Culture, Identity, and Political Action:
A Comparative Study of Tibetan and Uyghur use of Social Media

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ABSTRACT

CULTURE, IDENTITY, AND POLITICAL ACTION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TIBETAN AND UYGHUR USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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The recent rapid growth in information technologies such as the internet and mobile phones have added new possibilities for interaction and communication. As groups, movements, and political organizations seek to spread their message to the widest possible audience they have adopted new social media technologies to gather support for their causes. Tibetans and Uyghurs are ethnic groups in China and surrounding countries that contain strong social movements around their cultural identity, geographic location, and political independence. This thesis analyzes how Tibetans and Uyghurs maintain their cultural identity under the umbrella dominance of China through social media use, using the example of more than 70,000 tweets that show how Tibetans and Uyghurs use different actors, strategies, and content used to promote culture and identity.

1. INTRODUCTION

For centuries, people have used technology to promote themselves and their ideas. The recent rapid growth in information technologies such as the internet and mobile phones have added new possibilities for interaction and communication. As groups, movements, and political organizations seek to spread their message to the widest possible audience, they adopt the available information technologies and use them to serve their own agendas. In particular, in the past two decades, social movements have adopted new social media technologies to gather support for their causes. Tibetans and Uyghurs are ethnic groups in China and surrounding countries that contain strong social movements around their cultural identity, geographic location, and political independence. This thesis will explore how Tibetan and Uyghur social movements have adopted new social media such as Twitter and Facebook as a way to promote their causes and to maintain their cultural identity under the umbrella dominance of China.

Tibetans and Uyghurs each feel their culture, identity, and desire for autonomy is limited by China, and while there are many voices within each ethnic group, there is a strong desire by many for greater control over their cultural and political interests. Ackerman and DuVall (2000) discuss the democracy movement in China associated with Tiananmen Square, which coincides with growing repression of Chinese minorities seeking autonomy and freedom. As social movements, the actions of Tibetans and

Uyghurs tend to be nonviolent, which Erickson and Kurtz (2012: xii) define as "… an active fight against conditions of oppression, injustice, exploitation, and tyranny." Adding expanded communications options through the internet and mobile phones to a social and political context of minority dissatisfaction has led to the current online venue for social action (Buettner and Buettner 2016). In the case of China, Jacobs and Kurtz (2013:6) state that "… the virtual public created by the Internet has also frustrated the efforts of the Chinese government to resist the celebration of human rights as a globally shared value."

Tibetans utilize the status of the Dalai Lama and a global network of Buddhist supporters to provide visibility, assistance, and financial support. In contrast, Uyghurs lack the focus of a recognized international leader and have only recently sought the visibility and international activism that Tibetans have utilized since the 1980s. These two groups have been selected for the comparative study because they share some similarities, while exhibiting important differences. These ethnic groups have a traditional home in what today is part of modern China and have a similar status under Chinese rule, i.e. that of "autonomous" regions that on the surface recognize cultural independence, but in practice provide little autonomy.

While experiencing similar treatment and marginalization by the Chinese state, Tibetans and Uyghurs have created organizations and social movements around cultural identity and independence that differ significantly. The research prompted by analysis of Tibetan and Uyghur social movements and use of technology focuses on how social media are used by Tibetan and Uyghur political interests and the composition and meaning of social media content.

The thesis will first discuss three themes associated with technology and social movements: 1) Culture, identity and politics; 2) Technology and media; and 3) Digital Activism. These three perspectives provide an understanding of the use of technology to promote identity and cultural causes, which will be applied to a comparative study of the Tibetan and Uyghur diaspora. The technologies discussed in this thesis include the internet as a network that overlaps with the communication system comprising mobile and landline telephones. The physical infrastructure is the foundation for software and applications used for communication and the transfer and management of information. Social media applications, such as Twitter, use mobile phones and internet connected computers to communicate and spread information. The comparative study of Tibetan and Uyghur use of these technologies will focus on the scale and scope of social media operations and include content and sentiment analysis of their media use. The concluding analysis will show how different ethnic groups have adopted and embraced social media in different ways even though they seek similar goals of independence and recognition.

