

Defending Chinese External Security with Religion

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I. The Significance of Religious Sovereignty in Foreign Relations

1. Religious remains and activities is to a certain extent an indication of national sovereignty.

Fishermen on many islands of the South China Sea must go to temples to pray for a safe sailing journey before going to sea. There are many historical remains on these islands which can strongly prove that these islands have been a part of the territory of China since ancient times, including Tin Hau Temple, The Eighteen Arhats Temple and Brother Temple etc, but many of them have been demolished. And the policy on religious liberty can hardly be put into practice before these remains are rebuilt. Meanwhile, another way to display our sovereignty is restoring traditional practices in the South China Sea such as sacrificial ceremonies. For example, in Defending Diaoyu Islands Movement, a Mazu statue was shipped from Taiwan to Diaoyu Islands because Mazu statue is the indication and symbol of territorial sovereignty of China. Vietnam has occupied several islands on the Nansha Islands and sent six monks to take care the temples on islands, which is also a way to show its territorial sovereignty and an indication of cultural sovereignty.

The government of Hainan province is restoring local temples step by step and has put forward a series of events which will be held in the South China Sea Museum of Religion to elevate the level of this museum to that of The Yellow Emperor Mausoleum or even national level so as to show our religious sovereignty to the world, these events include all kinds of religious gatherings, worship ceremonies for Mazu, and public memorial ceremonies.

2. The prevalence of religion plays a key role in the making of national foreign strategy

Islam is being marginalized in China in terms of their social influence and religious norms etc. and it is not a mainstream religion worldwide, so potential influence of Islam is very limited. Therefore, Islam in China needs to make itself a predominant religion in the society so as to gain its global position in Muslim world and strengthen its soft power.

II. Two Key Points Relative to Religion in National Construction and Development

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The religious preparation implies:

Firstly, whether religion has made its contribution to the national construction and the development of national military spirit.

Religious preparation involves ideology, organization and people. The rise of any big country is accompanied by the rise of a religion and this is the reason why we say “One nation prospers, One religion prospers”. For instance, Christianity has pushed forward the rise of United States by playing such an important role in the external expansion of the States such as “The Holy War”. As a part of religious events, religious war plays a big part in national construction. Some people in Japan made visits to Yasukuni Shrine due to their military spirit worshipped by Shinto and this spirit plays a big part in the external expansion of Japan. Although German is not such a typical case as Japan, Nazi in this country is just like a religion which supported racism theoretically. As the birthplace of missionary work, the overseas expansion of Britain was also greatly promoted by Christianity. Many explorations and expeditions were driven by religious powers. The growth of a big power is usually accompanied by the prosperity of a religion and the religion called the mental world or the spiritual shield is helpful for the development of the country.

Secondly, whether religions of other countries can be correctly treated under China’s Going Global Strategy.

A country where this issue cannot be solved will not become a big country or a long-lasting big power. America, for example, has suffered much loss because of this problem. On the one hand, Christianity contributes a lot to the development of America; on the other hand, America knew little about other religions and failed to develop a good relationship with these religions since too much attention had been paid to Christianity. Therefore, when it came to the changes in Eastern Europe in 1989, America was totally unprepared while ignoring the power of other religions.

III. The Challenges of China’s Religious Security

The religious in China includes Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, The Baha'i Faith, The Mormons and Orthodox Church. Religious variety brings about following challenges to our religious security:

1. The illegality of the Mormons in China

Many Mormons are politicians with excellent capability to participate in deliberating and administration of state affairs such as the two candidates of the last American Presidential Election——Romney who almost beat Obama and became the American president and Hong Guopei. However,

since the Mormons is still an illegal religion in China, many issues will come up if Romney, as the president of America, pays his visit to China. Besides, the growing number of international religions brings difficulties to Chinese policies on religious security.

2. The certain degree of illicitness of Orthodox Church in China

Orthodox Churches are called events rather than organizations in China. When Chinese president Xi visited Russia, Putin, the biggest contributor to Orthodox Church, arranged a meeting with the patriarch for Xi which caused much uneasiness for both parties.

3. The overthrown of traditional missionary work by The Baha'i Faith

The traditional thinking holds that missionary work which involves imperialism is relative to colonialism and neocolonialism. However, as many Baha'i were persecuted in Iran, The Baha'i Faith has shifted to Israel and it brought challenges to our religious security. With the rapid development of The Baha'i Faith among white-collar class in China, it is said that almost 50 thousand white-collars in Beijing are followers of the religion, of which a representative is the famous entrepreneur called Pan Shiyi.

