

The Uighur Genocide

The Chinese Authoritative Structure's Inherent Restriction of Religious Freedoms



Iss, Dolan. "Europe's Reaction to the repression of the Uighur minority group has been limited." *Politico.eu*, 14, September 2010. Source: <https://www.politico.eu/article/uyghur-genocide-china-why-is-europe-silent>

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INTRODUCTION

Tensions have begun to boil over between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and their Muslim ethnic minority, the Uighur population, as recent efforts of homogeneity unto the minority population have taken the form of familiar-looking detention camps. The detention facilities have been termed "re-education camps" and pursuing an overarching goal to divert the Uighur minority away from their religious priorities and to force a more traditional, atheist, and nationalistic mindset on the population. The presence of these facilities brings to light China's attitudes toward free religious practice.

RESEARCH QUESTION

To what extent does the CCP's alienation, persecution and attempted homogenization of their Uighur Muslim minority display the structural inability of the Chinese Authoritarian regime to allow their populations substantial religious freedoms?

China's authoritarianism inherently recognizes religious solidarity and diversity as a threat to the regime's consolidation of power due to:

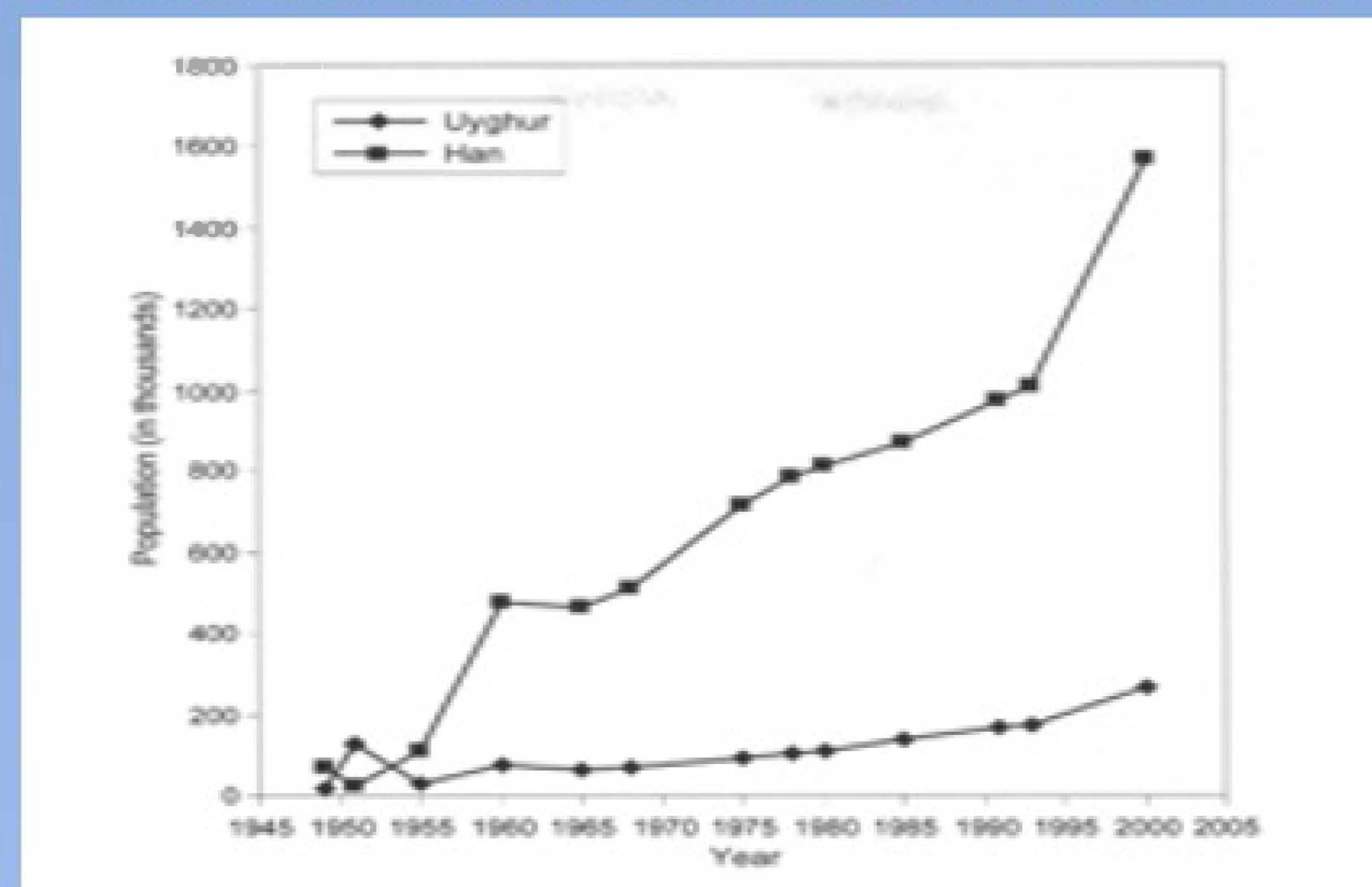
- 1) religion's capability to mobilize opposition
- 2) the digression from a nationalist mindset and priorities that intrinsic religious allegiance assumes on the individual.