Background

The scale of information and communication technology use is significant, and with access to media comes the ability to voice concerns and to use the technology as part of political action. As the internet was evolving, Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) recognized the importance of a media strategy for both news media and social movements, emphasizing the importance of audience and entertainment. The International

Telecommunication Union (ITU 2015) estimates that there are 1.06 billion landlines (14.5 per 100 population) and 7.09 billion mobile phones (96.8 subscriptions per 100 population) worldwide in 2015. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU 2015) estimates that there are 1.05 billion landlines (14.5 per 100 population) and 7.09 billion mobile phones (96.8 subscriptions per 100 population) worldwide in 2015. Computers in the home applied to 45.4 per 100 households, although many mobile phones serve as computer equivalent technologies, so that 49.0 per 100 households have internet access at home (internet connected computers + mobile phones) with a total of 43.4/100 people accessing the internet worldwide.

Global averages do not show the disparities in access to information technology, but access in many developing countries rivals or exceeds the developed world. For example, the International Telecommunications Union (2015) reports that the world average for mobile phones is 96.8 subscribers per 100 population, with the lowest rates occurring in Africa (73.5/100) and Asia/Pacific (91.6/100) and all other regions exceeding 100 subscriptions per 100 population. Within these regions there are also high levels of access that are close to or exceed US levels of 110 mobile phones per 100 population, such as Botswana (167.3/100), Cambodia (132.7/100), Egypt (114.3/100), Indonesia (128.8/100), Mongolia (105.6/100) or South Africa (149/100). Access to computers shows greater disparity with only 10% of households in Africa or 36% in Asia/Pacific having a computer, compared to over 80% in Europe, but the convergence of technologies means that mobile phones often serve as small portable computers and afford internet access to users. With all of these countries showing that much of the

population owns two mobile phones (or sim cards), which shows that owning more than one mobile phone is much more prevalent than in the US with 91% ownership as of May 2013 (Pew Research, 2013). There are multiple reasons for owning multiple phones/sim cards such as business, illegal/black market activities, or as ways to bypass government firewalls or censorship.

The scale and growth in mobile phone use and internet access is shown in the following figures with data for the countries containing the majority of Tibetans and Uyghurs. Figure 1 shows mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, with many countries showing more than one subscription per person on average. Noteworthy is the recent rapid adoption of mobile telephones in the region especially between 2004 and 2007, with even the lowest adoption rates in 2014 being close to 80 mobile phones per 100 inhabitants. Mobile phone use is important because it is an increasingly common way to access the internet in many countries, for example, Asia has 3.06 billion mobile phones of which 1.07 billion are active on social media, which is an increase of 21% on a year earlier. The share of web traffic using mobile phones is estimated by We Are Social for several Asian countries ranging from 21% in Hong Kong, 24% in Vietnam, 26% in South Korea, 40% in China, 41% in Singapore, 45% in Thailand, and 46% in Turkey (We Are Social 2016). This demonstrates how over time and across countries internet use is growing through mobile phone access. Initially, internet use only required a landline and a desktop computer, but over the past decade access through wireless and mobile has expanded the reach of the internet.