4 The unfriendly relationship between Judaism and China.

Recently, the Jewish Memorial Park in Shanghai has caused a sensation, which brings another challenge to our religious security.

IV. Perspectives of Chinese Religion Strategy

1. Theories promoted by Chinese Buddhism must consist of "Theory on War" and "Theory on Peace".

None of the theories of Chinese Buddhism is related to war. As a country where Confucianism and Buddhism are dominant, China need to bring the theories on war into religious theories to show what we favor or against, at least the definition of a righteous war should be included. For instance, one of the two viewpoints held by American Christianity is Principle of Reconciliation, which is followed by Fellowship of Reconciliation (a school of Christianity). Under the influence of America, Many leaders of Christianity in China joined Fellowship of Reconciliation and they further encouraged more people to be their members. But Principle of Reconciliation finally broke down due to Japanese Invasion to China at the beginning of the War of Resistance against Japanese Invasion.

Therefore, Chinese Buddhism on the one hand should promote world peace and the elimination of war, making "the way of harmony" a worldwide idea, on the other hand it should make preparations for wars.

2. Religious collaboration can be promoted between China and foreign

countries through religious affairs concerning nationals living abroad and make it beneficial to China.

China is a country with the biggest number (somewhere between 550,000,000 and 60,000,000) of overseas Chinese around the world and the figure will amount to 60,000,000 if the number of Chinese stowaways is counted. However, such a great size of human resources had a bad effect on China rather than being a positive power. Many overseas Chinese still cannot make contributions to China, especially to Chinese religion.

There are five kinds of relationships between China and overseas Chinese, including blood relationship, geographic relationship, material relationship (foods like Lao Gan Ma sauce and meat floss), business relationship (overseas Chinese have their own product lines and business ties) and religious relationship. Religious affairs concerning overseas Chinese should be utilized to promote a worldwide religious collaboration between Chinese people so as to strengthen religious relationship as mentioned before and to weaken the religious influence of America and other western countries on China.

Overseas Chinese are able to make their contributions to Chinese religion in ways as follows: Chinese emigrants who have a weak connection with their hometowns can bring Chinese religion abroad and make it popular and local in foreign countries. Therefore, Chinese religion as a part of religious beliefs in China can also become a part of local beliefs in foreign countries. For example, overseas Chinese has made a big contribution to the spread of religious like Mazu and Taoism which are followed by many foreigners. Moreover, religious remains of China in South-East Asia and other places around the world should be brought back to China, which is a challenging work. However, we also boast many advantages such as abundant religious remains like Triratna and Taoism sanctums etc. It is necessary for us to depend on religious organizations to develop religious affairs involving overseas Chinese since these people cannot be regarded as religious ties between Chinese religion and foreigners for security concerns.

3. A development mode of religion featuring nongovernmental powers as the manager while the government supports behind the scenes.

As a good example of this mode, the events of Mazu Worship is apparently managed by a civil committee but in fact supported by the government. The direct confrontation between religions in two countries will results in many problems. For instance, many nongovernmental organizations from United States entered South-east Asia to promote their religious beliefs especially those of Christianity and they even smeared

local religions. And our effort to suppress the development of Christianity in China exactly offers a good excuse for them.

4. It is acceptable to fill the gaps in Chinese geopolitics with geo-religion.

For Islamic countries, China is not an enemy. With Buddhism being a golden bond between China and these countries as well as many overseas Chinese living in South-east Asia who are followers of Buddhism, China enjoys a relatively good geo-religion which can be employed to make up for the weakness of Chinese geopolitics. One important idea is to follow Chinese religion, which unlike Chinese politics, Chinese economy or Chinese culture has been accepted by many people. Meanwhile, China has put forward an idea of Post-missionary Era. Although missionary work is forbidden nowadays, religious interactions between China and other countries are more frequent and diverse than ever.

Translator/Li Ziyang

Introduction:

Center for Religion and National Security, Fudan University (University Think-tank of Shanghai)

The Center for Religion and National Security at Fudan University is aimed at becoming a Shanghai-based, nation-faced and world-radiated think tank, which is substantive, interdisciplinary, fluid, professional and international, with the capacity to provide countermeasures study, academic research and talent training. The center is mainly committed to the research in four fields: (1) religion and China's national security; (2) religion and current Sino-foreign relations and China's foreign strategy; (3) religion and Chinese social security and state building; (4) religious movements and phenomenon in the world. The center has four research centers (projects), including: Center for Religion and International Relations, Center for Religion in the United States, Center for Chinese Society and State Building, and Center for Vatican and Sino-Vatican Relations.

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