Foust, Joshua. "Map of China and Xinjiang." *PBS.org*, Need to Know on PBS, 24, August 2010. Source: <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/need-to-know/opinion/terrorism-in-china/3050/>

FINDINGS

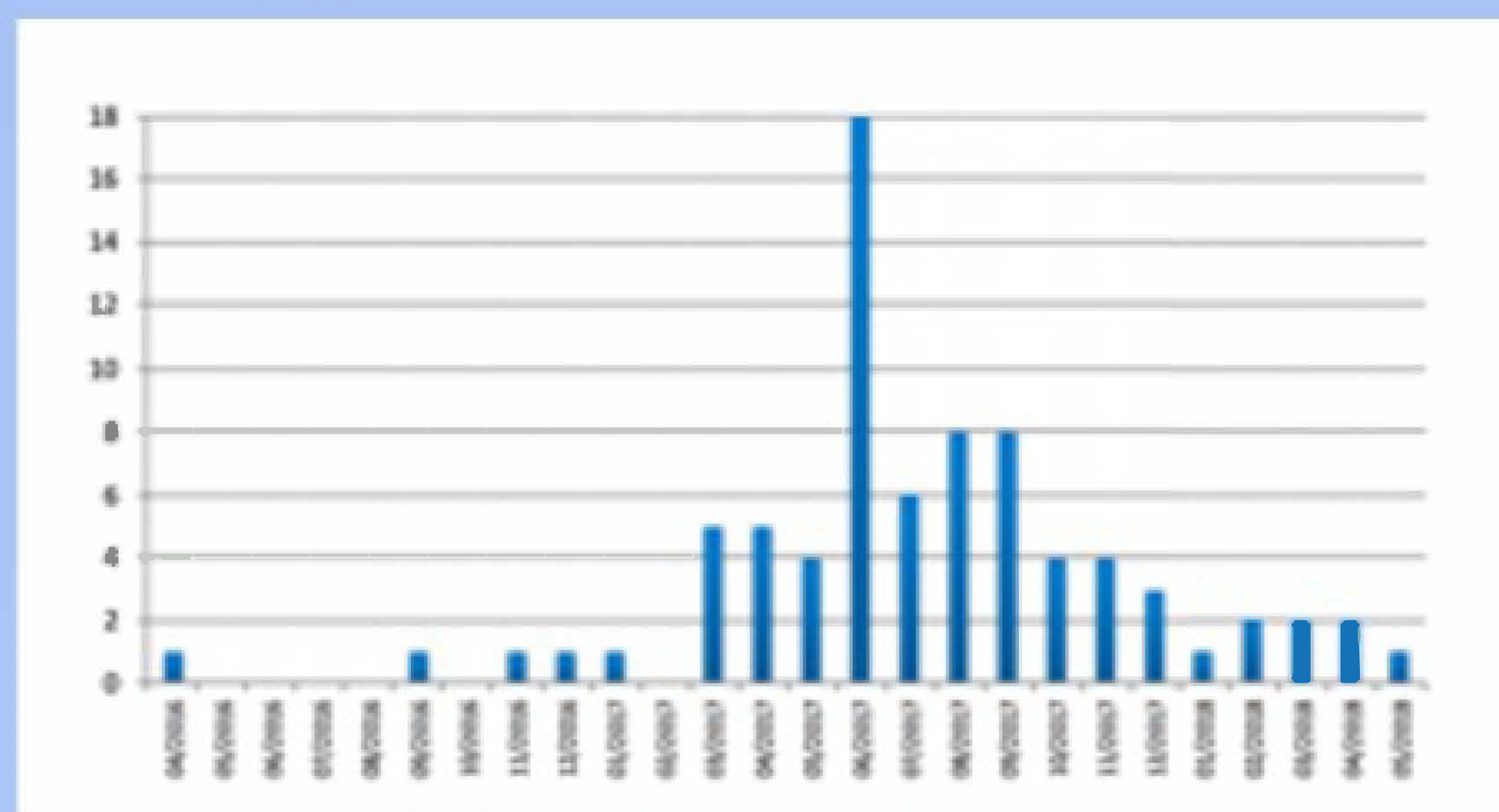
Slow economic development in the late 1970's prompted the Chinese Communist Party to liberate their market and privatize land. The Uighur struggled with the massive economic transition as they had heavily relied on the previous communist structure for job security and social integration (Zhao, 2010). The lagging economic development of the Uighur's Xinjiang Region of China led to the CCP to push a "Western Development Program" in 1999, encouraging mass immigration of Han (traditional, atheist Chinese) into the Uighur's Xinjiang. Preferential policies toward the Han have led the Uighur to remain at