Another perspective is shown in Figure 2, which shows levels of internet use in the same countries. The takeoff of internet use lagged mobile phone use by several years, with internet access growing rapidly after 2007 for some of the countries (Kazakhstan, China, Uzbekistan, Bhutan, and Kyrghzstan) while the other countries, such as India and Nepal, have experienced more gradual adoption. One challenge with these data is that the convergence of computers and mobile phones makes it harder for users and social scientists to know exactly how access is obtained. What the data shown in both figures can show is the rapid adoption and use of information technologies as the context for this study of social media use. The rapid uptake of mobile phones and access to the internet in these countries quickly changed the ability of residents to access information and to communicate locally and globally. The speed of adoption may also have taken authorities by surprise, which then required new controls and filters for governments to maintain their management of information flows to the population.
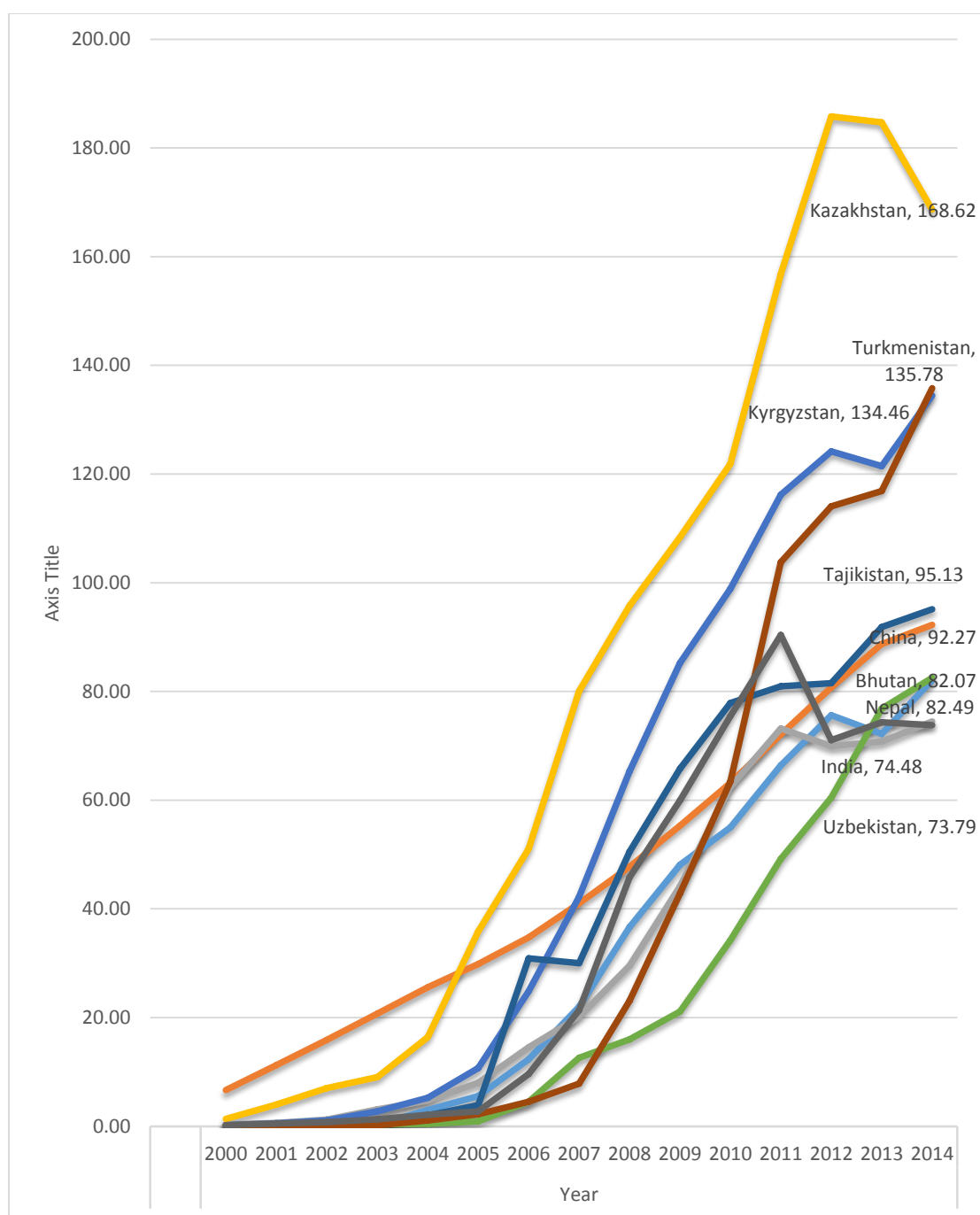
Figure 1.1: Mobile Cellular Subscriptions per 100 Inhabitants 2000-2014

