT worker from the rural south, posted this message in August 2014, and like many other smartphone users, deleted all the Islamic media from his profile in response to the crackdown.

All friends and colleagues please read:

If any of you have Islamic words or images on your WeChat profile, please forgive me if I remove you from my friendship list. I am currently having a lot of problems. I travel a lot, and I am constantly being checked (*tekshurlimen*). I don't want to cause trouble for you.

Conclusions

Of course, WeChat is not the problem. The religious ideologies spread by smartphone are not the cause of social and religious change in Uyghur society, but are a symptom of these changes. This highly flexible form of social media enabled a brief window in time when we were able to sit outside Xinjiang and listen in on very open conversations about life, religion and politics, giving us a unique snapshot of the changing face of Islam in Uyghur society. The crackdown will not stop these conversations but can only shift them into a different forum.

In terms of religious and ideological stance the material that we have surveyed on We Chat is diverse, revealing a range of different religious sensibilities. This runs from the overtly nationalist, intellectual style of political Islam, linking the failure of the Uyghur nation to follow 'correct' forms of Islam to their oppression by a Communist regime. This contrasts with the miracle-laden, emotive discourse of a folk preacher who promotes piety and especially women's modesty; and finally a sung nasheed, which seeks to create a powerful, intimate empathetic bond between the listener and an imagined mujahidin. It is not

appropriate to label the whole of this diverse discourse as extremist Islamist propaganda that has infiltrated from abroad. As Johan Rasanayagum argues in his introduction to a special issue on Islam in post-Soviet Central Asia, it is important to acknowledge the diversity of interpretation within a particular society, as well as taking account of the linkages between local Muslims and ideas and trends circulating outside the local context. Islam should be understood as a discursive tradition that seeks to define the correct form and meaning of religious practice, and scholars should focus on the processes and struggles through which local actors themselves attempt to define what constitutes true Islam and a good Muslim (Rasanayagum 2006: 225).

Clearly this material is coming from multiple sources. Much of it is entirely apolitical, and most of it is locally produced. Almost all of the material is produced by Uyghurs for Uyghurs, and it directly references local concerns. There are a few references to Muslims in other parts of the world by the more highly educated, cosmopolitan individuals – to Gaza, to the UK Prime Minister David Cameron’s 2014 Ramadan address, an Islamic song by a well-known Arab singer – but for the most part the focus is inwards. The most radical, most oppositional items are being shared by the youngest and least well-educated individual in our sample, ie the most marginalised, the one with least to lose.

It is crucial to consider what makes this kind of material so popular, and why it was circulating so widely. By listening to and sharing these media items, people experience a form of cultural intimacy in powerfully affective ways. The listening experience is at once personal, intimate and secret, and also public, collectively shared. Together they produce a sense of crisis – one personally and collectively experienced – to which Islam, in different

forms, provides a solution through personal and collective transformation. A common theme running through much of the material relates Islam to the question of national survival.

Repeatedly we find the twin arguments that only by becoming true Muslims can Uyghurs withstand oppressive and assimilative rule, and only by becoming true Muslims can Uyghurs counter damaging tendencies in society like drug abuse, alcoholism, fraud and prostitution, since these immoral acts that spring from living in a non-Muslim society.

Secondly, there is ample evidence in the material surveyed to suggest that the current crackdown on religious extremism, with the imposition of a range of tight restrictions on normal religious practice including prayer, teaching, and fasting, and through the current high levels of surveillance, harassment and frequent recourse to violence by the police, far from addressing the root causes of the spread of radical Islam, is increasing the sense of injustice and discrimination experienced by many Uyghurs, thus exacerbating the problem it purports to solve. In this way, the region has entered a cycle of escalating violence and increasing religiosity from which it may be hard to extricate.

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