

ISLAM IN CHINA: CURRENT CONDITIONS AND STATE POLICIES

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Executive Summary

1. In the recent years, Muslim-related ethnic tensions and the Chinese government's to iron-fisted response have drawn controversies and attention from the international society.
2. Although the Muslim population in China is only 1.8% of its total population, it is of political and strategic importance to the central authorities.
3. China came into contact with Islam about 1,000 years ago through trade and conquest, and Islamic culture and Chinese culture have since mutually influenced each other.
4. The Islamic issue is intertwined with ethnic issues as most of the Muslims in China are ethnic minorities. China has tailored political, social and economic preferential policies for its ethnic minorities.
5. Beijing has taken great efforts to improve the social and economic conditions in Muslim-populated regions, but failed to reduce inequalities between the Han and Muslim minorities.
6. The thrust of the policy towards Islam is to promote its fusion with Chinese culture and to prevent influence of Arabic customs.
7. The Chinese leadership is inclined to exercise more control and surveillance of Islam than other indigenous religions like Taoism and Chinese Buddhism.
8. In the last few years, the Chinese Communist Party has implemented heavy handed religious policies on the Uighurs in Xinjiang. There is also an increasing fear among the Hui that the policies in Xinjiang will be extended to them.

9. In the long run, the policies might aggravate ethnic tensions between the Han population and Muslims groups like the Uighurs and Hui. The central government will likely face greater challenges in the future.