

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

RELIGION IN CHINA: PERSPECTIVES FROM CHINESE RELIGIOUS  
LEADERS

Washington, D.C.

Thursday, September 11, 2008

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

**Introduction and Moderator:**

JEFFREY BADER  
Senior Fellow and Director  
John L. Thornton China Center  
The Brookings Institution

**Featured Speakers:**

WANG ZUOAN  
State Administration of Religious Affairs, PRC

ADILIJANG AJIKELIMU  
Chinese Islamic Association

KAN BAOPING  
China Christian Council

**Panelists:**

DING CHANGYUN  
China Taoist Association

GAO FENG  
China Christian Council

CHEN SHUJIE  
Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association

JING YIN  
Buddhist Association of China

\* \* \* \* \*

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

## PROCEEDINGS

MR. BADER: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to Brookings. I'm Jeffrey Bader, the Director of the John L. Thornton China Center at the Brookings Institution. And we're delighted to have you here today.

Today is an unusual event in Washington's think tank world. I don't recall many, if any, such events featuring leaders and officials of China's religious community here in Washington.

We are very pleased to host this delegation of leaders from some of China's major religions. The group's visit and its presence here is a reminder of the extent and dynamism of the most important drivers of the U.S.-China relationship, namely the non-government sector.

The delegation is visiting the U.S. as guests of the Forest Hills Baptist Church of North Carolina, and the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty in Washington, D.C.

The principal hosts for the delegation are Minister Dee Froeber, sitting down in the front here, with whom I've had the great pleasure of working to arrange this event; Brent Walker, the former director of the Baptist Joint Committee.

I would also like to recognize Dr. Larry Harper, the Senior Pastor of Forest Hills Baptist Church. I would add that Minister Ferber has long been deeply involved in building ties between American and Chinese religious communities. And this delegation's visit is a product of that

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

commitment.

Their visit to Brookings is but one event in an extensive series of meetings during their visit, including yesterday on Capitol Hill.

Today's event reflects the desire of religious groups in China to expand their connections with people of faith outside China. For people of faith everywhere who believe in the universality of their message, this should be seen as a welcomed development.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to our guests in the Chinese delegation, seated to my left and my right. They are men of faith representing the China Christian Council, better known to Americans as the registered umbrella organization of China's Protestants -- Pastor Kan Baoping and Pastor Gao Feng; the China Islamic Association represented by Adilijiang Ajikelimu; the China Taoist Association, Dr. Ding Changyun; the China Patriotic Catholic Association, the Reverend Chen Shujie; and the Buddhist Association of China, Dr. Jing Yen.

The delegation leader, Wang Zuoan, the Deputy Administrator of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, will begin our program with a brief introduction. Then Mr. Adilijiang Ajikelimu and Pastor Kan Baoping will speak. We would have liked to have given everyone the opportunity to speak to you this morning, but in the interest of time, we've had to truncate the opening speaking opportunities.

After the presentations, the speakers, as well as the other members of the panel, will welcome the opportunity to answer your

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

questions.

Religion is one of many aspects of Chinese life, about which there is a relative dearth of understanding in the United States. Religious communities in China are viewed with uncertainty by some Americans because of the role of the state in registering them and constraints upon their activities.

Americans have a strong belief based on our own history that religions should be free to organize and worship without regard to state guidance.

I would also note that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which China has signed but not yet ratified, says that freedom of religion can be subject to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

Having lived in China and attended services of several faiths, I can personally attest that the worshipers at the churches I attended were true religious believers, that their services are genuine, and that it is frankly insulting to suggest otherwise, as some have done.

But that still leaves many questions unanswered about the degree to which religions in China are restricted -- questions I look forward to being addressed today.

I hope you will give a warm greeting to our visiting delegation of religious leaders, listen attentively, and ask them challenging questions.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

I'd like to turn the program now over to our -- to introduce our discussion to Mr. Wang Zuoan, the Deputy Administrator of the State Administration on Religious Affairs.

Most of this program will be in English. There will occasionally be some English-Chinese or Chinese-English, as needed. Thank you very much.

MR. WANG: Good morning. (In Chinese) I would like to just make a correction that the head of this delegation is Reverend Gao Feng. I'm just their consultant.

I have a great discovery this time during the visit that in formal speeches, you seldom hear them address as "ladies and gentlemen" first, instead you say "good morning" or "good afternoon" first.

MR. BADER: If I could just ask our interpreter to stand up and please speak a little louder.

MR. WANG: So I've tried a few times this time by saying good morning and good afternoon, and I feel good and because it will shorten the gap between you and me.