Hopper, Ben and Webber, Michael. "Urumqi's Population by Nationality; 1949-2004" *Inner Asia*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2009), pp. 173-203

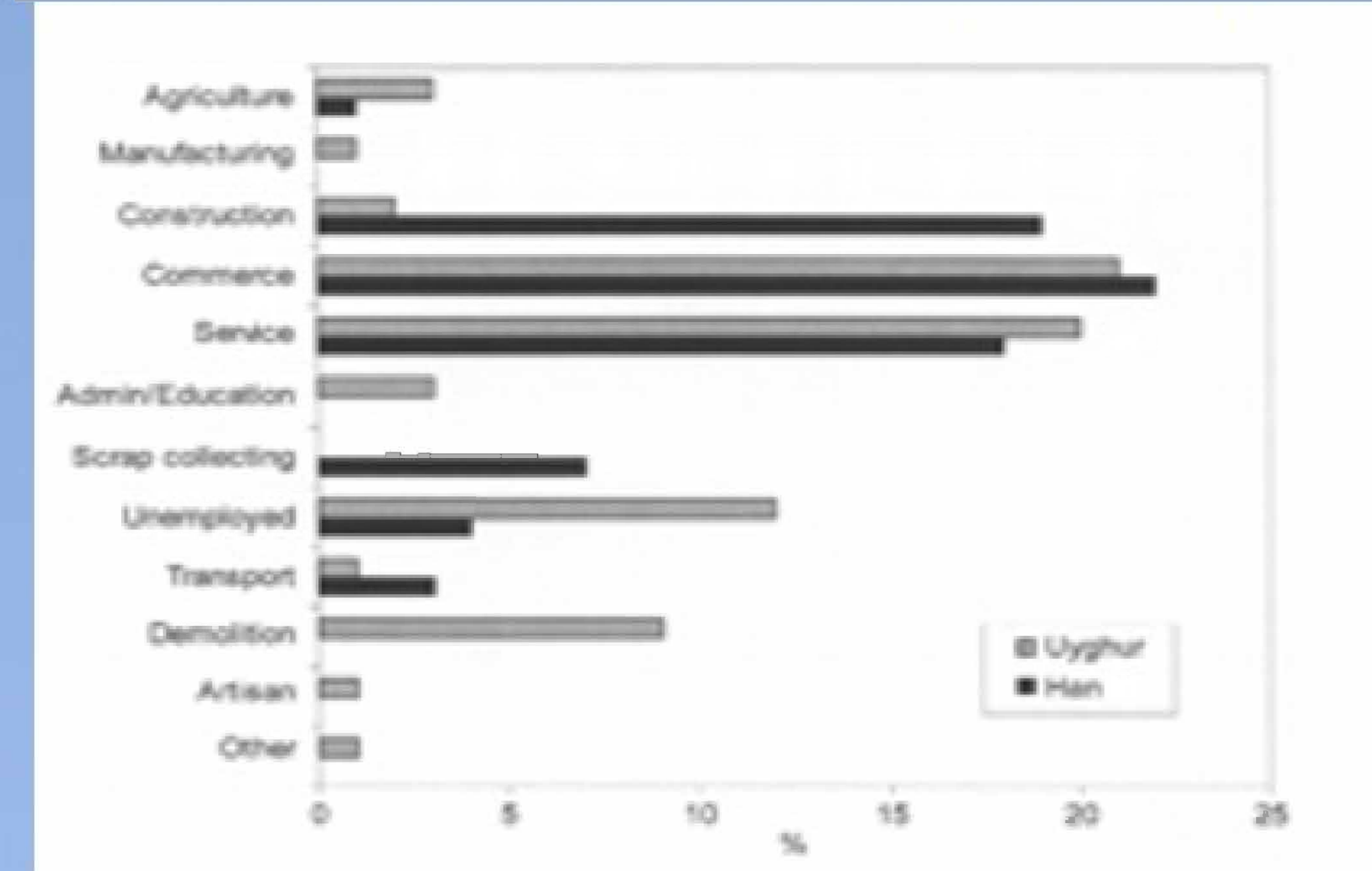
The Threat of Uighur Terrorism

While there is proof of terrorist organizations in Xinjiang in 2001, it has been established that radical Islam would only appeal to a small minority of the Uighur population, (Gladney, 2003). The Uighur's violent discontent stems from the **Social Cohesion Theory**, implying that the Uighur lost a connectiveness with their surrounding society at the turn of the century due to waves of reform. As the Uighur lose connection with their society, they seek solidarity amongst themselves and in their religion for a divine purpose. The increasing solidarity of the group will radicalize their religious ideals and their opposition to the regime that abandoned them.



Zenze, Adrian. "Number of Re-Education facility construction advertisements in 2016-2017" *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2019, pp. 102-128.

the lowest sectors of the economy with little access to higher education (Guo & Attane, 2016). Violent outbursts of discontent from the Uighur led the CCP to implement a "Strike Hard," policy, condemning religious practice for its apparent link to terrorism. A strong narrative of Uighur terrorist involvement was spread by government officials to win support for the extreme policy. The policy has caused disproportionate militarization of Xinjiang, imprisonment of Uighur leaders and students, tightening of Muslim religious policies, and massive increases in re-education camp construction and detainment in Xinjiang (Cornelison. 2015).



Hopper, Ben and Webber, Michael. "Sector by nationality, Urumqi sample 2004." *Inner Asia*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2009), pp. 173-203

The Church as Opposition

