

FOOD, MARRIAGE, AND ACTIVISM:
ANALYZING ISSUES OF IDENTITY
RELEVANT TO THE COMMUNITY
OF DIASPORIC UYGHURS
IN PAKISTAN

by

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Presented to the Faculty of the International Institute of
The University of Michigan – Ann Arbor in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL STUDIES
(CHINESE SPECIALIZATION)

Completed Under the Faculty Membership of
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THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN – ANN ARBOR

April 2023

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Abstract: Since the 1940s, Uyghurs have steadily migrated to Pakistan and established communities there. However, due to Pakistan's close relationship to China, Uyghur life in Pakistan is increasingly threatened by Pakistani statesmen who, on Chinese orders, repress expressions of Uyghur culture and identity while further assisting China in arresting and deporting Uyghurs who China may deem problematic. Few academics have explored this subject matter, and even fewer have analyzed Pakistani Uyghurs through diaspora studies theories. This thesis intends to accomplish two items: to elucidate the historical and contemporary realities that Pakistani Uyghurs deal with in the arenas of religious expression, food culture, marriage patterns, and diaspora diplomacy; and to introduce a paradigm between forced and stateless diasporas that then enables an understanding of how political violence, nostalgia, and the resolve to survive all shape a diaspora's identity and behavior outside of the homeland. It is necessary to discuss Pakistani Uyghurs in the context of this paradigm and diaspora studies overall because doing so enables a more nuanced understanding of how Uyghur identity and actions differ in and outside the homeland, as a non-diaspora and as a diaspora.

Nestled inside a concrete building near Pakistan's capital city of Islamabad, an Uyghur man named Umer Mohammed Khan stood before a small crowd of students. "Children," Khan said in Urdu, tapping on a laminated poster of the Id Kah Mosque. "Today I'll tell you about this place. It's a historic mosque for Uyghurs. Right? [...] This historic building belongs to our ancestors." Shifting to another section of the room where colorful clothes were carefully pinned to the wall, Khan pointed toward a rounded skullcap. "This is our cap. All of you are familiar

with it. This cap exhibits our culture. What is culture? Culture is our identity. [...] Now, whenever we wear this, what will [we] be known as?” Dutifully, the children answered in unison: “Uyghurs!”¹

For the last two decades, Khan has operated this makeshift school to service Pakistan’s steadily growing Uyghur population. He caters to concerned Uyghur parents who, after successfully escaping Xinjiang, struggle to keep their children attached to their heritage while they build homes on foreign soil. Thus, more than two thousand kilometers away, Khan educates these children about their Uyghu identity and culture, relying upon Urdu as their primary language of communication because the children are unable to speak Uyghur as well as their parents. Much of the children’s education orbits around teaching Uyghur children the fundamentals of their clothing, their history, and key landmarks in Xinjiang – teaching them, because they are unable to live and experience it for themselves.²

The origins of the ongoing Xinjiang conflict date back before the twentieth century, but the contours of current tensions began in 1949 when the newly-established People’s Republic of China incorporated Xinjiang into the state. Chinese statesmen then grappled with the quandary of unifying the Chinese people – most ethnically Han – with Xinjiang’s significant Uyghur population, a task made all the more difficult by the chasm of linguistic, cultural, and religious differences between the two groups. As their efforts to secure social control increasingly relied upon repressing Uyghur rights and cultural expression, more Uyghurs attempted to flee the state. Many migrated to Turkey, where a shared ethnic background provided a sense of comfort and

¹ VICE News, “Uyghurs Who Fled China Now Face Repression in Pakistan,” *YouTube* video, 21:32, March 3, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RrpLEOQMnE>.

² This exchange between Khan and the schoolchildren took place sometime before 2021, and occurred in the presence of American journalists.

stability. Many fled to America, where the loudly promoted ideals of democracy, freedom, and justice lent an air of political security and physical safety. And then many others, such as Khan and the parents of his students, trekked toward nearby pastures – such as, Pakistan, located just south of Xinjiang.

Pakistan should serve as an ideal state for Uyghurs to take refuge. Not only is it geographically easy to reach, but its official name, after all, is the “the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.” Most Uyghurs identify as Muslim, and with much of Chinese persecution bent on curtailing the practice and pronouncement of their religious faith, Pakistan’s self-declaration as a Muslim state should provide Uyghurs with the freedom to fearlessly and openly observe Islam. In reality, however, life in Pakistan presents a variety of dilemmas for the Uyghur community, some of which are similar to what Uyghurs face in China and some of which are wholly unique.

Pakistan and China share a deep historic diplomatic friendship, one that a former Pakistani prime minister has gone so far as to describe as “higher than Himalayas, deeper than ocean, sweeter than honey, and stronger than steel.”³ Pakistani statesmen consistently place a higher priority on maintaining this relationship with China over supplying Uyghurs a safe and secure space. To this end, Uyghurs such as Khan have faced violent intimidation from Pakistani police forces. In 2015, for example, Khan witnessed officers charge into his school and destroy valuable teaching tools, including language textbooks and computers. While Uyghurs like Khan persist, continuing to gather as a community and nourish their cultural roots, Pakistan’s willingness to carry out China’s will and suppress Uyghurs – even deport them back to China, where they often face charges of separatism and are placed inside brutal reeducation camps –

³ This quote is attributed to Yusuf Raza Gilani, who served as Pakistan’s Prime Minister from 2008 to 2012.

efficiently demonstrates how the theoretically perfect host state can instead be an extension of the same dangers that had initially caused the diaspora to leave the homeland.

Despite a presence that dates back to the 1940s, Pakistan's Uyghur population and the issues of identity, culture, and politics that swirl around them have thus far been largely unexplored by academics. Examining the Uyghur diaspora through accounts such as that of the teacher-activist Khan enables a more nuanced understanding of the grim reality of the Xinjiang conflict, especially how this discord spills over borders and violently entangles different communities. Aside from demonstrating Chinese willingness to surveil and police Uyghurs outside China, investigating Pakistani Uyghurs' lives further provides an opportunity to scrutinize how ideas of religious solidarity, ethnic divisions, and cultural belonging can exist within a Pakistani context.

Most critically, however, Pakistani Uyghurs can serve as a fruitful case study for diaspora studies. When perceived through a paradigm that categorizes all diasporas as either stateless or forced, Pakistani Uyghurs illustrate how both material and intangible conditions affect the formation of diasporic identities and behaviors within the host state. This paradigm reveals how political violence, nostalgia, and the resolve to survive influence, if not dictate, Pakistani Uyghur identity and actions within the spheres of religion, restaurants, marriage, and activism. To understand the scope of this argument, as well as the nature of this paradigm and where Pakistani Uyghurs fit within it, it is necessary to outline the current state of diaspora studies, starting first with defining what constitutes *home*.

Interpreting Home, Homeland, and Diaspora

While broadly exploring ideas of community and belonging, anthropologist Dorinne Kondo discussed the complexity surrounding the word *home*. When reduced to its essentials, “home” is shorthand for a safe place, a haven where people find comfort and security. When analyzed in usage, “home” evokes a sense of nostalgia for a specific time and space wherein people feel most at ease, most empowered, and unconcerned about the differences between themselves and others. When examining the realities of the term, it is quickly apparent that for many “home” is more fiction than not – a site where marginalized members of society (including, but not limited to, gays and lesbians, women and children, those with physical or mental disabilities) experience varying degrees of abuse, violence, and oppression. *Home* is ultimately a term ensconced in conflicting narratives of power and impotence, of sentimentality and dread, and of the inevitable, impossible desire for a particular place where everything is as it should be.⁴

In contrast, political philosopher Hannah Arendt has identified the home as a space that is intangible. Home was never a physical location at all, as Kondo’s definition suggests, but life itself. To have lost one’s home, Arendt has written, is to have lost “the familiarity of daily life [...] [one’s] occupation, which means the confidence that [one is] of some use in this world [...] [one’s] language, which means the naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of gestures, the unaffected expression of feelings.”⁵ Home, then, is assurance of community, family, and identity. It is the constant knowledge, certainty, and joy of knowing who one is and where they belong. To

⁴ Dorinne Kondo, “THE NARRATIVE PRODUCTION OF “HOME,” COMMUNITY, AND POLITICAL IDENTITY IN ASIAN AMERICAN THEATER,” in *Displacement, Diaspora, and Geographies of Identity*, eds. Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 97-98; Sonia Ryang, “The North Korean Homeland of Koreans in Japan,” in *Koreans in Japan: Critical Voices from the Margin*, ed. Sonia Ryang (Milton Park: Routledge, 2000), 47-49.

⁵ Hannah Arendt, “We Refugees,” *The Menorah Journal*, (1943): 264.

lose that singular home and that social texture through displacement and to witness one's home ripped away through natural changes or intense violence leads to a state of precariousness that is physically, mentally, and emotionally disorienting.⁶

Political scientist Nicholas Xenos has expanded upon Arendt's notion of home as not a palpable space but a tightly woven blanket of civic life, and he has connected it to ideas of the *homeland*. He transitions from examining the individual to examining the community, and then the nation itself, wherein the homeland exists as a static space. It is a space that, simultaneously, is both real and imagined. It is a space that pre-exists the nation but was also the nation's own creation. It is where the home – Kondo's exclusive safe place, Arendt's way of life – exists, and it is where the nation resides. When removed from that homeland, the nation yearns to return to the homeland or, if that is unattainable, to fashion the new home into one identical in character to the one that was lost. Homelessness, then, is when the nation is forced to accept the humiliating reality that this dream of returning home to the homeland is not just an incredibly draining task, but an impossible one as well.⁷

Anthropologist Sonia Ryang has distinguished between the home and the homeland, fixating on the different dynamics that the nation has with each. Returning to Kondo's idea of home as one that is largely physical if heavily sustained by intangible emotional attachments, Ryang delineates the home as where one grows up. It is the homeland that contains what Arendt describes as a particular style of living, and it is the homeland that the nation continually desires even as it adjusts, generation by generation, to a new home elsewhere. Eventually, this new home becomes, for all practical purposes, simply home itself. As memories of the homeland (where

⁶ Ryang, "The North Korean Homeland," 47-49; Arendt, "We Refugees."

⁷ Nicholas Xenos, "Refugees: The Modern Political Condition," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 18, no. 4 (1993): 427-428; Ryang, "The North Korean Homeland," 47-49.

echoes of the old home reside either corporally, incorporeally, or both) burn long and intense, the nation wavers between resisting the reality of possible homelessness and embracing the future of living in a home that is distinct from what is remembered or desired.⁸

Amid these efforts to demarcate *home* and *homeland*, the *diaspora* is defined. Sociologist Stéphane Dufoix has explained that the term evolved in the centuries to refer to the Jewish history and theological understanding of banishment, with scholars having funneled the term through different religious, political, and cultural frameworks to gain new understandings. Contemporary scholars, as Dufoix has written, generally operate around two different definitions of diaspora. In the first definition, a diaspora is a political group with a history of migration or exile. The group holds strong dreams of returning to the homeland, as demonstrated by their continued usage of languages and traditions. Alternatively, in the second definition, a diaspora is a cultural group. It is characterized less by a desire to return home than by a jubilant attitude toward living. It invents new customs instead of merely surviving and taking a sunk-cost fallacy approach to maintaining the old ways.⁹

Scholar Bibi Bakare-Yusuf has used Dufoix's historical approach to diaspora and has extended it through a specific focus on the diasporic body as an embodied subject that is forever situated within the context of history. Rather than keep her analysis wholly somatic,

⁸ Sonia Ryang, "Introduction: Between the Nations: Diaspora and Koreans in Japan," in *Diaspora without Homeland: Being Korean in Japan*, eds. Sonia Ryang and John Lie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 3; Ryang, "The North Korean Homeland," 47-49.

⁹ Stéphane Dufoix, "The Loss and the Link: A Short History of the Long-Term Word 'Diaspora'," in *Diasporas Reimagined: Spaces, Practices and Belonging*, eds. Nando Sigona, Alan Gamlen, Giulia Liberatore, and Hélène Neveu Kringelbach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 8-11; Stéphane Dufoix, "Diaspora before it became a concept," in *Routledge Handbook of Diaspora Studies*, eds. Robin Cohen and Carolin Fischer (Milton Park: Routledge, 2018), 13-14, 17-20; Jonathan Grossman, "Toward a definition of diaspora," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42, no. 8 (2019): 1264-1265; Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth, "Diasporas and international relations theory," *International Organization* 57, no. 3 (2003): 452; James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (1994): 304-306.

Bakare-Yusuf's thesis is linchpinned around the notion that the diasporic mind is itself an ever-changing product of the past and present by continually engaging with classical cultural habits while creating new ways of living. Incorporating Dufoix's secondary division of diaspora into a cultural group and Ryang's synthesis of Kondo and Arendt's ideas of home and homeland, Bakare-Yusuf argues that through leaving the old home (the homeland) and arriving in the new home (the host state), the diaspora creates an entirely new body for itself, one with new traditions and new identities.¹⁰

While similar to Arendt's description of losing home, Bakare-Yusuf's understanding of diaspora as a body in constant flux is not only much more positive about moving on and healing from the loss of home, but it is almost celebratory. Through the grief and trauma of the oft-unresolved violence endured through being physically and emotionally uprooted, an opportunity emerges for the diaspora to reinvent and radically transform itself into something new, into something that is energized by interactions with the new home while still existing in continuity with the old home. This process is painful and irreversible, but nonetheless there remains the potential for the diaspora to experience genuine joy in becoming someone new whilst yearning for the old serves as a necessary anchor to the past, present, and future.¹¹

Stateless and Forced

With this background, it is possible to establish an imperfect but functional paradigm for categorizing diaspora: *stateless* and *forced*. As implied by the words themselves, stateless diasporas are those whose homelands lack sovereignty. Forced diasporas are those who were removed from the homeland through instances of war, invasion, or other events. Despite the

¹⁰ Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, "Rethinking diasporicity: embodiment, emotion, and the displaced origin," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 1, no. 2 (2008): 148-151.

¹¹ Bakare-Yusuf, "Rethinking diasporicity," 151-156.

overlapping realities (e.g., a diaspora can be simultaneously stateless and forced) and slight exclusivity (e.g., a diaspora can be neither stateless nor forced) of this paradigm, this division of diaspora remains useful for synthesizing dominant ideas in diaspora studies. It acknowledges, for instance, that the distinction between Dofoix's two definitions of diaspora as cultural or political are greatly blurred. Diasporas can and do reflect both definitions, as posited by Bakare-Yusuf. A diaspora's contemporary identity and behavior will remain inscrutable unless historical narratives are also included. The diaspora, as Bakare-Yusuf argues, is a product of the transformation that occurs when memories of the homeland collide with the materiality of the host state.¹²

This paradigm helps to realize that aside from the historical narratives underpinning this collision and transformation, three other factors shape identity and behavior within the host state: political violence, nostalgia, and the resolve to survive. As mentioned, Bakare-Yusuf concentrates on the diasporic *body* and how diasporas biologically inherit these histories via intergenerational traumas.¹³ To tread beyond the initial scope of Bakare-Yusuf's argument, this paradigm intends to loosely categorize diasporas by historical narratives and contemporary situations to determine just what transformations have occurred and how the diasporic body has changed since leaving the homeland. In particular, by using the context in which groups leave the

¹² Julie Peteet, "Problematizing a Palestinian Diaspora," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39, no. 4 (2007): 627-629; T. J. Demos, "Desire in Diaspora: Emily Jacir," *Art Journal* 62, no. 4 (2003): 72; Paul Conrad, *The Apache Diaspora: Four Centuries of Displacement and Survival* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021), 80-83, 94, 108, 210, 229, 239, 287-290; Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 148-154.