I have heard much about the highest level think tank in the United States, the Brookings Institution. Today, I'm extremely honored to be able to speak here.

Seven years ago today is an unforgettable day to people who love peace, not only in the United States, but also in the rest of the world. Terrorists hijacked airliners and crashed two of them into the Twin

Towers and the third one into the Pentagon. Thousands of innocent lives were lost.

Today, as I rode here, I saw the flag went down half, and I was sad. The 9/11 incident was a great shock for the world. It changed the world and also drew people's attention to new focus on religion.

Both history and reality disclose to us that religion can be a spiritual resource that creates peace as well as a deep root that grows conflicts.

Just as there is a need for inter-religious dialogue, so too there's a need for nations to discuss religious issues through dialogue. We all know the issue of religion has become a focus and a concern for both China and the United States.

This time we form a delegation of different religious leaders. The purpose of this delegation aims to explore the possibilities for such a discussion and dialogue on religious issues.

This year is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reform and openness in China. The Oriental country with ancient cultures has gone through tremendous changes. When people see a change, maybe people will see the growth of its GDP and also the skyscrapers in Shanghai.

But, in fact, we have deeper and more profound change in China. Such changes can be seen not only in economic life, but also in political and social realms, as well as in people's spiritual life.

A significant phenomenon is that more and more Chinese

people believe in religion. For instance, in 1979, there were less than two million Christians, but now there are at least 16 million practicing Christians or even more.

I believe that such a growing rate can rarely be expected in many other countries. Not only for Christianity, the numbers of believers of other religions also grow rather rapidly. The reason for such growth tells its own tale. In a changing society, the value orientation of people tends to be pluralistic. Being a value system religion inevitably becomes an important choice for people. In recent years, the Chinese government has made its priority to the implementation of religious policy. The attitude of common Chinese people towards religion tends to be rational and objective. The social environment is increasingly free for the development of religion.

Maybe you have already noticed that President Hu Jintao recently clearly pointed out that religious workers and believers can exert a positive role in promoting the economic and social development in China. This means that the leadership of China has a more positive attitude toward religion.

In fact, religions in China are playing a positive role in guiding the individual and family life and in constructing a system of values and social morality. All of these contributions are appreciated by the Chinese government and different circles of society.

It is predictable that religion can continue to grow over the

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190



long-term. This growth is quite normal during the process of modernization and the period of economic transition and social transformation.

What we care about is not the growth of religious people in numbers, but the positive role that religion can play in promoting social development in harmony.

Literally, the word Brookings shares similar meaning with the famous Chinese couplet: "The sea can hold the water from thousands of rivers, it is big because of its capacity. A person is great when he can be tolerant and forgiving of many other people."

It is necessary to have an inclusive and open minded spirit within a country. Similarly, such a spirit should be advocated within the international community.

The founding of the United States was closely related to its ancestors' pursuit of religious freedom. For this, we understand and want to pay our respect.

Nevertheless, in a world without stability, what is the most precious is to learn how to coexist peacefully, how to adjust to changes in the spirit of tolerance and how to remove hatred and cease conflicts through effective communications and dialogue. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. AJIKELIMU: Okay, it's a great honor to be here to introduce about Islam in China. I would like to introduce that the Muslim

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

ethnic groups in China there are 10 minority groups in China taking Islam as their original national religion. They are, as you know, Uygur, Hui, Kazak, Kirghiz, Uzbek, Tatar, Tajik, Dongxiang, Sala, and Bao'an.

And there are about 21 million Muslims in China, spreading over many urban and rural areas in a variety of provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions, inhabiting mainly in Xingjiang, Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, et cetera. Thus from the Muslims communities, centering around their mosques. Islam has extended profound influence upon their historical culture, ethics, morality life patterns, social customs and habits.

There are now in China 35,000 mosques in more than 45,000 imams in China at the moment, covering the whole country. As the social economy keeps growing and the people's living standard keeps being improved, many mosques were renovated and a lot of new mosques were built up.

After the founding of the new China, Muslims of various nationalities have gained great achievement and development in various fields of political issues, economy, and culture. In regions where Muslims are in great numbers, nationality regional autonomy is given. The Chinese government persistently pursues a policy of "ethnic equality and religious freedom." Muslims enjoy equal rights and share in the harmonious sunshine.

The 10 Muslim minorities and other religious and ethnic groups respect each other on their religious beliefs and help each other in

life. They are living in harmony, not any forms of conflict, and all of them are working hard together for a harmonious society.