Source: ITU (2015) data
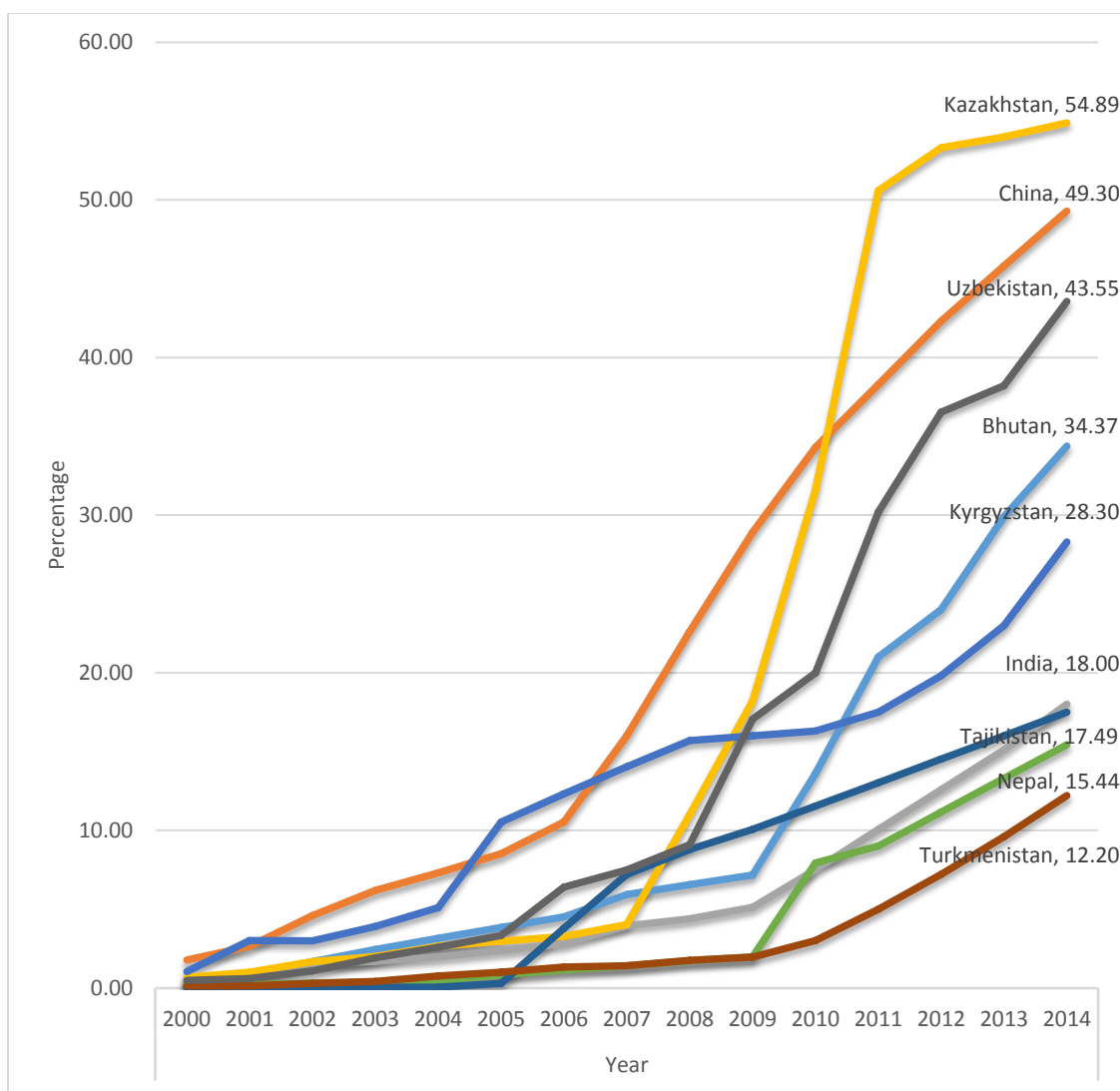
Figure 1.2: Percentage of Population Using the Internet 2000-2014

Source: ITU (2015) data

Moving from access to information technology and use of the internet, to the use of specific applications, shows the popularity of social media. The most active social media sites worldwide include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and LinkedIn (Pew Research Center 2014). Facebook (2015) reports 1.49 billion monthly active users

and 1.31 billion mobile monthly active users for June 2015, while Twitter (2015) reports 320 million active users with 80% active on mobile devices sending over 600 million tweets per day. Instagram, owned by Facebook, reports over 400 million monthly users. While users are likely to be active across different social media platforms, these data indicate the scale of interaction.