¹³ Bakare-Yusuf's analysis here bears striking familiarity with the concept of *postmemory*, which was conceived by the academic Marianne Hirsch to describe how trauma is passed down from generation to generation, with the first generation clutching crystal-clear memories of trauma while the second generation holds onto a *postmemory*, a memory not of the traumatic event itself but a memory of how that trauma affected the first generation so deeply. While this thesis does not directly use the term *postmemory*, it touches on similar ideas and themes throughout.

homeland and become diasporas as the focal point, this paradigm can efficiently pinpoint the factors that most influence the diaspora's activities inside the host state.

Dividing diasporas into stateless and forced categories, for example, helps to determine the intensity and influence of *political violence* on the diaspora. The term is used here in a literal sense to refer to any and all violence committed under the backdrop of a political agenda. For example, the violence that rendered Uyghurs a forced diaspora was political violence because Chinese statesmen had political goals of national unity and security when they repressed Uyghur identity and cultural expression. For forced diasporas such as the Uyghurs, political violence could play a greater role in shaping their existence than for stateless diasporas because forced diasporas are, by definition, a product of violent removal from the homeland.

Nostalgia references the enduring desire to return to the home of one's memories. Stateless and forced diasporas may differ in their yearning for the homeland, with the latter possibly more aggrieved than the former due to the violence surrounding the context of their departure. This grief could lead to an increased nostalgia for the safe life of before. For example, to return to an earlier tableau, Khan's decision to pin clothes and pictures of the Uyghur homeland to his cement walls demonstrates an intense nostalgia for the old home, with this longing amplified by Khan's inability to return home and physically show his students their culture and identity existing as is.

The *resolve to survive* speaks to the diaspora's interest in maintaining or pruning their cultural roots.¹⁴ This factor is distinguished less so by the initial paradigm of stateless or forced

¹⁴ This variable is loosely adapted from *survivance*, a critical framework that originated from Native American studies. Introduced in 1999 by academic Gerald Vizenor, the term is used to describe the active survival and resistance of Native American tribes in the face of centuries of genocidal colonial violence and direct rejection of victimization narratives. For more information about *survivance*, see *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* by Vizenor.

but more so by taking the two previous factors into consideration. A diaspora that faces intense political violence in the host state may abandon heritage and assimilate for the sake of survival. However, as exhibited by how Khan continued teaching despite state-sanctioned violence, the nostalgia for the homeland may override these fears of violent reprisals and instead escalate the diaspora's resolve. With all three factors, this paradigm's aim is not to firmly state that stateless diasporas are more likely to experience political violence or vice versa. Rather, the goal is to categorize the diaspora's history as stateless or forced and then determine how these factors exist within said history while continuing to influence present-day conditions in the host state.

This paradigm provides a basis for analyzing how diasporic identities are expressed through avenues of food, marriage, and diplomacy, using Pakistani Uyghurs as a case study. While Uyghurs have been described as a forced diaspora, in reality they do not fit neatly within this paradigm. They may also be considered a stateless diaspora because their homeland is under control of the Chinese state. In complicating this binary division, Pakistani Uyghurs allow for a more dynamic approach to studying diasporas, especially in examining how different political and cultural realities affect identity development in the twenty-first century.

The second chapter will outline the basics of Uyghur history, culture, and identity. It will also focus upon Uyghur attachment to Islam as a key to their identity. Uyghurs are unable to express their faith to the level that local Pakistanis comfortably can because Chinese statesmen continue to surveil their communities beyond state borders. However, the nostalgic longing for a partially imagined historical homeland where Islam was practiced openly and freely without state interference persists. This commitment to surviving not just as Uyghurs but as Uyghur *Muslims* highlights how religion remains central to Pakistani Uyghurs' self-perception and activity while

further showcasing how, depending on what is at stake, Uyghurs may work past increasing political violence.

The third chapter examines the presence of Uyghur cuisine within Pakistan's restaurant and overall food scene, concentrating on Uyghurs' increasing visibility within Pakistan and the correlating rise of public awareness of the Xinjiang conflict. While Chinese statesmen do work to limit Uyghurs' religious expression both inside and outside China, Uyghur cuisine is not policed to a similar extent. Despite concerns for procuring religiously "pure" food and becoming stereotypically attached to specific dishes, restaurants remain a key venue for Uyghurs to maintain their connection to the homeland without intense state persecution.

The fourth chapter then contrasts marriages between Pakistani men and Uyghur women with marriages between Han men and Uyghur women. Although both unions are inter-ethnic and culturally undesirable, the former are deemed more acceptable than the latter due to their intra-religious nature. Returning to Uyghurs' enduring persistence to exist as Muslims, this chapter will analyze the roots and realities of Uyghurs' religion-based nostalgia and resolve. Chinese statesmen, despite encouraging Han-Uyghur unions, threaten the security of Pakistani-Uyghur unions because they, like Uyghurs themselves, recognize the centrality of Islam in Uyghur identity and Uyghur willingness to compromise ethnic purity for religious purity.

Finally, the fifth chapter analyzes Pakistani Uyghurs through the specific lens of diaspora diplomacy. Building off of the previous chapters, this chapter will discuss how and why Uyghurs attempt to build awareness of the Xinjiang conflict within the Pakistani public. In particular, it

will focus upon Pakistani-Uyghur marriages by analyzing the mobilization of Pakistani husbands when their Uyghur wives and children are detained by the Chinese state.

It is impossible to think of diasporas existing in host states as if they were directly translated, word-by-word, from the homeland. Uyghurs in Pakistan and the global Uyghur diaspora as a whole demonstrate how diasporas are not one-to-one translations of the homeland, but rather fragmented interpretations of the homeland that are further splintered by fear, desire, and other emotions. These interpretations then further lose accuracy to the original homeland when the diaspora's subsistence on memories as opposed to immediate, physical connections is compounded by political violence, nostalgia, and the resolve to survive. Bakare-Yusuf's efforts to think somatically about the diaspora remain largely undiscussed by the bulk of diaspora studies, but as demonstrated by the paradigm articulated herein, it is worth examining how the diasporic mind and body is fundamentally changed and transformed in the process of leaving the homeland and resettling elsewhere.

CHAPTER 2: RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION

Abstract: This chapter details the overarching history and fundamentals of Uyghur culture and identity as it has existed in the Xinjiang homeland and within the Chinese context. Specifically, it highlights the significance of the Islamic faith in shaping Uyghur identity and everyday behavior both inside and outside of Xinjiang – Uyghurs carry an intense nostalgia for a partially-imagined historic Islamic homeland wherein they could exist not just as Uyghurs, but as Uyghur Muslims. Despite the centrality with which Uyghurs consider being a Muslim to be toward their identity, the political violence they experience in and out of China to suppress their religious identity requires them to negotiate their nostalgia with the necessity of deemphasizing Islamic faith so that they may survive as Uyghurs. Yet because Uyghurs consider being Uyghur as synonymous with being Muslim, this necessity causes extraordinary tension and heartache. Discussing religious expression in the context of diaspora studies reveals how Uyghurs intensify public pronouncement and practice of Islam as a diaspora than within the homeland even when they face similar repercussions because they believe that, as a diaspora, they can and should practice Islam as thoroughly as possible to remain connected with the homeland and to keep their identity alive.

Over the past few decades, Uyghurs fleeing the intensifying violence of their homeland have carved out a secondary home in Turkey. Aside from a shared Turkish ethnicity and culture, Turkey's constitution guarantees Uyghurs permission to openly practice their faith without inhibitions. This ability to freely express religious faith is critical to the preservation and maintenance of Uyghur identity, as explained in 2022 by Mahmoud Mohammed. An Uyghur

man who serves as an *imam*¹⁵ for a suburban neighborhood near Istanbul, Mohammed argues that “throughout Uyghur history, religion is always the shield to protect identity, [and] the ones who have strong religious beliefs also have a strong ethnic identity.”¹⁶

Mohammed’s words establish the critical role that the Islamic faith plays in defining both historical and modern Uyghur identities. Ethnic and religious identity are so deeply intertwined that the less devout Uyghurs experience difficulty in determining where religion ends and their cultural and ethnic heritage begins. Islam serves as the basis for wide swath of cultural rituals, such as men’s practice of wearing skullcaps¹⁷, the avoidance of pork consumption, and the general gravitation towards modest¹⁸ clothing. The national flag of Xinjiang¹⁹ is composed of a crescent and star – two recognizably key symbols of Islamic aesthetics. Islam does not just shield Uyghur identity, it is so thoroughly woven into the fabric of everyday Uyghur life that being Uyghur is synonymous with being Muslim.²⁰

It is this corresponding relationship between religion and culture that Chinese statesmen are so determined to break. While Uyghurs are far from the only group within China to practice Islam, they are the largest non-Han Muslim community. Ethnically Han Muslims, known as the Hui²¹, enjoy relatively less restrictions to their religious faith. In 2014, while Uyghurs were

¹⁵ The Islamic term *imam* refers to someone who holds a leadership position within the Muslim community. Different sects of Islam define the details and qualifications of this position differently, but adherents to the Sunni sect – as most Uyghurs are – consider someone who leads everyday prayers to be an *imam*.

¹⁶ John Beck, “China is erasing their culture. In exile, Uyghurs remain defiant,” *National Geographic*, November 22, 2022, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/china-uyghurs-oppressed-exile-defiance-culture-preservation-istanbul-diaspora>.

¹⁷ In Uyghur, this hat is specifically called the *doppa*.

¹⁸ “Modest clothing” is popularly understood in the Islamic context to refer to loose-fitting clothes that conceal as much bare skin as possible.

¹⁹ Called the *kökbayraq* in Uyghur, this flag was created in 1933 and while it lacks international recognition, it is used in unofficial contexts as a cultural symbol.

²⁰ Beck, “China is erasing their culture,” 2022.

²¹ Officially, the Hui also encompasses non-Han ethnic groups that dominantly practice Islam, but most academic discourse focuses on just Han Muslims.

shuttled into re-education centers and coerced into abandoning principles of their faith, the Hui experienced no restrictions as they adopted more conservative Islamic habits such as the women's decision to veil their faces. Even as the Hui do face new pressures in the early 2020s to forgo adherence to religious rules such as the obligation to fast during the Islamic month of Ramadan, they remain capable of existing as Muslims without the same insecurity that constantly threatens Uyghurs. The difference between Uyghurs and the Hui boils down to their baseline ethnic and cultural distinctions, with the Hui generally seen as more in-line with Han culture due to a shared ethnicity despite divergences in faith. Uyghurs, in contrast, are visibly non-Han in ethnicity and culture, with their religiosity only amplifying these differences. Chinese statesmen are committed to stamping out Islam from Uyghur identity so that Han culture can fill the void.²²

Within this context, Uyghurs migrate to Pakistan. Just as Uyghurs equate being Uyghur to being Muslim, Islam informs the basis of Pakistan's society, government, and establishment itself. In the early twentieth century, South Asian statesmen proposed a partitioning of India on religious lines, arguing that the subcontinent's incredible ethnic diversity could still be unified around religious identity. Officially founded in 1947, Pakistan continues to see itself as a homeland for South Asian Muslims, wherein ethnic and cultural backgrounds are rendered insignificant because religiosity triumphs over both.²³ Uyghurs are not members of a South Asian

²² Hannah Beech, "If China Is Anti-Islam, Why Are These Chinese Muslims Enjoying a Faith Revival?" *Time*, August 12, 2014, <https://time.com/3099950/china-muslim-hui-xinjiang-uyghur-islam/>; James Jennion, "China's Repression of the Hui: A Slow Boil," *The Diplomat*, June 15, 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/06/chinas-repression-of-the-hui-a-slow-boil/>.

²³ This is a summary of the *two-nation theory* that forms the basis of Pakistan's existence. For more information, see *The Emergence of Pakistan* by former Pakistani Prime Minister Chaudhry Muhammad Ali.

ethnic group, but they are still Muslim, and thus, the potential to fashion Pakistan into a home away from the invaded homeland remains.

Yet Pakistani statesmen, acting on orders from Chinese statesmen, do place cumbersome and increasingly violent restrictions to Uyghurs practicing Islam within Pakistan. Uyghurs can freely practice their faith in the sense that they may pray regularly in mosques and fast during Ramadan without pushback, but attempts to become active religious leaders in the community can risk deportation back to China. Open cultural expressions, such as the establishment of ethnic schools, are also blocked. In sum, Uyghurs can exist openly as Muslims, but only at the cost of existing quietly as Uyghurs.

This balancing act demonstrates how diasporic identities can be ensconced in national narratives wherein history, culture, and religion are all thoroughly blended into each other. Uyghurs and Pakistanis both feel that Islam plays the same role in shaping their identity by assuming that a shared religious faith can be enough to eliminate dissimilarities. However, the political violence that Uyghurs face in China and Pakistan alike demonstrates how Uyghurs, by necessity, interpret and practice Islam differently. While culture and religion remain inseparable in the Uyghur context, Pakistani Uyghurs demonstrate how the two may be negotiated to ensure long-term survival of the nation and faith.

Living Inside China

Uyghurs are a Turkic ethnic group located in Xinjiang, a region in Central Asia that forms a significant block of China's northwestern front. Although Uyghurs treasure the ancestral connection between them and other Turkic ethnic groups, they recognize only Xinjiang as their homeland. Due to vast trade routes and the subsequent conversion of national rulers to Islam

during the fifteenth to seventeenth century, the vast majority of Uyghurs are Muslim. While there are sectarian splits, divergences in ideology, and variations in intensity of religious observance, Uyghurs are still broadly united through this shared faith.²⁴

In 1949, Chinese statesmen incorporated Xinjiang into the state through a takeover that historians would later dub "the Peaceful Liberation of Xinjiang." Although this wording attempted to dress the event as beneficial for all parties involved, in reality Chinese statesmen were flummoxed with how to subsume Uyghurs into the Han-majority Chinese nation. With the aim of building a cohesively unified state, statesmen gradually granted Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities special rights so as to provide them equal footing with the majority Han. Statesmen deemed Xinjiang an autonomous region in 1955, a move that did not translate to genuine political autonomy or self-rule, but did provide Uyghurs increased legislative rights. They could now, for instance, directly participate in their local government and suggest alternative policies that better suited the cultural realities of their community. However, though these policy measures granted Uyghurs the illusion of sovereignty, statesmen were not actually committed to granting them any genuine power. The end goal remained the same: to secure unity via state-wide adherence to a Han-based national identity while thoroughly dismantling the agency of ethnic minorities.²⁵

Starting in the 1950s, for instance, statesmen encouraged Han men to migrate to Xinjiang. They incentivized the move with promises of work and financial security, couching Han integration into Uyghur communities as a necessity for national unity and security. But to

²⁴ Gardner Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 199; Dru Gladney, *Dislocating China: Muslims, Minorities And Other Subaltern Subjects* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 11-20.