The Chinese Muslims have always upheld the fine tradition of patriotism, being loyal to the country and faithful to the religion. For hundreds of years, they have worked hard cooperatively with other peoples, defending and building the country, and made great contributions in the fields of politics, economics, culture, and education.

Since China opened to the outside world, the living standard of Muslims in China has improved a lot, and they have made tremendous progress in all walks of life. However, the majority of the Muslims are living in the northwest China, which is comparatively backward in economy and culture for its geographical and historical reasons.

Therefore, the main challenge facing us is to develop our economy and education. So I would like to introduce about the Islamic organizations in China. Islamic organizations started to appear in the modern times of China. The majority of the Islamic organizations established in the early period were engaged in education, charity, and publication.

After the People's Republic of China was founded, the China Islamic Association was established in Beijing on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1953. It is the first of unprecedentedly united and nationwide Islamic organization in the history of China.

In the following years, to meet the actual needs of the

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

Islamic work and Muslim's religious life, 30 provincial Islamic associations and hundreds of Islamic associations at the city and county were set up all over China. There are now altogether over 420 Islamic associations at different provinces, municipalities, autonomous regions, and counties.

These Islamic associations serve as a bridge between the government and the Muslims, and are a great help for building a harmonious relationship between Islam and the society. And also on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2001, the China-Islam Affairs Guidance Committee was set up to be responsible for the work of the research and explanation. And it is a great event for the Chinese Islamic circle and would produce positive effects on the development of Islam in China, the reunification of the motherland, national unity, social stability, and the construction of a harmonious and well-to-do society.

So now I would like to introduce about the development of the religious work in the China Islamic Association in the new era. In the late 1970s in China as a reform and opening up to the outside world goes further, and the policy of ethnic and the religious affairs is totally implemented. The Chinese Islamic work and activities are enabled to be carried out comprehensively. And the foreign friendly contact of the patriotic Islamic organization tends to be internationalized, being in favorable condition of development.

So first we did the carrying out the religious work. In April 1980, the plenary session of the fourth Chinese National Islamic Congress

was held successfully in Beijing. It's an important meeting for the China Islamic Association and the new period.

It was decided at this meeting that the main task of a China Islamic Association in the new era is to assist the People's government to carry out the policy of religious freedom and develop the fine tradition of Islam.

Also, and we did the running the Islamic education, so China Islamic Association, the supreme Islamic institution of higher learning in China resumed recruiting students, and the Chinese Islamic education was restarted. And also we have nine provincial Islamic institutes now all over China.

And also, we did the running of *Muslim in China* magazine, the magazine published by Chinese and the Uyghur language.

And also, in recent years, we hold national Holy Qur'an recitation competition and the al-Wa'z competition, nationwide national competition program we began to start from 1995.

And the first Qur'an Competition was held in 1995 and the first national al-Wa'z Competition was held by the China Islamic Association in Beijing -- the contestants of various ethnicities to develop their sermons concerning Islamic law, doctrines, regulations, rights, philosophy, ethics, and the story of the Islamic sages. Some of them focused their sermons on how to develop Islamic culture, promote Muslims' morality, defend the dignity of the law, and maintained the

national unity, encouraging the Muslims to take an active part in the material and cultural progress of the country.

This competition enriched the traditional sermons and contents and themes, and played a positive role in propagandizing the Islamic teachings, developing Islamic moralities, and strengthening national unity and maintaining social stability.

The about two programs that are held alternatively every year increased a great influence on the Islamic circles, inspiring Muslims to recite the Qur'an and preaching.

Of course, and we have -- we also have undertaken the Islamic scripture reinterpretation program and developing of Islamic research, Islamic academic research program, and we publish so many Islamic books by Chinese and the Uyghur language, and because of the short time I cannot say any more.

So I want to take this opportunity to thank the organizing committee, and we hope the trip of our delegation deepens the understanding and the communication of the religion in our two countries and strengthens the friendship between our two peoples. Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. BADER: Thank you very much. Thank you.

MR. KAN: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I have been to the States for many times, but this is the very first time for me to speak at non-church institutions.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

It must sound very strange to you and to my colleagues as well that I always feel a kind of a cultural acquaintance when I'm here in the States. It's strange enough, why? That's because of John Dewey, the master of pragmatist philosophy and his great inheritor Richard Rorty.

In his entire life, Dewey advocated freedom and democracy - and that distillation in his pragmatist philosophy concerning democratic government. He stressed on that a matter should not be considered in relation -- should be considered in relation with other matters, but not to make judgment upon the matter itself in isolation from other matters.

He refused to take his own understanding as a sort of truth. He reminded people to understand and respect other people, but not to judge or criticize. He opposed to take one's own experience as a standard, and upon that to make judgment. And he advocated that people should have their own moral understanding and ethical norms on the basis of their own concrete existence.