The Church, or dense collection of religious followers, can easily utilize its resources to mobilize opposition. The Church can provide a place for all societal classes to communicate as spiritual equals, allowing for an easy exchange of oppositional sentiment. The Church can organize the lowest and disadvantaged classes, who harbor the most opposition to the regime (Johnston & Figa, 1988). In its abilities to provide oppositional forces with resources, easy communication, and efficient organization, the Muslim "Church" of the Uighur is a threat to eliminate.

Intrinsic Religion Loyalty v. The Nationalist Mindset

Both intrinsic religion and the extreme nationalism of Authoritarianism require complete submission of the individual's mentality. As religious subscription prioritizes divine elements of life and the individual, extreme nationalism prioritizes the state, building an inherent conflict for the individual's subconscious. Flere and Klanjšek formed a comparative study finding religious individuals are more likely to have an "authoritarian" personality; they are more submissive to strong mental forces (Flere & Klanjšek, 2009). If the individual submits to religious ideals, it is difficult if not impossible to submit to an authoritative mindset with nationalist priorities. The Uighur have subscribed to their religion and are therefore incapable of willfully submitting to their state.

CONCLUSIONS

In analysis of the CCP's preferential policies, forced terrorist narrative and discrete installment of re-education camps, the Republic of China sees the Uighur's solidarity and religious mentality as adverse to the success of the state and their regime. The RPC analysis of threat applied to the Uighur can be applied to other religious ethnic groups that operate similarly and as strongly, concluding that the Chinese authoritative structure is inherently restrictive of free practice and expression of religious diversity.



Fruchter, Sruli. "Uighur Detainees in Local Re-Education Camp." *Yucommentator.org*, The Commentator, 20, July, 2020. Source: <https://yucommentator.org/2020/07/a-genocide-in-the-making-chinas-uyghurs-need-us/>

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