²⁵ Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 199; Gladney, *Dislocating China*, 11-20.

build houses in Xinjiang was not enough – statesmen further encouraged Han men to marry Uyghur women, making this prospect all the more attractive by providing “family benefits,” such as guaranteeing that any children born of this union would be given higher consideration during university applications. Just as well, inter-ethnic marriage was a soft blow against the Uyghur community. After all, it was not the Han who attempted to learn the language and culture of their spouses, but the Uyghurs. As Uyghur wives stumbled through conversations in Mandarin and abided by the Han sensibilities of their husbands, Chinese statesmen ensured that these women and their children were kept away from the allure of separatism and absorbed into Han culture until any trace of their Uyghur roots were nothing more than just that: a trace.²⁶

In 2014, this political violence directed toward Uyghurs escalated with the launch of President Xi Jinping’s “Strike Hard Campaign Against Violent Terrorism.” Designed with the lofty ambitions to fully resolve the Xinjiang conflict by eliminating the “three evils” of terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism, this campaign involves sending Uyghurs to euphemistically named “vocational training facilities.” Statesmen claim that through these facilities, Uyghurs can learn Mandarin and other basic skills that increase their employability within the Chinese economy. However, Uyghurs describe these facilities as shoddily-disguised internment camps wherein they face extreme physical and psychological torture until they openly renounce their ethnic and religious identity. In opening these institutions to house and re-educate Uyghurs into

²⁶ Nicolas Becquelin, “Xinjiang in the Nineties,” *The China Journal*, no. 44 (2000): 65, 74-76; Michael Clarke, “China’s “War on Terror” in Xinjiang: Human Security and the Causes of Violent Uighur Separatism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 2, no. 20 (2008): 76-78; Agnieszka Joniak-Lüthi, “Han Migration to Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region: Between State Schemes and Migrants’ Strategies,” *Zeitschrift Für Ethnologie* 2, no. 138 (2013): 155-157; James Milward, “Historical Perspectives on Contemporary Xinjiang,” *Inner Asia* 2, no. 2 (2000): 122.

loyal Han-adjacent citizens, Chinese statesmen have cultivated a social and political environment where Uyghurs feel little security to exist as Uyghur Muslims.²⁷

Within China, Uyghur identity is defined in terms of ethnic and religious difference by not just Uyghurs but the broader Chinese public as well. While the Hui are not counted as members of the Han, as mentioned, they are still permitted to openly practice key Islamic rituals without state interference. In contrast, Chinese statesmen curtail Uyghurs' religious freedoms because they view any and all religiosity among Uyghurs as evidence of developing ethnic consciousness and separatist sentiments. This gap in perception and policy reveals that though religious identification is a major marker of difference within Chinese society, ethnic differences severely intensify said marker of difference. Already distinct for their ethnicity, Uyghurs' unrestricted practice of Islam would only open the door to further dividing the Chinese nation on ethnic lines. State persecution, however, only increases Uyghurs' consideration of Islam as a chief aspect of their identity. As China's efforts to erase religious identity clashes with Uyghur efforts to maintain religious identity, the perception of Islam as fundamental to being Uyghur only grows in the eyes of Uyghurs and non-Uyghurs alike, both within and outside of China.

Migrating to Pakistan

Historically, Uyghurs have traveled frequently between Xinjiang and Pakistan. Aside from geographic proximity, passage through Pakistan is necessary for travelers wishing to complete *hajj*²⁸. Since Xinjiang's incorporation into China in 1949, many Uyghurs directly

²⁷ Christopher Cunningham, "Counterterrorism In Xinjiang: The Etim, China, And The Uyghurs," *International Journal on World Peace* 3, no. 29 (2012): 7-8, 15-16; Adrian Zenz, "'Thoroughly reforming them towards a healthy heart attitude': China's political re-education campaign in Xinjiang," *Central Asian Survey* 1, no. 38 (2019): 1-2, 12.

²⁸ In Islamic doctrine, *hajj* is a pilgrimage to the cities of Mecca and Medina (located in modern-day Saudi Arabia) that all Muslims must attempt to complete at least once in their lifetime.

moved to Pakistan, fearing persecution due to China's official policy of state atheism. During the 1980s and 90s, tensions of the Xinjiang conflict spiked as Uyghurs organized numerous riots and demonstrations against the Chinese state. In retaliation, China began an intense crackdown of religious and ethnic expression in Xinjiang. Amid this increasingly unfavorable atmosphere, many Uyghurs who were already en route to Pakistan for *hajj* opted to settle down in Pakistan rather than return to Xinjiang. With the sanctity of their home under severe threat, Pakistan provides Uyghurs an alternative space to live.²⁹

In the contemporary period, not only has China's crackdown escalated to opening re-education camps, but migration to Pakistan has gained new complexities as well. Uyghurs are now restricted from traveling out of Xinjiang, and their attempts to do so may earn them brutal scrutiny from the state. Some Uyghurs do leave Xinjiang on business trips to Pakistan, or because they have wedded Pakistani businessmen or students who are visiting China. Many others have also escaped illegally. This is a risky route to take, but Uyghurs have limited other options available for them. Mohammed Umer Khan, who was mentioned in the introduction, operates an underground railroad between Pakistan and Xinjiang, covertly helping Uyghur families flee and then resettle in Pakistan or nearby states such as Afghanistan. Khan's railroad has been operational since the early 2010s, and he continues to run it despite threats from

²⁹ Shumaila Jaffery, "How the Uighurs keep their culture alive in Pakistan," *BBC News*, August 12, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-33775646>; Bradley Jardine and Robert Evans, "'Nets Cast from the Earth to the Sky': China's Hunt for Pakistan's Uyghurs," *The Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs*, August 18, 2021, <https://oxussociety.org/nets-cast-from-the-earth-to-the-sky-chinas-hunt-for-pakistans-uyghurs>; Maija Liuhto, "'China is after us': Uighurs in Pakistan report intimidation," *Al Jazeera*, January 14, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2019/1/14/china-is-after-us-uyghurs-in-pakistan-report-intimidation>; Alessandro Rippa, "From Uyghurs to Kashgari," *The Diplomat*, December 20, 2013, <https://thediplomat.com/2013/12/from-uyghurs-to-kashgari>; Michael E. Clarke, *Xinjiang and China's Rise in Central Asia – A History* (Milton Park: Taylor & Francis, 2011), 83, 85, 135; Cheng-Tian Kuo, *Religion and Nationalism in Chinese Societies* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 180.

Chinese and Pakistani statesmen alike. With China's crackdown only continuing to tighten, Khan's railroad provides a dangerous but critical route to freedom.³⁰

Inside Pakistan, Uyghurs have more or less blended into the local populace. Pakistani Uyghurs generally adopt Urdu as a secondary or even primary language and further integrate into society through marriage. As was the case in China, Uyghurs' ethnicity and culture do serve as markers of difference, separating them from Pakistan's population. However, unlike China, Pakistan's national identity is not built upon a singular ethnic group, nor is their population demographically split so that more than ninety percent of the population are members of just one ethnic group. Pakistani statesmen, in managing the extreme ethnolinguistic diversity of the state, promote a national identity built upon a conglomeration of loosely shared cultural traits and, most importantly, a united faith in Islamic principles. Non-South Asian Muslims such as the Uyghurs are certainly singled out in Pakistan and may even face violent harassment³¹, but they are still capable of mingling with the populace due to this shared belief in Islam.

Islam as a Basis for Identity

Scholars within Islam and academia alike have argued that Islam can be the premise for a stable universal identity, one so ideal that it can cut across all ethnic, racial, and cultural differences. This argument, however, undermines the severity of the diversity within the global Muslim community. Even if limited to Chinese and Pakistani histories, there is a number of evidence that points to Islam's failure to genuinely unite populations and secure social harmony.

³⁰ VICE News, "Uyghurs Who Fled China," 2021.

³¹ While there is significant evidence available pointing to the abuse Uyghurs have suffered at the hands of Pakistani police, there are no publicly available accounts of Pakistani Uyghurs facing harassment from the general Pakistani public. This does not mean that this phenomenon does or does not occur, only that it has not been documented.

Take, for instance, how Pakistan was once more partitioned in 1971 because of ethnic conflict between Bangladesh's Bengali population at odds with the then-ruling Muhajir population.

Critically, Uyghurs do not just identify as Muslims, but specifically as *non-Chinese Muslims*. They reject association with the Hui, who they group with the Han on the basis of the Hui sharing the same ethnicity and thus benefiting from the privileges attached to it. Speaking to a researching academic in the early 2000s, one Uyghur commented that they avoided both Han and Hui foods because “we don't trust them, after all they're Chinese. Muslim, but Chinese.”³² Within this parlance of equating Uyghurs to Muslims, to be Chinese is to be non-Muslim, and even if a Chinese person is a Muslim, their identity as Chinese taints the legitimacy of their identity as Muslims. Uyghurs see themselves as far more authentic Muslims than the Hui because they are not Han, demonstrating how in the Chinese context, Islam resoundingly does not unite Muslims across ethnic lines.

Uyghurs do not, however, paint other non-Uyghur Muslims as non-Muslims. Within Pakistan, Turkey, and other states where the diaspora has settled, the local populace are acknowledged and respected as fellow Muslims even if they are non-Uyghur. This firstly demonstrates how the Xinjiang conflict is chiefly an ethnic conflict, because it is the violence that Uyghurs endure at the hands of the ruling Han that leads them to regard the Hui as near-synonymous to non-Muslims. This secondly demonstrates how Uyghurs can and do take advantage of the widespread assumption that Islam can serve as a basis for a universal identity. In valuing non-Uyghurs as Muslims, they attempt to build solidarity with other Muslims outside of China so that they may secure their support and assistance amid the Xinjiang conflict.

³² Cristina Cesaro, “Consuming Identities: Food and Resistance among the Uyghur in Contemporary Xinjiang,” *Inner Asia* 2, no. 2 (2000): 230.

Uyghurs also portray themselves as the only Muslims to exist inside China, dismissing the Hui as illegitimate while presenting themselves as the standard. Khan and his fellow activists, for example, pushed their identity as Muslims to the front, positioning Pakistani Uyghurs as Uyghurs, but, more than that, as fellow Muslims hoping to live peacefully within Pakistan. It is their efforts to balance these two identities at once that leads to reproach from the Chinese and Pakistani states – as discussed previously, Uyghurs can exist as Muslims in Pakistan until they insist that they are *Uyghur* Muslims.

The third chapter will continue to discuss Islam as an anchor for Uyghur identity by examining how religious devotion is expressed through the construction and consumption of food. It delves more deeply into markers of cultural and ethnic difference as expressed via restaurants within China, Pakistan, and elsewhere across the globe. Although the yearning for a return to the imagined historical homeland wherein Uyghurs could live and eat as Muslims without interference remains, the Uyghur diaspora in Pakistan and elsewhere must contend with the realities of their host state and negotiate strands of their identity to ensure that their culture outlives them in some form, however greatly transformed, through their children.

CHAPTER 3: GUSTATORY ASSERTIONS

Abstract: This chapter discusses Uyghur food culture, exploring how it has developed and exists within the homeland while further touching upon how this cuisine has traveled throughout China and outside its borders. In particular, it focuses on how this food and the rituals surrounding food preparation contrast with Han and Hui cuisine in the Chinese context, specifically in determining the Islamic purity of the meals and how that may translate to identity or ethnic conflict. Uyghur restaurants provide a venue to examine how Uyghur culture exists outside of the homeland, especially in understanding how political violence and consumerist environments may temper any nostalgia to cook food exactly as it was consumed at home. Looking toward Pakistan, investigating various restaurants, their food, their aesthetics, and their reception enable a deeper understanding of how food affects identity formation and activism efforts. Since food plays such a key role in helping diasporas survive the transition from homeland to host state, with flavors, ingredients, techniques, and rituals all serving as anchors to the old home, it is worth analyzing how food exists in the diasporic Uyghur context.

The energy never decrescendos in Rawalpindi, a city situated in northern Pakistan. Here, regardless of the time, people bustle about from air conditioned store to air conditioned store, clutching shiny plastic bags of wares while their children dutifully follow along, crunching down on street food snacks to stave off boredom. In 2020, vlogger Arshad Mahmood visited a strip of malls lining Murree Road to fix his craving for a specific Chinese dish – *mantu*, a dumpling stuffed with thinly sliced and heavily spiced meat. Although Mahmood initially referred to the food that he ate as Chinese (*mantu*, *laghman*, *dapanji*), the restaurant owner, a man named

Hanzala, explained that in reality, each dish had Uyghur origins. As his maternal grandmother had migrated from Xinjiang decades before, Hanzala and his relatives now sold the food that they had eaten on an everyday basis. “[This is] total home-cooked food³³,” Hanzala told Mahmood, happy that his restaurant, Mizlick Meals, could introduce Uyghur cuisine to the Pakistani public.³⁴

Mahmood was not the first Pakistani vlogger to record his experiences with Uyghur food, and nor was he the last. Since the 2000s, Chinese and Uyghur food have concurrently gained popularity among Pakistanis such as Mahmood, though Uyghur food is generally included within general understandings of Chinese food rather than standing out as a distinct cuisine of its own. However, as the Xinjiang conflict continues to accrue international attention and concern, Pakistanis are slowly beginning to connect the dots between Uyghur food to Uyghur identity. While Uyghur schools and other organizations automatically earn state scrutiny, Uyghurs such as Hanzala can operate restaurants without instant suspicion, enabling Pakistan’s Uyghur diaspora to reconstruct the homeland through plates of food without the hurdles that generally plague other actions.

Much like Islam has come to provide a critical foundation for Uyghur identity, food is a central expression of history and culture. In the context of diasporas, along with language, clothing, and other cultural rituals, food serves as an immediate vehicle to reconnect with their heritage and the homeland, to instantly transport the mind and metaphorical body across time and space from the new home of the current reality to the old home of histories long past. For the

³³ The Urdu word Hanzala uses to describe his restaurant’s dishes is *ghar ke khane*, with the literal translation being “home’s food.” Within both Pakistan and Chinese culture, great value and emphasis is given to home cooked meals as they are assumed to carry greater love and familiarity.

³⁴ Arshad Mahmood, “Lets Eat Mantoo a Chinese Dish | Murree Road Rawalpindi,” *YouTube* video, 10:22, March 10, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HyAvwSTIQpk>.

diaspora, food is firmly ensconced in tight narratives of nostalgia and desire, serving as a material and edible representation of the new home and the old home, mixed and fried into a new being – similar to the diasporic body itself. Food, as an emotional anchor, allows the diaspora to further obsess over the imagined homeland that exists inside their fragmented memories.³⁵

In the Uyghur context, food has historically existed as a marker of cultural fusion and contemporarily as a marker of ethnic and religious difference. Uyghur cuisine is primarily an amalgamation of different cultural interactions throughout history, with perfumed rice dishes such as *pollo* reflecting Persian influences while chicken and noodle dishes such as *laghman* demonstrate the impact of Chinese cuisine. Inside China, Uyghur insistence to only consume *halal* or *qīngzhēn*³⁶ food then separates them not only from Han Chinese, but other Chinese Muslims such as the Hui.³⁷

Uyghur restaurants in Pakistan do not declare similar determinations to strictly consume and serve *qīngzhēn* food, but food served, the ingredients used, the language used by the restaurant, and the overall ambiance of the restaurant all demonstrate how Uyghurs adapt to Pakistan's different cultural and political environment and – to a certain degree – thrive from the security of being surrounded by *qīngzhēn* food. Uyghur restaurants in Pakistan serve as an example of how diasporic communities can carve out and curate unique spaces in the host state,

³⁵ Anita Mannur, *Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 27-31; Cristina Cesaro, "Polo, Lāghmān, So Säy: Situating Uyghur Food Between Central Asia and China" in *Situating the Uyghurs Between China and Central Asia*, eds. Ildiko Beller-Hann, Cristina Cesaro, and Joanne Smith Finley (London: Routledge, 2007), 187-188.