A violation of the above principle will necessarily lead to autrarchy or hegemony. That is still his understanding toward a democratic government.

Dewey came to China and he delivered lectures and universities in 1919. He was entitled as the second Confucius in contemporary circles in China.

It's obvious that his thoughts corresponded to the thoughts of harmony, peace, and tolerance in Chinese cultural tradition, even

though the title might mean something derogatory.

Richard Rorty came to China in 1985 and also the year of 2004, and also delivered lectures in the universities. His lectures caused great interest among many Chinese scholars.

If there's one word that can describe the present situation in China it may be the word "complicity". China is so vast. It has a long and complicated history. It used to be a powerful empire, but was invaded and trampled by Western powers in the 19th century, and it became a semi-colony of Western countries.

In the early 1930s and '40s, China was invaded and occupied by Japanese, and over 20 million people were killed.

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, China started to reshape its confidence and restore its energy. It has been developing so fast that I even feel hard to catch up with its pace.

Chinese culture is a multi-culture that is composed and enriched by all the ethnic cultures. Any single event in China should be considered carefully against its complicated history and culture.

Any simplified conclusion or judgment may lead to mistake. So is the situation of our church in China.

I know that everyone here has an interest in the present situation of the church in China. As a pastor from China, I'm very happy to share with you the newly development of our church and its missions we are carrying on.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190



The modern development of the church in China can be characterized by two phases. One is the fast-growing period from 1979 until the end of the last century. The second is the mature development period since the end of the last century.

I believe that there's no single religion that's able to meet all the religious needs of all the people, particularly in a big multi-ethnic and multi-religious country.

That is why that there is a space for Christianity in China, and that is also the reason that our church developed very rapidly in the 20th century -- in the 20 years at the end of the last century.

It is because that there's no faith that's able to meet the religious needs of all people, there is a margin for the development of Christianity in China. That is why our Chinese Church stresses on its mature development now.

At the present, we don't have the latest figures of the church in China. According to the rough statistics in 2005, by the year of 2005, there were over 16 million church members, 55,000 churches and meeting points or home gatherings, whatever. In 2005, the pastors including 364 females, 1,739 associate pastors, including 625 females. 5,573 elders; 27,439 evangelists; 150,000 lay ministers; 18 seminaries and Bible schools; over 1,800 enrolled students in 18 schools each year, and around 9,000 students graduated.

By the end of the year of 2007, the Chinese Church has

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

published and distributed 44,370,000 copies of the Bible in 19 versions and eight ethnic languages and Braille Bibles for the blind as well.

We have also published meetings for books and audiovisual products on spiritual formations, theological studies, Bible studies, and so on. They are distributed to churches through over 70 distribution centers all over China. The Bible is available in every church and many beacon points.

Because of its introverted ethical understanding, the Chinese Church was marginalized in our society. That awkward situation hindered the prevalence of the Gospel in Chinese society and also obstructed the Chinese Church from being the light and the salt in our society.

Two of the major missions we are carrying on among many are training and the social service. We need to train qualified pastoral personnel and reinforce the capacity of management, financing, and evangelism of the Chinese Church.

We have also sponsored hundreds of training centers. We are also determined to intensify social service programs and develop the social function of our church to serve our society and bear witness to the Gospel.

We started and sponsored over 700 social service programs, including artistic rehabilitation centers, the senior citizens homes, church clinics, orphanages, HIV/AIDS prevention training programs, and so on.

Let me conclude my briefing on the present situation of the

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

Protestant churches in China with one sentence; that is, we are on the right track and we are trying hard. Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. BADER: Thank you much, Pastor Kan and thank you, Adilijiang Ajikelimu, for your opening remarks. I won't attempt to summarize so that we can get to questions and answers as quickly as possible.

I would just express appreciation for Mr. Wang, noting the tragic anniversary that we are observing today in the United States. We appreciate your remarks and the remarks by the two speakers about the growth of religion in China and the extent of the social services that they are providing.

Now I would like to open it up for questions--if you could please give your name and your institutional affiliation, and then tell us who your question is directed to. Down in the front?

MR. CHENG LI: Yeah, my name is Cheng Li. I'm a Senior Fellow at the China Center, the Brookings Institutions.

And first thank you all for traveling all the way to help us understand religions in China and thank you for your candid and also very informative remarks.

Now my question is about the relationship between religion and the Chinese Communist Party. As Mr. Wang mentioned earlier, this is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening and reform, one of the most important

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

changes in China is within the Chinese Communist Party.

