

Pairing Up : Interethnic Family Campaign and the Militarization of Multiculturalism in China's Xinjiang

Presenter

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In response to ethnic unrest in its northwestern region of Xinjiang, the Chinese government has, since 2014, initiated the so-called "People's War on Terror." While much of the world's attention has been directed to internment camps and the regime of forced labor, this talk examines the lesser-known "pairing up and becoming family" (jiedui renqin) initiative in which Han majority cadres are required to claim kinship with and live in homes of Turkic Muslims. This is a mass campaign of surveillance and occupation, but it also creates a forced time of togetherness that has to be made pass. Drawing on textual and visual diaries where Han cadres document how they spend time, study, cook, eat, have fun, and share beds in homes of Uyghur families, this talk looks at what it means to relate to someone whom one suspects as enemy from the start. In doing so, it aims to critically interrogate what makes the People's War on Terror distinct from its Global counterpart and show how multiculturalist project of China is weaponized against the very minorities it claims to recognize and include.