³⁶ *Qīngzhēn* (清真) literally translates to "Muslim" in standard Mandarin Chinese. However, the word *mùsīlīn* (穆斯林) is more commonly used to refer to adherents of Islam, while *qīngzhēn* refers to food that is considered "halal" (permissible for consumption according to Islamic laws and norms).

³⁷ Cesaro, "Consuming Identities," 230; Cesaro, "Polo, Lāghmān, So Säy," 187; VICE Asia, "The Little Known Cuisine of the Uyghur People," *YouTube* video, 11:38, August 13, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OymbOaZ33KM>.

specifically how they negotiate between integration with host society versus maintaining traditional identity of the homeland.

Uyghur Cuisine Within China

In the Chinese context, Uyghur food culture and cooking techniques are typically characterized in direct opposition to Han cuisine. For example, Uyghurs tend to consume rice-based dishes such as the previously mentioned *pollo* with their hands instead of chopsticks, as is the convention in Han culture. This simple choice (or lack of) in utensil selection differentiates Uyghurs from the Han so drastically that in Mandarin, *pollo* is referred to as *zhuā fàn* (抓饭), which literally translates to “grasp[ing] rice.” The Mandarin name indicates Han perceptions of Uyghur food culture – particularly this decision to eat with their hands – as uncivilized and backwards, a conclusion that is further evidenced by how Beijing’s Han population pejoratively calls migrant Uyghur workers “lamb kebabs,” apropos to the popular dish in Uyghur cuisine. The language that the Han use against Uyghurs to talk about food demonstrates how food serves as a key marker of ethnic identity.³⁸

Within the Uyghur context specifically, the food is further distinguished as a specifically *Muslim* cuisine. Uyghurs are far from being the only Muslim-majority ethnic group in China; Tatars, Kazaks, and other groups are also predominantly Muslim groups. However, as mentioned, Uyghurs define their food in contrast to Han food, which encompasses Hui food. While the Hui explicitly mark their food as *qīngzhēn* to distinguish their dishes from the original non-*qīngzhēn* Han variants, the Uyghurs, in presenting themselves and their food as Muslim by default, do not. That Uyghur food is *qīngzhēn* is a given instead of an optional element. Since the

³⁸ Cesaro, “Polo, Lāghmān, So Säy,” 192-3, 190, 196, 188.

Hui take pains to mark their foods as *qīngzhēn*, Uyghurs doubt the legitimacy and purity of their Muslim identity. For example, pork is considered a non-*qīngzhēn* food within Islamic doctrine, and Uyghurs avoid consuming Han food because they fear any potential pork contamination. They also avoid Hui food even if it is labeled *qīngzhēn* because, as mentioned, they see no distinction between the Hui and Han.³⁹

Uyghur Cuisine Outside of China

For the Uyghur diaspora, there are multiple avenues for them to recreate reasonably similar variations of home within the host state: speaking Uyghur to their children, crafting Uyghur spaces, or, most critically, cooking and selling Uyghur food. Mukkades Yadigar, for example, is an Uyghur woman who left Xinjiang to live in Great Britain. Not only does she take the time to teach her children the Uyghur language by regularly speaking to them with it and exposing them to Uyghur literature, but she has also established an Uyghur restaurant in London. This allows Yadigar to introduce Uyghur cuisine to the British citizenry, but on a personal level, this act of opening and maintaining a restaurant allows Yadigar to physically recreate the Xinjiang homeland in the British host state. Once a month, Yadigar allows her restaurant to become a community space for other British Uyghur women. Gathering all in Yadigar's restaurant, the women talk to each other in Uyghur, consume Uyghur food, and even dance according to traditional Uyghur customs.⁴⁰

³⁹ Cesaro, "Consuming Identities," 226-228, 231; Cesaro, "Polo, Lāghmān, So Säy," 185; Joanne Smith, "Making Culture Matter': Symbolic, Spatial and Social Boundaries between Uyghurs and Han Chinese," *Asian Ethnicity* 3, no. 2 (2002): 164; Christopher Sullivan, "Redefining and Challenging the Boundaries of Chinese Cuisine: A Visually Based Exploration of Uyghur Restaurants in the United States," in *American Chinese Restaurants: Society, Culture and Consumption*, eds. Jenny Banh and Haiming Liu (London: Routledge, 2019), 261.

⁴⁰ BBC News, "The Uyghur woman fighting to keep her culture alive," *YouTube* video, 4:05, November 15, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLCd57eJTiw>; Yasmeen Serhan, "SAVING UIGHUR CULTURE FROM GENOCIDE," *The Atlantic*, October 4, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/10/chinas-war-on-uyghur-culture/616513/>; Joshua L.

This “ladies gathering” is an elevation of an event Yadigar practiced in the homeland, but transformed to reflect the realities of having to live in the British host state. “[When we get together] there’s a bit of feeling [that we are back in] our hometown,” Yadigar comments.⁴¹ Zarina Burhanova, a friend and attendee of these gatherings, further remarks on the nostalgic appeal of these gatherings. “I think this is patriotic,” she says, watching other women dance. “Music [and dance], [these are both] a big part of our culture. [...] [We bring our children because] we are trying to keep our culture alive and pass it to them so that they can see how we do it, so they will do it.”⁴² These comments all underline how the Uyghur diasporas attempt to keep the homeland alive through themselves, through their own identity, culture, and body – regardless of if they return to the homeland or if their rituals will change due to the reality and influence of living in a host state, the Uyghur spirit will be kept alive through successive generations remaining connected to their Uyghur roots.⁴³

Similarly, Adila Sadir is an Uyghur woman who opened her own restaurant, titled the Silk Road Restaurant, in Massachusetts, America. Like Yadigar, she uses this restaurant to introduce the American citizenry to Uyghur food. Having left Xinjiang in her twenties for education, Sadir has been unable to return. With family members who managed to migrate and live with her, Sadir opened this restaurant to physically connect herself to the homeland through food. Specific aesthetic choices, such as placing a sign on the door that says “halal” or by decorating the restaurant with Uyghur art, are then done to create an idealized representation of her memories of the homeland. By placing the “halal” sign on her door and using Uyghur

Freeman, “Uighur Poets on Repression and Exile,” *The New York Review*, August 13, 2020, <https://www.nybooks.com/online/2020/08/13/uighur-poets-on-repression-and-exile/>.

⁴¹ BBC News, “The Uyghur woman,” 2021.

⁴² BBC News, “The Uyghur woman,” 2021.

⁴³ BBC News, “The Uyghur woman,” 2021.

designs, Sadir manipulates the memory of the Uyghur community and impressions of the non-community, presenting to them a version of Uyghur culture that lacks temporal accuracy but carries a strong yearning for how Sadir remembers the homeland.⁴⁴

Dolan's Uyghur Cuisine is another Uyghur restaurant in America, located in California and operated by the titular Dolan. Wearing a T-shirt that bears the words *Google Uyghurs*, Dolan and his team sell dishes such as *pollo*, *mantu*, and *dapanji*. The last dish, *dapanji*, is listed on the menu as "Big Plate Chicken," a literal translation of the name. He also gives customers "flower tea," a beverage that is reportedly "very common in my country," in handmade, ornate tea cups. Dolan contextualizes the restaurant the Uyghur dishes that it serves as part of a long historical tradition that he himself and the restaurant are part of. As noted by one customer recording his experience visiting the restaurant, the dishes symbolize deep marriages between cultures. Dolan uses this restaurant to construct an imagined homeland while also advocating for such a homeland to become a reality through his activism (e.g., the T-shirts).⁴⁵

In Manhattan, America, an Uyghur man named Kudret Yakup operates Yana Kebab Express. He links his cultural and religious background as shared driving forces for operating the restaurant. This restaurant, similar to Sadir's restaurant, also has a sign in English that declares itself *halal*, with a sign placed beneath it noting that it offers a prayer room during certain times of the day. Yakup maintains that Uyghur cuisine is the opposite of assimilation cuisine, at least in the modern context, because amid China's continued attempts to control Xinjiang and the Uyghur population, Uyghurs continued to cook and eat their own food instead of changing their

⁴⁴ VICE News, "The Only Uyghur Restaurant in Massachusetts," *YouTube* video, 6:38, January 18, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fUSUxTli_TM.

⁴⁵ BuzzFeedVideo, "\$10 Noodles Vs. \$94 Noodles," *YouTube* video, 15:55, December 15, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkIQMZaBTBo>.

tastes to appeal to Han immigrants. Yakup notes that Uyghurs traditionally eat with their hands, while Americans do not. To adapt to this reality and the bustling Manhattan setting, Yakup adapted his kebabs to use boneless lamb instead of bone-in lamb for easier and faster eating. Tandoor ovens are used to prepare what he refers to as a “special Uyghur bread.” While the Uyghur cuisine that Yakup serves is not assimilation cuisine, it has still adapted to the realities of its setting. In commenting upon how many Uyghurs visit his restaurant compared to the larger non-Uyghur customer base, Yakup states that most Uyghur foods can easily be prepared by the diaspora at home, hence why non-Uyghurs are more likely to come to the restaurant, but many Uyghurs still come to the restaurant to eat kebabs.⁴⁶

Uyghur Cuisine in Pakistan

In 2015, Chinese and Pakistani statesmen collaborated to launch the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). A joint infrastructure project located throughout Pakistan, CPEC intensified the economic, diplomatic, and cultural relations between China and Pakistan, culminating in international marriages, efforts to learn Mandarin in Pakistan and Urdu in China, and an influx of Chinese restaurants in Pakistan’s urban areas. While already popular within the public, CPEC enabled increased traffic and demand. Ginyaki, for example, opened in 2017 to rave reviews from Pakistanis thrilled for a chance to consume food composed of exotic flavors and, allegedly⁴⁷, health benefits.⁴⁸

In discussing Uyghur food, Pakistanis generally cite the same two factors (taste and nutrition) as reasons for why they enjoy the food. However, as demonstrated by vlogger

⁴⁶ VICE Asia, “The Little Known Cuisine,” 2020.

⁴⁷ Within Pakistan, Chinese food is perceived as healthy cuisine wherein the dishes all contain high nutritional value.

⁴⁸ Xinhua, “Chinese cuisine wins hearts of Pakistanis as restaurant industry sees boom,” *The Global Times*, October 8, 2020, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1202836.shtml>.

Mahmood’s initial perception of Mizlick Meals as a Chinese restaurant, it is difficult to isolate Uyghur food from Chinese (Han) food overall because most Uyghur dishes are served alongside Chinese dishes in Chinese restaurants without special distinction or comment. Identifying Uyghur restaurants is further made difficult by the reality that most restaurants are small street food stalls that have a strong local presence and attachment, but a comparatively small digital existence.

The China Xinjiang Restaurant then stands out for advertising itself in at least some part as an explicitly Uyghur restaurant by referencing the Uyghur homeland. Located in Rawalpindi’s China Market, the restaurant attracts a large number of visitors and has a reasonably high reputation among Rawalpindians. Nearby, there are other Chinese restaurants and East Asian department stores.



Figure 3.1: An image of the menu at China Xinjiang Restaurant, located in Rawalpindi. Image was uploaded to Google Maps in 2020 by a user named Arslan Haider.



Figure 3.2: An image of the signage at China Xinjiang Restaurant, located in Rawalpindi. Image was uploaded to Google Maps in 2018 by a user named Kaleem Ullah Khan.

For Figure 3.2, it is worth noting that this sign uses English, Urdu, and Chinese. English is not an unusual sight in Pakistan due to British colonization of Pakistan during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, the Chinese text helps to mark this restaurant as foreign. The lack of Uyghur is notable compared to how Uyghur restaurants in the West emphasized using Uyghur script in their restaurants, but in writing, Uyghur and Urdu look extremely similar to each other – Uyghur script would have ultimately helped the restaurant further blend in and lose its identity as non-Pakistani.



Figure 3.3: An image of the menu at China Xinjiang Restaurant, located in Rawalpindi. Image was uploaded to Google Maps in 2020 by a user named Faraz Akram.

Judging from the menu images in Figures 3.1 and 3.3, this restaurant serves familiar Pakistani dishes such as pulao (which is remarkably similar to the Uyghur dish *pollo*) and mutton yakhni. However, there are then items that are recognizably foreign to Pakistan – *laghman* and *dapanji*, for example. This hybrid of Uyghur and Pakistani foods provides a balance between providing customers with the exotic, healthy flavors they want from non-Pakistani food while simultaneously granting customers some familiar foods so that they are not uncomfortable.



Figure 3.4: An image of two customers at China Xinjiang Restaurant, located in Rawalpindi.

Image was uploaded to Google Maps in 2020 by a user named Gilgit Vlogs.



Figure 3.5: An image of the food at China Xinjiang Restaurant, located in Rawalpindi. Image was uploaded to Google Maps in 2020 by a user named Muhammad Zeeshan Akhtar.



Figure 3.6: An image of the food at China Xinjiang Restaurant, located in Rawalpindi. Image was uploaded to Google Maps in 2020 by a user named Gilgit Vlogs.



Figure 3.7: An image of the food at China Xinjiang Restaurant, located in Rawalpindi. Image was uploaded to Google Maps in 2022 by a user named Erum Vlogs.



Figure 3.8: An image of the ambiance at China Xinjiang Restaurant, located in Rawalpindi.

Image was uploaded to Google Maps in 2022 by a user named Talha Yasin.



Figure 3.9: An image of the ambiance at China Xinjiang Restaurant, located in Rawalpindi.

Image was uploaded to Google Maps in 2020 by the restaurant itself.



Figure 3.10: An image of the food at China Xinjiang Restaurant, located in Rawalpindi. Image was uploaded to Google Maps in 2020 by the restaurant itself.

Figure 3.10 offers an interesting comparison between Uyghur restaurants in Pakistan and those in Western states such as the UK and America. Where the Manhattan-based restaurant eventually had to transition to using boneless meats that were less “messy” to eat for customers, Uyghur restaurants in Pakistan can continue selling bone-in meats. As evidenced by other videos of customers who bought and ate *laghman* from street food stalls, Pakistani customers are also willing to consume “messier” foods in both rushed and non-rushed contexts without issue. This is because Western food culture prioritizes the usage of utensils while Pakistani food culture, similar to Uyghur food culture, allows for the usage of hands while eating.

Google Maps reviews for this restaurant began posting in 2016. Some reviews are written in Chinese, indicating Chinese tourism in Pakistan and their own search for non-Han Chinese food. Overall, people demonstrate increasing awareness that this restaurant serves Uyghur food over time. Older reviews generally identify the food as Chinese, Turkish, or simply Central Asian. Some reviews even say that this is Muslim Chinese food or traditional Chinese food. However, more recent reviews directly refer to the cuisine as Uyghur.