So after more than 80 years, the Party finally opened the door for private entrepreneurs, or we call them capitalists. This is the result of Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents," that the Party not only represents the working class, but also represents the most productive force and also advanced elements in society.

Now my question is, is there any consideration in the political establishment, that the Party would also open the door for religious believers? Of course, based on my observation, there is already a lot of Party members who are religious believers. This is a Chinese version of "Don't ask Don't tell."

But the question is whether the Party will openly or officially open the door for religious believers. And if not, does that mean that religious believers still do not belong to, you know, the cultural elements; therefore, second-class citizens? Thank you very much.

MR. BADER: Cheng Li, is that question addressed to Mr. Wang?

MR. CHENG: Mr. Wang.

MR. BADER: Mr. Wang?

MR. CHENG: It can also go to other people.

MR. WANG: (In Chinese) Thank you very much for your question, and I've been asked this question many times by many people when I was here this time in the United States. First of all, I would like to

mention the principle that defines the relationship between the Chinese Communist Party and religion.

Our principle is that for political affairs, we work together.  
On the matter of faith, we respect one another

We all know that CCP believes in communism, and we are atheists. But atheism is not anti-religion. We believe that we need to have a good relationship with religious people. Chinese Communist Party members have to pay a great respect to people who have religious faith. And we also want to reach a political and economic consensus.

But if religious people want to participate and want to join the Communist Party, it may violate their ideology and faith values. It seems to me that this is the issue that is only concerned by the Americans. I've worked for the State Administration for Religious Affairs for many years, and I haven't heard of or haven't met any religious person who would like to join the Party.

A moment ago, you mentioned that some Party members are religious people. Yeah, this is a sign. It's a reality.

I think the Communist Party as a ruling party has to take this issue seriously. Although Communist Party members do not believe in religion, they have to pay great respect to religious people and they have to make great efforts to the implementation of religious policy.

Just now, you talked about that there's a difference between whether the Party will accept them or whether they, the religious people

want to join the Party.

Personally, I feel this is a difficult issue to deal with.

MR. JING YIN: Sorry. I just want to ask you one question.

If you put the question to the Pope, if he will allow his Christian advisors or priests to join the Buddhist religion, you know, to become a Buddhist follower, what would be his answer? Because this is the first time I heard such a thing. I never think I should join the Communist Party, I tell you the truth. Or if you ask followers of other religions to join Buddhism. That seems to me, will be the answer.

DR. CHENG LI: Well, we can look at things differently. In this country, religious believers could join political parties. The question is whether the door should be open or not. Of course, I do agree with Mr. Wang that there is a difference in terms of believers or non-believers.

But again, by definition, the Communist Party should not include the capitalists. So, again, this is a question. And if you cannot join the Communist Party, can you join some other political party? So this is also an important religious question.

So it's not so much about the Pope become a Buddhist, no, of course not.

MR. JING YIN: No, I mean, it's different cases. We have to, you know, mind our own business.

MR. BADER: Well, I guess I would just add in commenting on Cheng Li's question that I think it is a very relevant question, because,

after all, the Communist Party has an effective monopoly on political power in China. And so the question of what role religious groups, religious communities will be able to play in shaping the future of Chinese society depends, at this stage of Chinese development, on access to the Chinese Communist Party. So I think it is -- I think it is a not irrelevant question.

Okay. I saw hands in the back. The one on the right side? That's you.

QUESTIONER: Thanks. Now, Mr. Bader rightly pointed out at the beginning that it would be downright insulting, you said, to say that China's religious believers with the registered churches are not sincere. And I would take that a step further and say that it's equally insulting to suggest that the unregistered believers are not sincere -- the members of the house churches, of Falun Gong. These people face, as I'm sure everyone in this room is aware --

MR. BADER: So could you tell us who you are and what --

QUESTIONER: Oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

MR. BADER: -- your affiliation, please?

QUESTIONER: My name is Caitlin Ford. I'm currently a graduate student at the Elliott School of International Affairs and the Program Director of the Asia Vision Foundation.

As I was saying, the house churches and underground Christians, Falun Gong members, and members of other religions that don't follow the Party line, including Uyghur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists,

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

face severe persecution for their beliefs. They've been denounced by the government, as well as by the representatives of all five of these religious organizations, which are state run or state-controlled. They've been denounced as *xiejiao* or heretical or evil organizations.

Now Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have noted that the definition of *xiejiao* is based not at all on matters of theological orthodoxy or heterodoxy, but rather on whether a group submits to the authority of the state.