For the countries of Tibetan and Uyghur populations there is also considerable access and use of social media. For January 2015, We Are Social (2015) reports that China has 629 million active social media accounts (506 million based on mobile phones) with average daily use of social media of 1 hour and 42 minutes, which exceeds television viewing (1 hour 27 minutes). Due to limits on access to some sites, Chinese use is concentrated on domestic social media platforms such as WeChat, Sina Weibo, QZone, Tencent Weibo and Youku. India has 118 million active social media account of which 100 million are mobile phone based. Average daily social media use is 2 hours 31 minutes, exceeding television at 1 hour 58 minutes. The most popular platforms are Whatsapp, Facebook, and Twitter. The dramatic contrast between China and India can be attributed to the fact that China now has a much more affluent and educated population than India, with a much higher literacy rate that would enable use of social media. Per capita GDP in China in 2013 was US$7590 and in India US$1882 (World Bank 2015), while China's literacy is 96.4% compared to 71.2% in India (CIA 2015).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Analysis of technology and social movements rests upon three themes drawn from sociology and related social sciences: 1) culture, identity and politics, 2) technology and media, and 3) digital activism. This literature review also includes discussion or relevant Tibetan and Uyghur examples of social media.

Culture, Identity, and Politics

In *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity,* Calhoun (1994) builds on the Western tradition of identity construction expressed by Aristotle and Plato (Arendt, 1958), Arendt (1958), and Foucault (1978). Calhoun sees identity not as a collection of an individual's characteristics alone, but also the recognition an individual receives from external authorities. Calhoun gives the example of rank in an organization conferring identity separate from the characteristics of the individual.

Identity is more than characteristics; it is also cultural and ideological. It is established social characteristics that distinguish a person from others. Calhoun contrasts a traditional sense of identity based on kinship with a modern conceptualization that references the individual, their relations, and their networks. His contribution, however, is to recognize the power of networks as part of the identity building process. The

recognition of networks makes Calhoun valuable for the study of online communities, although it can cause problems for identity because "Modernity has meant in significant part the breakup – or the reduction to near-irrelevance – of most all-encompassing identity schemes." (Calhoun 1994:11). Kinship remains important although it is tempered by modern social context. "Kinship still matters… but kinship no longer offers us an overall template of social and personal identities." (1994:11).

Another perspective of tradition is provided in Eric Hobsbawm's (1983) essay about the creation of traditions. With traditions shown as an important element of culture, Hobsbawm contrasts activities that carry meaning as distinct from activities that are simply routine. Traditions become formal when ritualized with intent, so that a practice gets meaning through the intention of the user. In the case of Tibetans and Uyghurs, each group has religious and cultural practices that are part of their identity, and when they wish to promote their identity they do so through their traditions. Hobsbawms approach can be applied in that traditions can be invented as a form of expression in the face of Chinese authority, while China can introduce new practices that it invents as traditions to oppose or dilute Tibetan and Uyghur identity.

In a modern society the balance of identity is shifting away from the self and more to recognition through networks and social relations (Calhoun 1994). This means the ability of the individual to control their identity faces greater challenges because the individual holds less power over the external definition of their own identity. This also means identity building must actively consider the external context as individuals construct their own identities. For a person, identity can be largely controlled, but for

those with a public profile or for social movements, the external perspective exerts increasing influence. As people and organizations move to the political space they lose part of their prior identity and gain a potentially altered identity to suit their context. This approach also means that external forces can impose an identity onto someone even if they reject or oppose that characterization.