In 2022, a Pakistani woman uploaded a video where she ate at the China Xinjiang Restaurant. The seating area is described as traditional, allowing guests to sit criss crossed over a nice rooftop view. This plays into some fantasies of elevation and grandiosity, tying in with the experience of eating exotic flavors. The restaurant serves *rooh afza*, a traditional Pakistani drink that is heavily associated with breaking fast during Ramadan. There is a prayer area at the restaurant – however, while this is notable in America, this is relatively commonplace in

Pakistan. The woman refers to *dapanji* as China's "desi dish." The woman says that the noodles served are actually called *miantiao*, which is simply the Chinese word for noodle. It could be that the restaurant is attempting to make itself look exotic but still approachable through using the Chinese word for noodles. Mantu is also labeled as a Chinese dish. The restaurant also provides a special, complimentary green tea that reportedly "has a special Uyghur name." The woman treats it as a unique beverage and further lauds the weight loss benefits of green tea. The tea itself is served in small bowls and the waiter initially pours some into the bowl before immediately tossing it out onto the floor – this is a common Chinese tea pouring technique.⁴⁹

At Rawalpindi's China Market, another woman on YouTube records the foods that she eats while shopping. Aside from eating *mantu* and *baozi*, the woman also eats *laghman* from a small street food stall. She explicitly identifies the food as Uyghur and while she cannot name the stall, she states that the food is so famous in China Market that if one were to ask, they would easily find it.⁵⁰

One YouTube video follows a man who claims that Islamabad's largest foreign population is Chinese – including any and all Uyghurs. This man's video is relevant because he was invited to a "secret" Uyghur restaurant in someone's home, thus providing an insight into domestic life for Uyghurs in Pakistan. He was served dumplings, an "authentic Uyghur Muslim Chinese chicken" dish that strongly resembles *dapanji* but uses rice instead of noodles, and a beef dish called "jasha". The man noted that the beef was cooked using a special technique where the meat was enveloped in egg yolk before frying. There was constant emphasis on

⁴⁹ Fatima, "Best Uyghur food in twin cities | China Xinjiang Restaurant in China Market Rawalpindi 🇨🇳," *YouTube* video, 6:19, April 15, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7afFc_vZvc.

⁵⁰ Wajiha, "China Market Rawalpindi | Yummy Uyghur Food | Cheap And Affordable Shopping In Pakistan," *YouTube* video, 11:06, March 30, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EhGU7r9wKNk>.

Uyghurs being Chinese and Muslim – the man was white and non-Pakistani, but Pakistanis around him did not dispute the association.⁵¹

Uyghur restaurants in America make a concerted effort to distinguish themselves from mainstream Chinese restaurants. Given the vast differences between the typical foods served at each restaurant, such a goal is possible. In Pakistan, it seems that Uyghur cuisine is conflated with Chinese cuisine. It will be considered “Muslim Chinese” or perhaps specifically Uyghur, but the awareness of Uyghurs and their identity overall in connection with these restaurants seems low. Pakistanis do see Uyghur food as halal, but they also see Chinese food as halal as well.

The fourth chapter will discuss marriage culture for Uyghurs, specifically inter-ethnic marriages as they exist in China and Pakistan. It will continue this exploration of Uyghur culture and identity by focusing on issues of gender dynamics and marriage. It will further examine the mobilization of Pakistani men to raise awareness for the Xinjiang conflict.

⁵¹ Brent Timm, “SECRET Uyghur Muslim Food in Pakistan! 🇺🇸,” *YouTube* video, 18:50, October 11, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FkynbTwYpo>.

CHAPTER 4: INTER-ETHNIC MARRIAGES

Abstract: This chapter will discuss marriage culture among Uyghurs, touching on adjacent topics of gender, honor, and parenting. In the Chinese context, traditional marriage culture is threatened by the increase of state-sanctioned marriages between Han men and Chinese women, a phenomenon which is itself preceded by Han men's historical and contemporary fetishization of non-Han women. This aversion to inter-ethnic Han-Uyghur marriage, however, is contrasted by the positive attitude toward the growing trend of inter-ethnic but intra-religious Pakistani-Uyghur marriages. The warmer reception toward Pakistani-Uyghur union is backdropped not only by a shared faith in Islam, but also similar gender roles and dynamics existing between Uyghur and Pakistani culture. Analyzing the contours of this situation through diaspora studies allows for a deeper understanding in how diasporic Uyghurs are more willing than those in the homeland to negotiate survival with nostalgia and pursue marriages for their children that may be inter-ethnic, but, more critically, are intra-religious.

Nurzat met Adila on the streets of Ürümchi, when both of them were studying at a nearby college. The two quickly fell in love and promised to marry each other in the future, a departure from the Uyghur tradition of parents arranging their childrens' marriages. Despite the rosy beginnings, the union quickly fell apart when Nurzat left to pursue graduate education in Europe, leaving Adila behind in Xinjiang. He came back in 2017 to see her, but the two were unable to see each other freely, confining themselves to a hotel room for the bulk of his stay in fear of the police scrutinizing Nurzat for his time spent abroad. By 2019, Nurzat remained immersed in his studies and Adila now faced pressure from her parents to end her five-year relationship with

Nurzat and marry another man. Her parents demanded this of her not because they disapproved of Nurzat, but because as she aged, the chances of the police coercing Adila into a marriage with a Han boy of their choice was too high. “Please don’t blame me for doing this,” Adila told Nurzat in a hushed conversation over WeChat video. “A lot of Uyghur women are rushing to get married now. Everyone is afraid.”⁵² Despite Nurzat’s assurances that he would quickly return home and Adila’s pledge to purchase a wedding dress and wait for him, the two were bleakly aware that their marriage was doomed to collapse before it could even begin.

The tragedy of Nurzat and Adila’s love story encapsulates several key aspects about Uyghur marriage culture and gender dynamics as it exists within the homeland. There is a long history of parents selecting marital partners for their children and then an even stronger preference for Uyghurs to marry Uyghurs, especially in the case of Uyghur women. Adila’s parents deemed it necessary to marry her to another Uyghur boy when Nurzat left to study in Europe because they could not bear to see her marry a Han boy and subsequently see the sanctity of her identity as an Uyghur chip away. Uyghur men such as Nurzat also had parents who desired to see them marry Uyghur women, but the yearning was stronger when it came to daughters not just due to orthodox ideas of honor but also because the Chinese state targeted these women to marry Han men much more frequently than vice versa. In summation, both Uyghurs and Chinese statesmen alike recognized the bodies of Uyghur women as battlegrounds for keeping the homeland alive and subsuming ethnic minorities into the Han-based nation, respectively.⁵³

⁵² Darren Byler, “Uyghur Love In A Time Of Interethnic Marriage,” *Art of Life in Chinese Central Asia*, September 6, 2019, <https://livingotherwise.com/2019/09/06/uyghur-love-in-a-time-of-interethnic-marriage/>.

⁵³ Darren Byler, “Love and Fear among Rural Uyghur Youth during the “People’s War”,” *Art of Life in Chinese Central Asia*, December 5, 2017, <https://livingotherwise.com/2017/12/05/love-fear-among-rural-uyghur-youth-peoples-war/>

For Uyghurs, intra-ethnic and intra-religious marriages are customary and generally perceived as ideal. This is not only in accordance with dominant interpretations of Islamic marriage laws, but also in-line with how Uyghurs have built their identity around not just being Muslims, but Uyghur Muslims. Although marriages between Uyghur women and Han Chinese men have been practiced since the Qing dynasty, these marriages were not popular among Uyghurs – women who did pursue and marry Han men could face hostility from their family members and could be denied burial in Muslim graveyards.

In the contemporary era, since the modern Chinese state's inclusion of Xinjiang into its borders, the state has increasingly encouraged marriages between Uyghurs and the Han – particularly between Uyghur women and Han men. Where in the Qing era and during most of the twentieth century Uyghurs could still work to avoid these inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriages, it is increasingly difficult for Uyghurs to resist state pressure to marry their daughters to Han men. Within China, Uyghurs do attempt resistance against state-sanctioned inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriages, shirking matrimonial unions with Han Chinese unless unavoidable. However, in Pakistan, Uyghurs carefully integrate into society through inter-ethnic but intra-religious marriages. This difference in approach toward marriage in Pakistan versus China further demonstrates the primacy that religion plays for establishing Uyghur identity both within the homeland and for the diaspora.⁵⁴

Traditional Ideas of Uyghur Masculinity and Femininity

As has been established, much of Uyghur culture is bedrocked in Islamic doctrines, and gendered norms and expectations are no different. The desire that parents of women such as

⁵⁴ Tasnim Nazeer, "Uyghur Women and Forced Marriages in China," *The Diplomat*, December 10, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/12/uyghur-women-and-forced-marriages-in-china/>.

Adila have for their daughters to be promptly married off to Uyghur men has its roots within Islamic texts that demand Muslim women to wed solely Muslim men, whereas Muslim men are permitted to seek out non-Muslim wives. Hence, Uyghurs display a specific concern for who their daughters marry while their sons receive less scrutiny and concern.

Aside from Islam, norms of masculinity and femininity in modern Uyghur culture are informed by historic literary figures such as Nuzugum. Popularized during the Qing dynasty in the 1820s, Nuzugum was originally a Kashgar woman. She is trapped by an unspecified enemy and victim to his sexual advances. Rather than betray her chastity by marrying the enemy and bearing his children, Nuzugum murders her enemy and protects the honor and integrity of her body, family, and nation. In Uyghur retellings, Nuzugum is made a native to Ghulja, a city in Xinjiang. The enemy that pursues her is explicitly labeled a Han Chinese man. When Nuzugum is sentenced to death for killing her enemy, she shows no fear because according to Islamic interpretations of murder and other forms of violence, Nuzugum's slaughter of the enemy and subsequent death crafted her into a martyr. Narratively, Nuzugum's suffering and eventual death represented the cruel invasiveness of China's control of the Uyghur nation while underlining Uyghur willingness to die, as martyred Muslims, should their death protect their homeland in any fashion.⁵⁵

Nuzugum serves as a symbol of idealized purity for Uyghur women. She further provides masculine men motivation to continue fighting for the nation – a model for women as well as men. Prior to her capture by the enemy in the tale, Nuzugum's brother warns her that the enemy

⁵⁵ Zubayra Shamseden, "I Have Revised My Idea of What a Uighur Heroine Should Be," *ChinaFile*, April 19, 2019, <https://www.chinafile.com/reporting-opinion/viewpoint/i-have-revised-my-idea-of-what-uighur-heroine-should-be>; Kara Abramson, "Gender, Uyghur Identity, and the Story of Nuzugum," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 71, no. 4 (2012): 1071-1073.

would destroy her purity via marriage and subsequent sexual violation. Thus, when Nuzugum is captured, she takes the opportunity to kill the enemy. She then celebrates that her purity was kept intact amid the entire ordeal. This story is used to tell women that if they are pure, they have no need to fear their enemies because their reward is in heaven for their piety.⁵⁶

Nuzugum is a literary role model for Uyghurs and her story can provide a glimpse into standard gender dynamics in the Uyghur community. Men are encouraged to physically fight for the nation while women are encouraged to maintain their sexual and moral purity intact for the nation's future and wellbeing. These ideas of Uyghur femininity and purity then play a major role in how inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriages are perceived. Amidst the wider Xinjiang conflict, the protection of women's bodies from marriage to the Han becomes an increasing concern. For both Uyghurs and the Han, the feminine Uyghur body is a key battleground. In the eyes of the Chinese state and the public writ large, said body is an exotic, ethnic landscape that can be invaded and controlled via marriage to achieve the end goal of national unity under Han supremacy.

Uyghur-Han Marriages in China

Within China, Uyghurs are dominantly perceived as more violent than other ethnic groups, with them being characterized as more "masculine" than other groups due to Uyghurs' maintenance of culture and resistance to assimilation into Han society. However, Uyghur women specifically are the subject of Han men's erotic fantasies. Historically, Han men have fetishized Uyghur women as non-Han women with a strange but alluring ethnic identity and associating cultural practices. This sexual fixation on Uyghur women remains prevalent in the contemporary

⁵⁶ Abramson, "Gender, Uyghur Identity," 1071-1074.

era, with Chinese statesmen leveraging this existing fascination Han men have with Uyghur women to craft state policies that encourage Han men to wed Uyghur women. These marriages are made financially desirably through legislation that promises critical benefits such as granting any children born from the union greater chances to secure acceptances at prestigious colleges than the children of inter-ethnic Han or Uyghur marriages.⁵⁷

From the perspective of Chinese statesmen, these inter-ethnic marriages are desirable for purposes of social control and national unity, but also for eliminating the supposed “three evils” currently plaguing Chinese society. Through facilitating marriages between Han men and Uyghur women, statesmen can gradually but efficiently infiltrate into Uyghur society and dismantle its core cultural and religious tenets from the inside as well as through the outside. This scene is illustrated as much through videos and other digital guides posted on state-run social media platforms with titles that are some variant of the phrase “how to win the heart of a Uyghur girl”. This content pleasantly informs Han men that they can secure the Uyghur women of their fantasies because while historically Uyghur women were maritally difficult to attain due to linguistic and cultural barriers, said barriers are now crumbling due to state pressures for Uyghurs to learn Mandarin and Han culture. Thus, Han men can live out their dreams while also serving the state through bringing non-Han women and their families into the fold of the Han-based Chinese nation. To this end, statesmen have even made clear to Han men that the state is willing to step in and resolve any lingering issues of “religious extremism,” read here as any

⁵⁷ Rob Schmitz, “For Some Chinese Uighurs, Modeling Is A Path To Success,” *NPR*, September 27, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2017/09/27/553703866/for-some-chinese-uighurs-modeling-is-a-path-to-success>; Radio Free Asia, “Xinjiang Authorities Push Uyghurs to Marry Han Chinese,” *Radio Free Asia*, 2017, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/special/uyghur-oppression/ChenPolicy2.html>; Dru Gladney, “Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53, no. 1 (1994): 92-98; Darren Byler, “Video promoting marriage between Han men and Uyghur women,” *YouTube* video, 1:49, August 14, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5x7tfTkzFQ>; Byler, “Uyghur Love,” 2019.

attempt by the Uyghur bride's family to reject the match. Considering that Chinese culture historically prizes arranged marriage as much as Uyghurs, the only odd aspect to these marriages is the lack of agency granted to the bride's parents, who traditionally in Han culture would wield more power over accepting or rejecting the match.⁵⁸

It is in this current context, combined with traditional gender norms and marriage expectations, that Uyghur parents such as the previously discussed Adila's fear for their daughters. As statesmen continue to systematically lock Uyghur men in re-education camps, the prospects of Uyghur women in finding Uyghur husbands dwindles further. In 2019, Gulmira, an Uyghur woman commented that while "people in the older generation don't accept [inter-ethnic marriages with the Han], it has increased a lot. I don't know if they are [willingly entering these marriages] or not. I'm not in touch very much with those that have gone through with it. I think they must be doing it willingly. It seems like their families wouldn't force them to do this. There are so many of [these marriages]."⁵⁹ Her words underline how despite this precedented stigma against Han-Uyghur marriages, Uyghur parents are unable to actually stop the state from encouraging these weddings to take place. Critically, Gulmira theorizes that the younger generation of Uyghurs desire these marriages even as the older generation views them with shame and sorrow. These lines demonstrate how state propaganda targets not just Han men's sexual fantasies but also Uyghur women's hopes for stable and secure futures. However

⁵⁸ Mou Tao [牟桃], "Understanding the phenomenon of Uighur-Han intermarriage, normalizing Uyghur-Han intermarriage, and solving key issues affecting national unity [正确认识维汉通婚现象, 使维汉通婚恢复正常化, 破解影响民族团结的关键问题]," *China Ethnic and Religious Network* [中国民族宗教网], January 7, 2019, <https://archive.fo/ShbNm>; Mathilde Vo, "The manipulation of Uyghur women in the Han ethnic domination organized by the Chinese government," *Gender in Geopolitics Institute*, May 8, 2020, <https://igg-geo.org/?p=1829&lang=en>; The Art of Life in Chinese Central Asia, "Video argues beautiful Uyghur women would love to have a Han husband," *YouTube* video, 1:34, August 4, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6fHChSF1ur8>; Byler, "Uyghur Love," 2019.