So to put it simply, if you're registered by the government and if you follow the government's line, you're allowed to practice openly. If you fail to do that, you are incarcerated and tortured and sometimes killed.

And my question to Mr. Bader and to the Brookings Institute more generally: would you be interested in holding a similar forum like this with the leaders of China's persecuted religious groups -- the Uyghur Muslims, the Tibetan Buddhists, the Falun Gong, the underground Christians -- to see how they weigh in on this subject?

And to the rest of the panelists, what can you all do to try to promote greater religious freedom in China and protect the rights of those people who don't practice in the registered faiths?

MR. BADER: Thank you for your question. The Brookings Institution promotes dialogue between people of different beliefs -- political, religious, social, economic, and others. We not long ago hosted



the Dalai Lama for an event.

I don't believe that it had the approval of the Chinese government. I don't believe that the Dalai Lama is registered with the Chinese government.

We had the Dalai Lama's special representative here, Lodi Gyari, give a presentation. Again, I don't believe -- I don't recall seeking authorization from the State Administration of Religious Affairs to hold that event. It had a very big turnout.

The Chinese government was not thrilled that we had that event. We have had numerous events involving Tibetan Buddhists, and for none of them do we request permission, authorization, or registration. That is the way we operate here.

When I said at the beginning that I thought it was insulting to suggest that the religions in China that I have observed are not true religions, I meant that based on personal observation. I was not making an observation about the house churches or the other believers that you are talking about, and I have absolutely no reason to question, nor do I question the sincerity of their religious beliefs, nor do I serve as an apologist in any way for the government's attitude towards unregistered religions.

We are delighted to provide a forum for any group at Brookings that has something useful and important to say on public policy issues, as long as they are basically peaceful in orientation.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

And I don't know if there's anyone else on the panel who wishes to address other aspects of your question. Please.

MR. GAO FENG: (In Chinese) I would like to make an explanation regarding the issue of house church. The term "house church" is brought by people in the West. In China, we do not use the term "house church". We use "home gathering".

In China, in the past 30 years, the number of Christians has grown rapidly. Christianity in China grows very fast, so the situation of Christianity in China is very different from other countries in Europe and in North America. A great difference is that we have lots of Christians, but we do not have enough churches.

I would like to give you one example. In my hometown, which is a county, there are 35,000 Christians. In the whole county there is only one church, which can hold 500 people. And on Sundays, we have three services, which means that 1,500 people can worship in their church on Sunday.

So apart from this 1,500 people, the rest of the people have to worship at home.

Some people in the West might think that those people who gather at home to worship are anti-government, and they are non-registered church members. So those people would think that apart from the 1,500 people, the rest are all persecuted. So I think those people who have this kind of idea have not been to China, and they did not really get

into the common lives of the Chinese people and the lives of Chinese Christians.

I was born into a fourth-generation Christian family. During the Cultural Revolution, people got together secretly in my home. At that time we had an elder, a leader of the service in our home, and so we called this elder our relative. People still get together in their home, so it's a home gathering since they can't afford to build a new church building.

So I think there are some misunderstandings on the concept of the house church that is understood by the West. Thank you.

MR. WANG: (In Chinese) I would like to make some comments. The Chinese government has never considered that those unregistered Christians belong to evil cults, and we never doubt their sincerity in religious beliefs. They are all God's people. They belong to one church, so we treat them equally.

Just now, as Reverend Gao Feng mentioned, and I think, well, the United States is a great country which often makes up great concepts. So one of the concepts, new concepts, is that the term of "house church". In China there is no official religious body or non-official religious body. They are all NGOs.

If you think that the churches that cooperate with the Chinese government can be called official churches, then I would say that many of the churches here in the United States are official churches.

A few years ago, some overseas organizations encouraged

some Christians in China not to register with the Chinese government, and they told Christians in China that if they register with the Chinese government, they are not true Christians; and they will not go to heaven, they will go to hell.

Some religious sites in China have not been registered with the Chinese government. It is because they were encouraged by overseas organizations that asked them not to register with the Chinese government.

But in recent years, we have also heard another kind of voice. Some overseas organizations accuse the Chinese government of not allowing registration for those people.

They told us that those Christians have to be -- those church buildings have to be registered, and they also have their lawful rights to get registered.

Regarding this issue, there's no problem with Buddhism, Taoism, and Islam. Only Christianity in China has this kind of problem.

So I think the Christian organizations in this country have to make their own reflection. We hope all the religious sites in China can be registered so that they can have lawful protection from the Chinese government. Thank you.

MR. BADER: Down in front here, along the aisle.

QUESTIONER: My name is Omar Kanot from Radio Free Asia. My question is for Adilijiang.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

Sir, you said in your presentation that the Chinese government guarantees religious freedom for all nationalities, including the Uyghur Muslims. But the religious education is banned for the Uyghur children under 18. Government employees, teachers, and students are not allowed to involve in any kind of religious activities, and they are not allowed to go to mosques to pray. And they are not allowed to fast during Ramadan.

So what kind of religious freedom is this? Could you please explain?

MR. AJIKELIMU: (In Chinese) Regarding the issues that you just mentioned, I would like to make a few remarks. I will first of all talk about Ramadan.

The first day of Ramadan begins on September 4<sup>th</sup> in China, and before that, we published the *Muslim Journal in China*, in two editions, one in Chinese, the other one in Uyghur.

I myself am the editor of the Uyghur version, the Uyghur edition of the *Muslim Journal*.

So I pay much attention to the publication of those articles regarding to the knowledge of Islam in Uyghur. The Uyghur edition of the Chinese Muslim Journal is the only magazine for Muslims in China, which is over 10,000 Muslims. I will get to your question. Real quick.

So on the second issue of the journal *The Chinese Muslim*, we have published a long article introducing all the customs and

knowledge about Islam in China, including all the rituals and its festivals and dates.

The purpose of this kind of introductory article is to educate our Muslims how to worship. So on the third issue of the journal, we also have a column, a Q&A column, talking about the knowledge of fasting for Muslims in China.

And we also printed the timetable for Ramadan. The purpose for us to do so is to give a full introduction to Muslims in China on how to observe their rituals. These articles are warmly welcomed and appreciated by Muslims in China. We received letters and phone calls showing their appreciation.

Before I came to the States this time, I went to Xinjiang to visit my relatives there. So I also attended the service in the mosque in Urumqi. You may know about that mosque.

What made me excited is that I saw so many people worshipping in that mosque. The members worshipping at the mosque include some communist cadres and also including some singers. And most of the worshipers are, you know, at their younger age or they are middle aged.

After the service, because there were so many people, I almost couldn't find my shoes. So this means that we have lots of people worshipping in the mosques. And last year I went to Kashgar City. I went there wanting to have an experience with the Muslims over there. I was

so happy because there were so many people there. It was a time after they were breaking the fast so that they had over 80,000 people.

In Kashgar, there were young people, children, as well as older people. Why children and young people are allowed to go to the mosque to worship? Because they were on holidays, so they have time to go to worship.

So we have normal religious activities among Chinese Muslims. You can tell from the articles.

So our magazine in Uyghur is very popular. I hope you can also subscribe. Our subscriptions have gone over 50,000 copies. This is a best-seller of magazines.

MR. BADER: Mr. Wang, did you want another word?

MR. WANG: (In Chinese) I want to briefly answer two questions. The first issue actually is regarding the religious education of the young people. In China, we uphold the principle of separation of education and religion. So religion cannot interfere with public education in China, so all children have to have public education. So I think this is similar to the system here in the States.

The second point is that the parents of those people who have legal custody to children can provide religious education to children. Parents and those people who have legal custody to children can bring the children to churches or other religious venues to have -- to let the children have religious experience, for instance, you know, kids are in

Sunday schools. It's very common in China.

Also we have some favorable policy towards some people whose special religious needs have to be paid attention to.

For instance, within Buddhism, there's one particular branch that requirea the children to stay in monasteries for a few months during their young childhood, and we allow them to do so.

The second issue regarding those government officials who are not able to attend religious activities. Just now, I mentioned that Chinese Communist Party members are not allowed to attend religious activities, but I did not say that government officials are not allowed to attend religious activities.

If government officials in China are not allowed to attend religious activities, it violates the law and this has to be corrected. In the U.S. newspapers, it often says that people who are under 18 in China are not allowed to believe in any religion. In fact, this is totally wrong.

Citizens in China have the right to believe in religion, and this is guaranteed in the Chinese constitution. And for the meaningful understanding of citizens, which means after you're born, you are a citizen. So, no matter at what age, you can attend religious activities. So I wonder whether I have answered your question all right.

MR. BADER: Okay. I'll take the question from the gentleman in this row.

QUESTIONER: Thank you very much, Mr. Bader. My name

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190



is Alim Satoff. I am the General Secretary of the Uyghur American Association. And my question is: China is, we all know, it's a communist, atheistic authoritarian state. According to the Chinese constitution and laws for the people in China, even in the autonomy ethnic regions, of course, as some of the representatives stated, that they do enjoy freedom and even human rights, according to China's constitution.