⁵⁹ Byler, "Uyghur Love," 2019.

infelicitous a Han-Uyghur marriage may be, the promises of the state to provide the couple with financial and social benefits makes the situation genuinely attractive.⁶⁰

Within this state-sanctioned marriage market, Uyghurs do have the choice of ensuring that their daughters enter an intra-religious if inter-ethnic union by looking toward a different group of Han men: Hui men. Rizwangul, another Uyghur woman, commented in 2019 that “there is a Hui boy chasing after me. He is so nice to me, I think he will cherish me in the future. He is nice to me and has a good personality. I am thinking as long as he does not create sorrows for me and makes me happy, that is good enough.”⁶¹ To Rizwangul, the Hui man is better than the Han because he is Muslim – in these conditions, inter-ethnic marriage can be acceptable so long as there is intra-religious marriage. It is also only in this context that Uyghurs ultimately recognize the Hui as fellow Muslims, as opposed to in contexts of food culture and religious identity where the Hui were consistently grouped with the non-Muslim Han on the basis of ethnicity.⁶²

Uyghur-Pakistani Marriages in Pakistan

As discussed previously, the Uyghur diaspora in Pakistan has integrated into local society by marrying into Pakistani society. Although there are cases wherein an Uyghur man marries a Pakistani woman, most public records and documentation focus on weddings between Uyghur women and Pakistani men. Analyzing these Pakistani-Uyghur marriages is worthwhile due to their contrast with Han-Uyghur unions and their comparison to Hui-Uyghur unions. Inter-ethnic

⁶⁰ Byler, “Uyghur Love,” 2019.

⁶¹ Byler, “Uyghur Love,” 2019.

⁶² Byler, “Uyghur Love,” 2019.

marriages may not be the most desirable end for any Uyghur parent with daughters, but they may be rendered acceptable if they are still intra-religious.⁶³

In the case of Pakistani-Uyghur marriages, Pakistani men are further desirable husbands because Pakistani masculinity is more similar to Uyghur masculinity than Han or Hui masculinity. Masculinity is defined, promoted, and idealized differently in Pakistan, China, and amongst Uyghurs. Within the Pakistani context, masculinity, similar to Uyghur norms, is constructed around a perceived need to defend and protect the virtue and honor of women in the family – with their lives, should it prove necessary. For example, during the Partition of India, women’s bodies were stand-ins for the (religiously-defined) nation, with men from different religious groups deliberately inflicting sexual violence toward women of other religions to harm the morale and honor of the nation as a whole. During the Partition and in contemporary society, the specific humiliation and emasculation that occurs when a woman in the family’s body is sexually invaded can lead to men murdering women preemptively or in the aftermath.

That Pakistani husbands will go to great lengths to protect their wives from intrusive Chinese and Pakistani statesmen is demonstrated by their behavior amid the Xinjiang conflict. Aiming to curtail the activism and existence of Uyghurs abroad, Chinese statesmen have pressured Pakistani statesmen to cooperate with them in deporting Uyghur women back to Xinjiang, where they are coerced into attending re-education camps. In 2018, Gilgit-Baltistan legislative assembly member Nawaz Naji said on this issue of the Chinese state holding Uyghur wives of Pakistani men indefinitely that “China needs to take into account the cultural sensitivity regarding this issue. We are a Muslim society and having our wives in someone else's custody is

⁶³ Kunwar Khuldune Shahid, “How Pakistan Is Helping China Crack Down on Uyghur Muslims,” *The Diplomat*, June 28, 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/06/how-pakistan-is-helping-china-crack-down-on-uyghur-muslims/>.

not acceptable to us. We do not want to escalate the issue because we want good ties between Beijing and Islamabad.”⁶⁴ Naji’s words underscore how Pakistani masculinity is predicated upon ensuring that their wives are kept at home, within their family and society. These ideals and values are similar to Uyghurs’, as was previously exemplified through the actions of Uyghur parents in marrying off their daughters as quickly as possible to Uyghur men so as to avoid the possibility of a Han son-in-law.

Ahmed, a Gilgit resident who married a Uyghur woman while he was working in Xinjiang, further emphasizes how religion informs conceptualizations of masculinity in Pakistani culture just as thoroughly as it does within Uyghur culture. After his wife was abruptly arrested by Chinese statesmen on charges of extremism, he demanded her return on the grounds that it was “consider[ed] a matter of honour [sic]” for a husband to reunite with his wife.⁶⁵ This evocation of *honor* once more demonstrates how Pakistani men build their identity around protecting the virtue of their women relatives and how in terms of idealizing brands of masculinity, Uyghurs and Pakistanis conceive masculinity in a similar fashion. They further recognize the feminine (Uyghur) body as a key site for maintaining the honor and integrity of the nation – once the wife’s body is breached via arrest and her removal from her husband’s life, the husband must work to recover her body before continued damage to her purity can be committed.

⁶⁴ Sattar Khan, “Arrests of Uighur women married to Pakistani men spark anger in Gilgit-Baltistan,” *DW Akademie*, March 12, 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/arrests-of-uighur-women-married-to-pakistani-men-spark-anger-in-gilgit-baltistan/a-42937458>.

⁶⁵ Memphis Barker, “Chinese crackdown separates Pakistani husbands from Uighur wives,” *The Guardian*, March 15, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/15/chinese-crackdown-separates-pakistani-husbands-from-uighur-wives>.

The fifth chapter will proceed to analyze Pakistani-Uyghur marriages further through the framework of *diaspora diplomacy*. This enables a more nuanced understanding of how and why Pakistani men are gradually mobilizing to fight for the release of their captured wives as well as for an end to the Xinjiang conflict. This framework also allows for an understanding of how the Uyghur diaspora operates within Pakistan and how Uyghurs negotiate activism with survival in their efforts to educate the Pakistani public on the Xinjiang conflict and the human rights abuses involved.

CHAPTER 5: DIASPORA DIPLOMACY

Abstract: This chapter is centered around diaspora diplomacy, a subfield of diaspora studies that focuses on how diasporas organize and advance the interests of their homeland while residing in the host state. After outlining key literature and theories within this subfield, this chapter will turn to examining how Uyghurs and Pakistanis raise awareness for the Xinjiang conflict within the Pakistani public despite the efforts of Chinese and Pakistani statesmen to prevent as much. Among Uyghurs, the previously mentioned Mohammed Umer Khan demonstrates how Pakistani Uyghurs balance necessary assimilation for survival with maintaining a nostalgic connection to the homeland through educating Uyghur children on the language and customs. Continuing on from the previous chapter, this chapter will also highlight how Pakistani men have mobilized to pressure Pakistani statesmen to change their policies in the hopes of securing the release of their Uyghur wives from Xinjiang. It is important to discuss Pakistani Uyghurs in the context of diaspora diplomacy because their identity and behavior as a diaspora advances existing arguments within the subfield that host states only respond positively to activist diasporas if their interests are in alignment with existing policies.

Speaking in 2018 to American journalists, Pakistani businessman Chaudry Javed Atta⁶⁶ mourned the loss of his wife. Having met in Xinjiang while Atta was working in the area, the two had been married for fourteen years. When Atta decided to return to Pakistan to renew his visa, his wife – an Uyghur woman – warned him that his leaving would precipitate her arrest by Chinese police. Atta left, and, just as she predicted, his wife was taken by the authorities and

⁶⁶ His middle name is alternatively transliterated by different publications as “Javed” or “Javeid.”

placed into a re-education camp. While Atta did manage to ensure that his two sons were placed in the care of his wife's family, this placement is precarious and Atta fears that they, too, will be sent away to a state-run orphanage in the absence of their parents. Atta's pleas to Pakistani statesmen to intervene and retrieve his wife and children have been unsuccessful because, as has been established throughout, the Pakistani state will defer to the Chinese state in the interest of maintaining harmonious relations between them. "I am worried, I am worried," Atta said.⁶⁷ Voicing his frustrations with the Pakistani state's lack of action, Atta mourned that within this Pakistani-China dynamic, "China is an elephant. Pakistan is the ant."⁶⁸

Atta's words efficiently underline the reality of any and all activism done in Pakistan to support Uyghurs amid the ongoing Xinjiang conflict. Despite the multiple background details that would suggest widespread state and public support for Uyghurs (i.e., a shared faith), when boiled down to the essentials, the Pakistani state has no interest in jeopardizing a strategically beneficial relationship with China on religious or moral grounds. Analyzing the efforts of Pakistani men such as Atta or Pakistani Uyghurs such as the previously mentioned Umer Mohammed Khan through the prism of diaspora diplomacy theories enables a deeper understanding of why Uyghur activism in Pakistan is currently ineffective. Uyghurs in Pakistan support existing arguments that diasporic communities are most effective when their goals align with that of the host state. However, this same literature then suggests that this growing phenomenon of mobilized Pakistani husbands fighting for the return of their wives could lead to said activism growing more effective.

⁶⁷ Daaa Hadid and Abdul Sattar, "My Family Has Been Broken': Pakistanis Fear For Uighur Wives Held In China," *NPR*, November 15, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/11/15/661788176/my-family-has-been-broken-pakistanis-fear-for-uighur-wives-held-in-china>.

⁶⁸ Hadid and Sattar, "My Family Has Been Broken," 2018.

Defining Diaspora Diplomacy

According to political scientists Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth, *diaspora diplomacy* is used to describe the diaspora's efforts to influence the politics of their host state in favor of the homeland. Diasporas, then, are critical actors in international relations who can advocate on the homeland's behalf from the outside. Nation-building or other irredentist activities related to the homeland may use the existence of diasporas as a key source of motivation. Using American politics as a case study, Shain and Barth argue that diasporas frequently form interest groups to lobby and demand American foreign policies to favor their homeland. Ultimately, this transforms diasporas into a threat to America's national security because these interest groups promote the welfare of foreign states instead of America's. For example, Irish-Americans were able to lobby and influence then-President William Clinton to issue visas to members of the Irish Republican Army despite objections both from Great Britain and within the American State Department. This was a dramatic departure from previous American foreign policy, which stressed a deliberate lack of involvement in Northern Ireland so as not to threaten America's harmonious relationship with Great Britain.⁶⁹

Shain and Barth explain that diasporas are motivated to influence the politics of their home state out of devotion and concern for the homeland, particularly if the host state's foreign policies threaten to have a drastic effect on the homeland. Their efficacy in influencing the host state is mitigated by various factors, including: if the diaspora has a positive relationship with the homeland; if the host state's foreign policy is relevant to the homeland; if the host state's political environment allows the diaspora to organize and lobby. For example, the Québécois in Canada

⁶⁹ Shain and Barth, "Diasporas and international relations theory," 305-308; Yossi Shain, *Marketing the American Creed Abroad: Diasporas in the U.S. and Their Homelands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1-7, 52-54, 80, 92-94; Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics*, 145-147.

are capable of garnering political support and endorsement for their secessionist agenda from French politicians who visit Canada – the diaspora, the Québécois, have a positive relationship with the homeland, France, and while the host state, Canada, views these demands for Québec’s sovereignty as a threat to Canadian unity, its political environment still allows the Québécois to organize.⁷⁰

Besides loyalty to the homeland, Shain further argues that diasporas are moved to advocate for their homeland due to a perceived inability to "belong" to the host state. For example, in discussing ethnic politics in America, Shain quotes the doctrine “once hyphenated, always hyphenated” to explain how diasporas struggle to balance ancestral connections to the homeland with the expectation to contribute to their new home in America. Attempts to transition from "the diaspora" to merely "ethnic Americans" are then further hampered by ethnic tensions and racism – all fueling the diasporas to have greater interest, investment, and emotional connection to the homeland instead of the host state. Shain argues that this further crafts diasporas as a trans-nationalist threat to America’s national security, with their deeper ties to the homeland destabilizing national unity.⁷¹

Aside from the work of Shain and Barth, other political scientists have further analyzed how diasporas behave within the host state. Sociologists Nicholas Van Hear and Giulia Liberatore, for example, divided degrees of Sri Lankan engagement with the homeland into three distinct spheres: the *household*, the *known community*, and the *imagined community*. The household is, as the name itself implies, a composition of the entire family tree. Many Sri

⁷⁰ Shain and Barth, “Diasporas and international relations theory,” 462-466; Shain, *Marketing the American Creed Abroad*, 25; Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics*, 145-147.

⁷¹ Shain, *Marketing the American Creed Abroad*, 1-7, 30-31; Yossi Shain, *Kinship and Diasporas in International Affairs* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 25.

Lankans engaged with the homeland strictly through this domestic venue, focusing on contact with family to ensure their safety and working towards their security and prosperity by sending remittances and opportunities to join other family members in the host state. The known community is then an extension of the household, with Sri Lankans fixating on the situation and health of their hometown and nearby areas. Finally, the imagined community refers to the homeland itself, incorporating the entire population in one broad stroke.⁷²

As noted by Van Hear and Liberatore, most engagement was done through the household sphere and then through the known community. Sri Lankans did work for the imagined community through collecting funds, developing organizations, and even arranging protests to build awareness – similar to the work that most Armenians did in their steep immersion into American politics. However, Sri Lankans gradually focused on other spheres over the imagined community because of the perceived inefficacy involved with attempting to help the entire homeland (a long-term, complex predicament that cannot be easily resolved) instead of just family members and friends (a relatively short-term and solvable predicament). Understanding the intricacies between each sphere of engagement allows for a deeper analysis of how Sri Lankan and Armenian diasporas operate to help home when away from home while further enabling an increased comprehension of the thick web of diasporic networks and how new homes are initially built as temporary sites in the host state.⁷³

The Uyghur diaspora has an extensive history of engaging in diaspora diplomacy. They work to combat Chinese narratives of the Xinjiang conflict in effort to benefit the conditions of

⁷² Nicholas Van Hear and Giulia Liberatore, “Shifting forms of diaspora engagement among the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora,” in *Diasporas Reimagined: Spaces, Practices and Belonging*, eds. Nando Sigona, Alan Gamlen, Giulia Liberatore and H el ene Neveu Kringelbach (Oxford: Oxford Diasporas Program, 2013), 211-214.

⁷³ Van Hear and Liberatore, “Shifting forms of diaspora engagement,” 211-214.

their homeland and ultimately secure some degree of sovereignty from the Chinese state. Rebiya Kadeer, for example, is an exiled Uyghur activist residing in America who relies heavily upon social media to draw international attention towards the Communist Party's treatment of Uyghurs. As a member of the World Uyghur Congress, an organization of exiled Uyghurs, Kadeer regularly meets with world leaders, urging them to impose sanctions or directly intervene in China's efforts to erase the cultural border between Hans and Uyghurs. By using social media to promote and build awareness for Uyghurs' unique culture and identity, Kadeer further challenges common perceptions of Uyghurs as dangerous and prone to violent separatism at the international scale. Chinese statesmen, in recognition of her effort and widespread impact, accuse Kadeer of not only separatism but also terrorism, alleging that she spreads misinformation and worsens Han-Uyghur relations as a result.⁷⁴

Other members of the Uyghur diaspora stress the importance of children in preserving the Uyghur identity, especially as China enacts increasingly aggressive policies to assimilate Uyghurs into Hans. These Uyghurs, living outside of China, deliberately immerse children into Uyghur culture and traditions, educating both their own children and the children of those detained in Xinjiang's re-education camps on their Uyghur heritage and identity. Similar to how Kadeer herself into a mother that is constantly fighting to protect her children from threats to their safety and wellbeing, these Uyghurs are determined to ensure that these Uyghur children survive and uphold cultural borders between Hans and Uyghurs at the international level.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Radha Sarma Hegde, ed., *Circuits of Visibility: Gender and Transnational Media Cultures* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 268-280; Austin Ramzy and Chris Buckley, "'Absolutely No Mercy': Leaked Files Expose How China Organized Mass Detentions of Muslims," *The New York Times*, November 16, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/11/16/world/asia/china-xinjiang-documents.html>.

⁷⁵ Hegde, *Circuits of Visibility*, 268-280; Joanna Kakissis, "'Somewhere Like Home': Uighur Kids Find A Haven At Boarding School In Turkey," *NPR*, March 15, 2020,

Chinese Interference in Pakistan

Historically, China and Pakistan have enjoyed a strong diplomatic friendship. However, academics Clarke and Ke Wang stress that China has consistently demonstrated wariness towards the close economic, cultural, and religious connections between Pakistan and Chinese Muslims. In particular, China scrutinizes the relationship between Uyghurs and Pakistan. Not only does Pakistan's geographical proximity to Xinjiang allow Uyghurs to reach Pakistan with relative ease, but China worries that Pakistan will support separatist sentiments among Uyghurs. For example, China perceives the East Turkestan independence movement as a genuine threat to its national security because of the movement's intentions to declare a separate Uyghur state. China fears the movement spreading into Pakistan via migrating Uyghurs.⁷⁶

Uyghur communities are scattered throughout Pakistan and are subject to China's intense scrutiny and surveillance. Many Uyghurs, for example, report to global newspapers that they are cautious of their behaviors in Pakistan and avoid risky actions (e.g., publicly supporting the East

<https://www.npr.org/2020/03/15/798662027/somewhere-like-home-uyghur-kids-find-a-haven-at-boarding-school-in-turkey>.

⁷⁶ Clarke, *Xinjiang and China's Rise*, 135-136, 155-156; Ke Wang, *The East Turkestan Independence Movement, 1930s to 1940s* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2018), 5; K. Warikoo, ed., *Xinjiang - China's Northwest Frontier* (Milton Park: Taylor & Francis, 2019), 172-173, 175-178; Joshua Lipis, "Language School Shuts Down," *Radio Free Asia*, May 20, 2010, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/pressured-05192010164138.html>; Mihray Abdilim, Kutluk Haji Kadiri, Mamatjan Juma, and Joshua Lipis, "Chinese Consulate Pays Off Uyghurs in Pakistan For Dirt on Activists," *Radio Free Asia*, July 23, 2015, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/pakistan-07232015145425.html>; Dawn News, "Pakistan accepts China's version on Xinjiang's Uighurs: PM Imran," *Dawn News*, July 1, 2021, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1632539/pakistan-accepts-chinas-version-on-xinjiangs-uighurs-pm-imran>; Bradley and Evans, "'Nets Cast from the Earth to the Sky,'" 2021; Liuhto, "'China is after us,'" 2019; Shahid, "How Pakistan Is Helping China," 2021; Zuha Siddiqui, "China Is Trying To Spy On Pakistan's Uighurs," *BuzzFeed News*, June 20, 2019, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/zahasiddiqui/china-pakistan-uyghur-surveillance-ex-chinese-association>; Brent E. Huffman, "Pakistan Is Cracking Down on Uyghur Muslims Who Fled China," *VICE News*, May 21, 2021, <https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/pakistan-cracking-down-uyghur-muslims-who-fled-china>; Reuters, "Uighur militants eliminated from Pakistani territory: Asif," *The Express Tribune*, October 18, 2015, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/974921/uyghur-militants-eliminated-from-pakistan-asif>; Saud Mehsud and Maria Golovkina, "From his Pakistan hideout, Uighur leader vows revenge on China," *Reuters*, March 14, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-uyghurs-idUSBREA2D0PF20140314>.

Turkestan independence movement) out of fear that China will detain and hurt family members left behind in Xinjiang. China frequently bribes members of the Uyghur communities to report on each other, leading Uyghurs to practice extreme caution in private spaces as well as public spaces. China also alleges that certain community centers, language schools, or community members advocate Uyghur militancy and separatism, and successfully pressures Pakistan into shutting down these institutions or deporting Uyghurs back to China. “They want to make sure that Pakistani Uighurs can't be used by any militant group against Chinese interests,” Abdul Rahman Bukhari, a member of the Chinese Overseas Association, commented to BBC News.⁷⁷ This quote underlines how China works to prevent Uyghurs from finding comfort in Pakistan and how it carefully polices Uyghurs beyond its borders to ensure that Uyghurs do not engage in loosely defined “violent separatism”.⁷⁸

Despite Chinese surveillance, Uyghurs have integrated into Pakistani society. For example, many Uyghurs prefer to speak Urdu as opposed to Uyghur, demonstrating a greater familiarity and closeness to the language of the host state than the homeland. They establish themselves within Pakistani marketplaces by cultivating businesses selling traditional Uyghur clothing, rugs, quilts, or other items. Many Uyghurs have also obtained Pakistani citizenship, with newer generations generally acquiring citizenship through Pakistan’s birthright laws, while women typically marry Pakistani men. Although they obtain Pakistani citizenship, these Uyghurs still perceive themselves as Uyghurs – they make strides towards assimilating into Pakistan, but

⁷⁷ Jaffery, “How the Uighurs,” 2015.

⁷⁸ Lipes, “Language School,” 2010; Abdilim, Kadiri, Juma, and Lipes, “Chinese Consulate,” 2015; Dawn News, “Pakistan accepts China's version,” 2021; Bradley and Evans, ““Nets Cast from the Earth to the Sky,”” 2021; Liuhto, ““China is after us’,” 2019; Shahid, “How Pakistan Is Helping China,” 2021; Siddiqui, “China Is Trying To Spy,” 2019; Huffman, “Pakistan Is Cracking Down,” 2021; Reuters, “Uighur militants,” 2015; Mehsud and Golovnina, “From his Pakistan hideout,” 2014.

they do not deny or erase their distinct Uyghur identity. As mentioned, Islam is Pakistan's state religion, and, combined with the rights afforded to those with citizenship, Uyghurs are theoretically capable of freely practicing religious and cultural traditions without state interference. Pakistan's democratic political environment further allows Uyghurs to draw attention towards the Xinjiang conflict, but, as mentioned, Chinese surveillance prevents most Uyghurs from doing so.⁷⁹

Besides surveillance, Pakistan actively supports Chinese policies in Xinjiang. It will, as mentioned previously, readily deport Uyghurs and shut down institutions at China's request because Pakistan is more concerned with maintaining ties to China than protecting Uyghurs. If China becomes aware of or merely suspects that Uyghurs are engaging in political activism, increased religiosity, or both, Uyghurs become at risk of deportation back to China. Even with citizenship, Uyghurs lack legal protections and political representation because of Pakistan's relationship to China. This not only leads Uyghurs to be reluctant in approaching Pakistani authorities for assistance when subject to crime or racism, but it also further entrenches cultural borders between Uyghurs and Pakistanis. "In Pakistan, anyone can raise [their] voice for the Muslims of Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan but Uighurs can't protest against Chinese atrocities against their brothers as the Pakistani authorities would never let us do that," Bukhari remarked,

⁷⁹ Jaffery, "How the Uighurs," 2015; Liuhto, "'China is after us'," 2019; Shahid, "How Pakistan Is Helping China," 2021; Dawn News, "Pakistan accepts China's version," 2021; Hadid and Sattar, "My Family Has Been Broken," 2018; Krzysztof Iwanek, "The Deafening Silence of Pakistani Jihadists and Radicals on China's Uyghurs," *The Diplomat*, September 20, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/09/the-deafening-silence-of-pakistani-jihadists-and-radicals-on-chinas-uyghurs/>.

demonstrating how religious solidarity is easily discarded when Pakistan's economic interests are at stake.⁸⁰

As discussed previously, existing literature in the subfield of diaspora diplomacy argues that diasporic groups are most successful at influencing the foreign policy when the diaspora's goals do not threaten the host state's national interests or security. Hence, Uyghurs in Pakistan are unsuccessful at influencing Pakistan's foreign policy because the diaspora's goals – Uyghur self-determination and freedom for the homeland – threaten the host state's agenda – maintaining positive diplomatic and economic relations with China. China is a critical ally to Pakistan, with the recently established China-Pakistan Economic Corridor allowing China to make major investments into Pakistani infrastructure. Beyond economic interests, Pakistan relies on China's military and diplomatic support on issues such as the ongoing Kashmir conflict. Even as Uyghurs in Pakistan influence public opinion in their favor (as demonstrated by Pakistani husbands organizing increasingly larger protests to demand the return of their deported, detained, or otherwise missing Uyghur wives), Pakistani foreign policy remains unlikely to change. This argument is consistent with Shain's work, which posited that the diaspora is most successful at lobbying on behalf of the homeland when the diaspora and host state's goals are aligned.⁸¹

In May 2021, for example, Islamabad-based businessman Abdul Wali finally received an update on the whereabouts of his brother, who had been missing for several weeks. “[My sister-in-law] was informed by a few close friends of my brother that he had been kidnapped by

⁸⁰ Jaffery, “How the Uighurs,” 2015; Liuhto, “‘China is after us’,” 2019; Shahid, “How Pakistan Is Helping China,” 2021; Dawn News, “Pakistan accepts China's version,” 2021; Hadid and Sattar, “My Family Has Been Broken,” 2018; Iwanek, “The Deafening Silence,” 2019.

⁸¹ Dawn News, “Pakistan accepts China's version,” 2021; Saikat Datta and Kunwar Khuldune Shahid, “Protests loom in Pakistan over China's jailing of men's Uyghur wives,” *The Asia Times*, April 17, 2018, <https://asiatimes.com/2018/04/protests-loom-pakistan-chinas-jailing-mens-uyghur-wives/>.

local authorities,” Wali recounted, before going on to elaborate that the authorities had been prompted to act due to his brother’s alleged ties to the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) – ties that Wali vehemently denied existed.⁸² “My brother hasn’t touched a gun in his life. He is a preacher of Islam and has been targeted because he speaks up for his fellow [Uyghur] *imams* and Muslims, who are being persecuted in our home country, as the Muslim *ummah*⁸³ watches in silence.”⁸⁴ Hence, as Wali argues, the supposed ETIM connection was only the state’s flimsy justification for violently policing not just Wali’s brother’s expressions of cultural identity, but also activism and protest.⁸⁵

As Wali’s account indicates, despite his integration into Pakistani society, it has not ensured a stable and secure existence for Pakistani Uyghurs. Wali’s brother was kidnapped because of his efforts to build awareness of the ongoing Xinjiang conflict. Although most Uyghur activists and Western states such as America argue that Chinese responses to the conflict are tantamount to genocide, Pakistan publically disagrees. As succinctly explained by Pakistan’s former Prime Minister, Imran Khan, Pakistan places its relationship with China above its relationship with Uyghurs. “We have [a] very strong relationship with China,” Khan was quoted saying in July 2021. “And because we have a relationship based on trust, [we] actually accept the Chinese version [of the Xinjiang conflict]. What they say about their programs in Xinjiang, we accept it.”⁸⁶

Efforts of Umer Mohammed Khan

⁸² Shahid, “How Pakistan Is Helping China,” 2021.

⁸³ “Ummah” is Arabic for “community”. This word is widely used among Muslims to refer to the global Muslim population.

⁸⁴ Shahid, “How Pakistan Is Helping China,” 2021.

⁸⁵ Shahid, “How Pakistan Is Helping China,” 2021.

⁸⁶ Al Jazeera, “Pakistan’s Khan backs China on Uighurs, praises one-party system,” *Al Jazeera*, July 2, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/2/pakistan-imran-khan-china-uighurs>.

Khan, as previously discussed, is a teacher-activist in Pakistan who has been active in educating Uyghur children about their identity since the early 2000s. He has founded Umer Uyghur Trust, a non-governmental organization dedicated to improving the conditions of Pakistani Uyghurs. Khan's goals for cultural revitalization using ethnic schooling as a medium provides a case study for diaspora diplomacy. Khan's efforts to carve out space and recreate the Uyghur homeland through schools led to violence from the Pakistani state due to Chinese pressure on Pakistani statesmen. In the context of diaspora diplomacy, Khan's failure to significantly rally local Pakistanis into supporting Pakistani Uyghurs and believing the human rights abuses involved amid the Xinjiang conflict is in-line with existing arguments. Khan's activism goes directly against existing Pakistani policies and Pakistani interests – while Pakistan may have a theoretical and religious commitment to supporting the plight of their fellow Muslims, Pakistan has a greater commitment to keeping its relationship with China intact. CPEC has ensured that Pakistan is dependent upon China for economic and strategic support in all arenas, especially on the international stage. Pakistan gains nothing from acknowledging the realities of the Xinjiang conflict, and thus, Khan's work fails to resonate with the public or state and instead is subject to increasingly violent repercussions.⁸⁷

Pakistani Husbands and Uyghur Wives

With the increase of marriages between Uyghurs and Pakistanis, more Pakistanis are developing awareness of the Xinjiang conflict. As Pakistanis watch their Uyghur family members – wives, husbands, or children – be deported with hardly any notice, they become more inclined to protest. Their protests, however, are stymied by citizenship laws as well as Pakistan's

⁸⁷ Mohammed Umer Khan, "Umer Uyghur Trust," accessed February 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/umeruyghurtrust/>; VICE News, "Uyghurs Who Fled China," 2021.

relationship with China. Prior to 2018, most Uyghur women who married Pakistani men did not naturalize their children as Pakistanis. Their children were thus Chinese citizens through their mother, and China could demand their deportation. Once deported, Uyghurs are subject to intense surveillance or sent to re-education camps. Young children are typically separated from family members and sent to an orphanage. “They don't want the children to have Pakistani or [Uyghur] customs,” one Pakistani father mourned to National Public Radio when his wife and son were detained after arriving in Xinjiang to visit family, with the son sent to an orphanage. “They want the children to become Chinese.”⁸⁸ This quote further demonstrates how China actively works against Uyghurs developing a distinct identity at home and abroad, and how deliberately sending Uyghur children to state-run orphanages ensures that future generations of Uyghurs fail to retain knowledge of Uyghur identity and culture.⁸⁹

China detains Uyghur wives of Pakistani men and keeps them in re-education camps, with the state claiming that these women have links to religious extremism. Most Pakistani men marrying Uyghur women are from Gilgit Baltistan. For Pakistani men living in Xinjiang with their wives, this is a severe predicament. The Chinese government refuses to renew Pakistani men's visas and the men are thus forced to leave their children behind in Xinjiang.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Hadid and Sattar, “My Family Has Been Broken,” 2018.