Deleted: it

But we all know that China is not a democracy. China is not ruled by law. Of course, the representatives will try to paint a very rosy picture of China's religious freedom and even human rights issues and Mr. -- his name is actually Adijiang Ajikerim, not Adilijiang Ajikelimu. That's the Chinese version of his name. Even he can't write his own name in his own language, because the Uyghur language is banned in China, from elementary school all the way to college.

This is the current reality. At the time when Adijiang is basically praising China's religious policies in East Turkistan, the Chinese governor, the Party Secretary, Wang Lequan just last month stated that the Chinese security forces will launch a life-and-death struggle against the Uyghur Muslims. And what he basically stated in Chinese was "*ni si wo huo*". In Chinese, it means, "You die, I live" basically. That's the Chinese government's policy toward Uyghur Muslims --

MR. BADER: Okay. Can you get to your question? We don't have much time.

QUESTION: My question is, at the time when he is praising

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

China's policies, Adijiang - my question, by the way, is specifically directed to him, not to any other gentlemen - the Chinese government now is initiating security crackdowns in Kashgar, Kuchar, Urumqi, and all the other areas. They do not allow the Uyghurs to have mass prayers. They are basically -- just recent reports even in the New York Times just a couple of days ago that the Chinese government does not allow the Uyghur women to wear veils or scarves and Uyghur men even to have beards. The Chinese government doesn't allow the Uyghurs to have mass gatherings in houses, in mosques, and anybody who opposes, who is not happy with this kind of rule is arrested.

The Chinese government even forced Uyghur restaurants to open. Because of the fasting of the Ramadan, some Uyghurs closed their restaurants.

MR. BADER: Sorry. Can you please get to your question? We don't have time for more speeches.

MR. SATOFF: So my question is, would you like to comment on this? Thank you.

MR. BADER: Thank you.

(Laughter)

MR. AJIKELIMU: (In Chinese) Regarding the issue of my name, I think Islam has this tradition that offers convenience to people, not offer inconvenience to people. So in my passport it says Adilijiang Ajikelimu. So this is also printed in my air ticket.

So I use this name for hotel reservations. So if I use another name, probably I need to have another passport in order to get an air ticket. So I thank you very much for your reminder, so next time when I apply for a new passport, I can use both names.

For Mandarin we use the *ping yin* system. So if I use Uyghur to pronounce my name, probably they will have a hard time to pronounce my name correctly. So my Uyghur friends would call my, you know, real name in Uyghur. It matches our pronunciation. They even call the abbreviation of my name. So I even have a short name. So this is a matter of our customs. So it has nothing to do with the issue of human rights.

So like you, you know, in the United States we have first name, middle name, and nicknames.

Regarding the issue of wearing a beard for men, the appearance of Muslims has nothing to do with the identification, with the identity of being Muslim. Wearing a beard or not does not mean you are a Muslim or not.

Whether you are sincere or not in your Muslim beliefs can only be judged by Allah. I think this is common with the other religions. So Allah did not judge from our appearance but looked into our hearts.

So our sincerity can only be told by our heart and by Allah. So if we do not behave well, we will not be accepted or appreciated by Allah.

So that's the greatness of our faith. And it is also the strength of our faith. So, well, I also don't see you wearing a beard. So this is a personal behavior, you know, a personal preference. So what matters is our faith. Okay.

(Applause)

MR. WANG: (In Chinese) Just now the gentleman's question mentions something that I said before.

QUESTIONER: And I asked you not to comment actually on my question. My question was directed to him. Thank you.

MR. BADER: Well, we -- if Mr. Wang wishes to comment, you do not have the right to tell him he cannot comment. This is a dialogue. But thank you very much. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Thank you very much.

We believe in a dialogue here. Okay. You're done with your piece of the dialogue.

I'm afraid that we are out of time. When I began this, I asked for challenging questions from the audience. I'm delighted to say that people have met that challenge.

When Minister Dee Froeber and I decided to hold this event, we fully expected that it would be an event that aroused some passions. That is not surprising since religion is a matter not only of theology, but also of passion. The event has not disappointed in that respect.

I hope that you all have benefited as much as I have from

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

hearing the delegation, and I'm sure the delegation has benefited from hearing your probing questions.

My take away from this is that we need to do more of these events in order to make people on both sides understand how the other side thinks about these issues.

I want to thank you all very much for coming, and look forward to seeing you again soon.

(Applause)

\* \* \* \* \*

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

**CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC**

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

/s/Carleton J. Anderson, III

Notary Public # 351998  
in and for the  
Commonwealth of Virginia  
My Commission Expires:  
November 30, 2008

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190