⁸⁹ Dawn News, “Pakistan accepts China's version,” 2021; Hadid and Sattar, “My Family Has Been Broken,” 2018; Bradley and Evans, ““Nets Cast from the Earth to the Sky”,” 2021; Kathy Gannon, “Locked away, forgotten: Muslim Uighur wives of Pakistani men,” *AP News*, December 17, 2018, <https://apnews.com/article/ap-top-news-pakistan-international-news-islam-china-d87ac82db56c476aa3cde047b6407eac>; Datta and Shahid, “Protests loom,” 2018; Reid Standish, “Beijing Hopes To Replicate Pakistani Model For Returning Uyghurs To China,” *Radio Free Europe*, August 12, 2021, <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/beijing-pakistan-uyghurs/31406166.html>; Alice Su, Shashank Bengali, and Shah Meer Baloch, “A Pakistani father's ordeal: China seized his Uighur son and sent his daughters to an orphanage,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 25, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-09-25/china-pakistan-uyghurs-xinjiang-silence>; AFP, “China frees 'lost' Uighur wives but at a price, families say,” *Bangkok Times*, April 30, 2019, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/1669684/china-frees-lost-uyghur-wives-but-at-a-price-families-say>.

⁹⁰ Barker, “Chinese crackdown,” 2018.

A Pakistani man named Ali lost his wife in 2017. He says, “[The state does] sort of training where they teach them about Communism and prepare them to be patriotic citizens. My wife told me that Chinese police had come to her house and asked her about the calls from Pakistan and asked her to explain her links with ETIM. They never tell you anything, they just say your family will come back to you when they finish their training.”⁹¹ His words demonstrate the suddenness of how many of these Uyghur wives are arrested, often on a flimsy and secretive basis that leaves family members struggling to process the event.

Pakistani husbands are reluctant to talk about the increasing number of their wives being arrested in China because they worry that their activism could harm their wife and other family members in Xinjiang.⁹² Khan, the teacher-activist who operates the underground railroad between Xinjiang and Pakistan, comments that “hardly a few dozen Pakistani men approached the government for help. Their wives have been released but most people did not approach the government fearing a backlash from Chinese authorities. [...] More than 12 members of my extended family have been detained for merely saying their prayers, reciting the Holy Quran and for other religious activity. China is committing the worst kind of human rights violations. Millions of Uighurs are in these jails which they call educational centers.”⁹³ His words underline how Chinese statesmen specifically target religious expressions among diasporic Uyghurs, linking this behavior to ethnic consciousness.

⁹¹ Agence France-Presse, “Uighur Women Who Married Pak Men Vanish In China “Re-Education” Centres,” *NDTV*, March 25, 2018, <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/uighur-women-who-married-pak-men-vanish-in-china-re-education-centres-1828321>.

⁹² Khan, “Arrests of Uighur women,” 2018.

⁹³ Sattar Khan, “Pakistanis distressed as Uighur wives face Chinese crackdown,” *DW Akademie*, February 15, 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/pakistani-husbands-distressed-as-uighur-wives-face-chinese-crackdown/a-47540441>.

An anonymous trader from Gilgit Baltistan remarked that his wife was “living under surveillance. She went through an interrogation process twice last year [...] I have not seen my wife and children for the past two years. My family is psychologically disturbed because of the situation.”⁹⁴ Adding that his wife’s other relatives are now also accused of having ties to Islamic extremists, this Gilgit-based trader’s testimony highlights the emotional damages accrued by Pakistani-Uyghur unions due to political violence enacted by Chinese statesmen.⁹⁵

For many Pakistani husbands, they grieve not only for their wives, but further fear for their children. Mir Aman, a Gilgit native, stated that after his wife was arrested, “I am not allowed to meet her or talk to her over the phone. They haven't told me what crimes my wife has committed. My 18-year-old son was also arrested a month prior to my wife's arrest.”⁹⁶ Shafqat Ali, another Gilgit trader, says that, “My children are suffering because of their mother's arrest.”⁹⁷ Another man said that, after his visa from a Chinese embassy in Islamabad was rejected at the Chinese border, “I begged them to let me enter [...] My wife, my two-year-old son and eight-year-old daughter were there.”⁹⁸ Iqbal is a Pakistani businessman who in 2018 said that “My wife and kids were taken away by the Chinese authorities in March last year and I haven't heard from them since. [Chinese police] said my wife was in 'training' and the government was taking care of my kids. I begged them to let me talk to my daughters, but they refused.”⁹⁹ He was living in China but had to return to renew his visa, and further lost hope of reuniting with his

⁹⁴ Khan, “Arrests of Uighur women,” 2018.

⁹⁵ Khan, “Arrests of Uighur women,” 2018.

⁹⁶ Khan, “Arrests of Uighur women,” 2018.

⁹⁷ Khan, “Arrests of Uighur women,” 2018.

⁹⁸ Barker, “Chinese crackdown,” 2018.

⁹⁹ Agence France-Presse, “Uighur Women,” 2018.

family. The accounts of these men further demonstrate how these arrests split families and harm the Pakistani Uyghur community as a whole.¹⁰⁰

Ahmed is another man from Gilgit who married an Uyghur woman while he was working across the border. He moved to Xinjiang and had a child with the woman. His wife was suddenly arrested and charged with extremism. Ahmed says that “It is absurd. We are well-off people and my wife is a housewife [...] Now our life is destroyed. [...] Officials say my wife is at school, that she is learning Chinese and Chinese law. But school is morning you go, evening you come home. You cannot call school where a person is detained and not coming home for many months.”¹⁰¹ Ahmed is not sure that his wife is receiving the medical care needed for her epilepsy. His daughter is distraught, sending Ahmed messages on WeChat where she screams “Where is Mama?”¹⁰² Xinjiang authorities refused to renew Ahmed’s visa and his daughter is now separated from both of her parents. She is extremely traumatized. She is only able to talk to her mother for five minutes once every fifteen days.¹⁰³

Zaman Khan is also from Gilgit Baltistan. He is a gemstone trader. He married an Uyghur woman named Shermeen Khan and they had two daughters and one together. Then one day in 2017, “My wife and I had come to my hometown in Gilgit-Baltistan to meet my extended family; the crackdown had already begun. I was trying to enter Xinjiang but at a check post, they asked me to bring my wife. I came back and told my wife about this, insisting that she should not return to China but she protested, saying she did not commit any crime and that she would go back to her country. When we returned to Xinjiang, she and my son were detained [by security

¹⁰⁰ Agence France-Presse, “Uighur Women,” 2018.

¹⁰¹ Barker, “Chinese crackdown,” 2018.

¹⁰² Barker, “Chinese crackdown,” 2018.

¹⁰³ Barker, “Chinese crackdown,” 2018.

officials] [...] They say it is an educational center but it is a detention center where more than three million Uighurs have been detained without any trial. I have met my wife only thrice in the last two years and my son, I haven't met him even once [...] My two daughters cry for their mother. What terrorist act could she possibly commit at the age of 60? She has been arrested just for being Muslim. Four other members of her family have also been arrested [...] I cannot focus on anything. I am tired of consoling my little daughters who keep on asking about my wife. Their education has been badly affected. They look traumatized and have become reticent. [...] Pakistani officials have been saying that they are trying. I hate this word now. Why can't Pakistan take up this matter with the Chinese authorities? I worked there for 25 years. I was their guest and this is how they treated me. They not only detained my wife and son, but also sold my house that I had bought with a loan without our permission. My wife's house was recently robbed in our absence. I am deep in debt and my business has been ruined."¹⁰⁴

Rehman's wife went back to Xinjiang with her son because she wanted to introduce him to her family. She was detained upon arrival. Her son was placed in an orphanage. Rehman says that, "They don't want the children to have Pakistani or Uighur customs. They want the children to become Chinese. It's not a normal school. They teach them, they feed them, but they don't allow the children to see their parents. [...] It's a very difficult time. My family has been broken."

¹⁰⁵ Rehman says that his wife went back to Xinjiang unaware that there is a crackdown. "If I knew, she would never have gone," he says.¹⁰⁶ Their younger son was a Pakistani citizen and Rehman could take him back to Pakistan but their older son was detained.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Khan, "Pakistanis distressed," 2019.

¹⁰⁵ Hadid and Sattar, "My Family Has Been Broken," 2018.

¹⁰⁶ Hadid and Sattar, "My Family Has Been Broken," 2018.

¹⁰⁷ Hadid and Sattar, "My Family Has Been Broken," 2018.

In 2018, Pakistani husbands did organize a protest, but they were threatened by Pakistani police. The protest subsequently fell apart. Imran Malik, from Lahore, was one of the men who tried to protest, and he said that “It’s been three years now that I have been registering protests regarding [my] wife’s whereabouts. She went back to China in 2018, and I haven’t heard from her since. I don’t know where she is and how she is.”¹⁰⁸

However, with the Chinese government pressuring Pakistan to deport Uyghurs back to China regardless of their citizenship status, Pakistani men are mobilizing to protest against the Pakistani government’s actions regardless of backlash. According to locals in Gilgit Baltistan, if discussions with foreign ministers in both Pakistan and China fall through, the men intend to publicly protest and demand the release of their wives. A Lahori man named Malik, for example, had registered a complaint with the Chinese consulate. He said in 2018 that “Some of us have been able to connect to our wives once every few weeks, but I for one haven’t heard from my wife at all, for over a year. Many of us are now connected because we’ve been meeting up at embassies and offices. And since there has been no support from the government we will now launch protests for the sake of our families.”¹⁰⁹ Javed Hussain is a local government official in Pakistan near the China border. He says that “the Chinese authorities should at least allow the men to meet their wives and children. China is our friend and this incident will leave a bad taste.”¹¹⁰ This is significant.¹¹¹

In some instances public protest by Pakistani husbands has been productive, but not necessarily effective. Mir Aman’s wife, for example, was detained at a reeducation camp. He has

¹⁰⁸ Shahid, “How Pakistan Is Helping China,” 2021.

¹⁰⁹ Datta and Shahid, “Protests loom,” 2018.

¹¹⁰ Agence France-Presse, “Uighur Women,” 2018.

¹¹¹ Khan, “Arrests of Uighur women,” 2018.

two daughters with his wife and they live in Pakistan together. He said regarding his wife, “When they would see anything written in Urdu, a prayer mat or something related to religion, they would seize it. They want to eliminate Islam.”¹¹² He threatened public suicide before authorities granted him to spend an hour with his wife. He does not know her whereabouts. Mir says, “My mind just won't work. I sound incoherent, I can't think, I even forget what to say in my prayers.”¹¹³

Many husbands further comment that even after their wives returned from re-education camps, they remained haunted and under state surveillance. One Pakistani man from Rawalpindi, for example, saw his Uyghur wife get detained. She was released, but is still surveilled by authorities from China. He says that “She still has to take lessons, for three hours in the morning and three in the evening. Her phone calls are still being bugged while some of her relatives are still behind bars.”¹¹⁴

Sakandar Hayat is a Pakistani man whose wife was detained in Kashgar. He had been living in Pakistan with his son when his wife called in 2017 to say that she had been arrested. Hayat and his son went to the border, where his son was arrested. Hayat said, “Don't separate us [...] Question him in front of me. I'll be silent and he will speak truth.”¹¹⁵ However, the Chinese authorities were unmoved and curtly told Hayat to wait a week for his son's release. But it would take two years for his son's return and even after, Hayat's son was coerced into working for a Chinese company for low wages. His wife was released in 2019 but remains in Kashgar with severe health conditions. She will not speak of what happened. Hayat has three children with his

¹¹² Gannon, “Locked away, forgotten,” 2018.

¹¹³ Hadid and Sattar, “My Family Has Been Broken,” 2018.

¹¹⁴ Khan, “Pakistanis distressed,” 2019.

¹¹⁵ Su, Bengali, and Baloch, “A Pakistani father's ordeal,” 2020.

wife and while his wife and son were detained, his two daughters were sent to Kashgar orphanages. Hayat says that “It is very hard to leave your heart, your children, to live in a place worse than a prison.”¹¹⁶

Amid these overwhelmingly unsuccessful case studies, however, there are examples of Pakistani men demanding the return of their wives and succeeding. For example, Zumret Dawut is an Uyghur woman who spent two months in a re-education camp in 2018. Her husband, a Pakistani man, was then living in China. When the Pakistani consulate proved unhelpful, her husband threatened Chinese statesmen with stating his story to foreign journalists. It was only after this that Dawut and her husband were then able to escape to Pakistan and then America.¹¹⁷

Within the context of Pakistani history and gender dynamics, Pakistani (Muslim) masculinity is grounded around ensuring women’s honor and virtue is protected (e.g., honor killings during the Partition of India). With their Uyghur wives and children threatened, Pakistani men have mobilized to demand their security. Pakistani men fighting to reunite with their Uyghur wives ground their protest in religious and emotional justifications. They are not exactly an example of diaspora diplomacy but they remain a related example of how diaspora diplomacy can be successful. Ahmed, for example, claimed that protesting husbands could shut down the border and even CPEC, which is currently vital for Pakistan’s economy. Zaman also hopes that the international community can collectively pressure China to change its policies.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Su, Bengali, and Baloch, “A Pakistani father’s ordeal,” 2020.

¹¹⁷ Simina Mistreanu, “Uyghur Women Are China’s Victims—and Resistance,” *Foreign Policy*, March 12, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/03/12/uyghur-women-are-chinas-victims-and-resistance/>.

¹¹⁸ Khan, “Pakistanis distressed,” 2019; Barker, “Chinese crackdown,” 2018.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Although the Xinjiang conflict remains a key concern and well-written topic within the genre of Chinese studies, the conflict's spillover into neighboring states and the assembly of Uyghur identities and communities inside said states remains a relatively less-researched subject matter. Aside from Chinese studies, this thesis also enriches the status of South Asian studies because it examines ethnic minority communities within Pakistan and discusses how they live in perpetual insecurity due to Pakistan's dependence on China for economic, strategic, and military purposes. Finally, as the bulk of diaspora studies literature focuses on diasporic communities in Western host states, this thesis is valuable for examining the existence of a diasporic community in a non-Western host state in the global south.

This thesis introduced a valuable paradigm to the interdisciplinary field of diaspora studies. If diasporas are divided into the categories of stateless or forced, it becomes possible to identify three key variables that influence diasporic identity and behavior during their residency in the host state: a resolve to survive, nostalgia for the homeland, and the political violence that may envelope their existence. Considering how relatively unknown Bakare-Yusuf's work regarding the construction of diasporic bodies and minds remains within the overall field, this thesis prompts scholars to reconsider traditional approaches to diaspora and to delve more deeply into the human costs and emotional stakes inherent to their situation.

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