Identity politics are political because they displace their identities others wish to recognize. An individual with a political role will seek to promote an identity at the same time others are trying to provide an alternate interpretation. One of the earliest statements about identity that applies in this case is by the philosopher, Montague (1906), who argued that someone's identity could have a number of different perspectives, which informs Calhoun's view that external forces can shape identity. Montague criticizes the concept of absolute identity and argues that an individual or entity has multiple identities. The implications for this research are that entities may know themselves in one way but others seem them differently. For example, Uyghurs and Tibetans may see themselves as freedom seekers while the Chinese government labels them as protestors or even terrorists.

As an entity moves into a political space they may displace their existing identity with one that they wish to portray along with others who wish to define that identity differently. For example, the Dalai Lama, before moving into a political space/role, had a non-entity political identity. This means initially he had no political identity but was defined by his religious identity, but as soon as he moved into a political space it displaced his previous identity in the political space. Either as a non-entity identity or an

identity created/recognized by another (China), the Dalai Lama has an identity of peaceful religious leadership that he created himself in a nonpolitical way, while China defines him as a political entity who lacks authority. Discussing the political role of the Dalai Lama, Robertson (2014) argues that it is the Dalai Lama's global activism that keeps the Tibetan issue in the news, and that without him the issue could be forgotten. The challenge for Tibetans will be that China controls the selection of the Dalai Lama and with the death of the current Dalai Lama will be able to gain more power over the identity of Tibet.

Adopting a perspective on identity that recognizes the power of external perspectives raises recognition and validity by others to a role in shaping identity. In addition to critical theory, this perspective also is a part of symbolic interactionism, which sees an individual's reality defined in part by the social interactions they have with others. As more people and organizations create online identities and interact globally, they are also open to being characterized by others, so that individuals are influenced by others perceptions of them (Blumer 1969). External recognition and perception removes some of the power of the individual in the making of their identity and actively or reluctantly gives it to other interests. It may be necessary to have external recognition as part of the identity construction process, but it comes at a risk of losing control of a person's identity. For example there is identity tension between China and Tibet and China and the Uyghurs as each group tries to construct a globally recognized perspective that serves their interests.

Tibetans promote a peaceful religious social movement, which China portrays as external political agitation. Uyghurs seek to portray themselves as peaceful Muslims, while China promotes an image of terrorism and anti-state activism. In his analysis of eco-terrorism, Loadenthal (2013) shows how government can portray a group or individual as a threat and use that status to contain their actions. This approach is used by China against Tibetan and Uyghur activists and has been particularly effective against Uyghurs as their portrayal as Islamic terrorists has received support from the United States and other countries that also see Uyghurs as a threat now. In these cases China uses the non-recognition of each group's identity as a way to defuse the power of each group. Non-recognition is as powerful as opposing recognition if you seek to discredit an opponent.

External recognition can be a powerful force and can even obliterate identity and culture if exercised by a dominant and repressive group. Through history groups have lost their identity by having their cultural practices banned or outlawed. A recent example in Xinjiang, China shows the recasting of cultural attributes not as identity creation, but as a legal action. Calhoun (1994) recognizes the importance of law which is exemplified by recent Chinese actions. China's desire to marginalize Uyghurs has used the law to ban headscarves, and to force Muslim storekeepers to sell alcohol and tobacco. The failure to ignore the religious practices that define Uyghurs gives China the power of law and recognition as a way to undermine the Uyghur's cultural identity.

At a time when recognition [or the "politics of visibility," as May Joseph refers to it in *Nomadic Identities*] is increasingly important, the power of non-recognition is also

greater especially in the political identity space. One strategy is to deny the authority or existence of opposing individuals or groups, which in the past led to actions such as erasing people from official photographs and reports. Calhoun's approach can be applied to China's relationship to Tibet as it both refuses to recognize the Dalai Lama and at the same time creates an alternate identity for the Dalai Lama's replacement. This strategy combines non recognition with alternative identity creation to isolate Tibetan separatist movements.

In discussing the role of recognition Calhoun also notes the significance of social relations and networks in identity creation. Calhoun defines networks as social connectivity, which lends itself to the analysis of social media and the internet. These technologies facilitate social networks and make them global, thereby providing recognition and reinforcement via these organized networks of social relations. Individuals and movements would use these networks for reinforcement, but opponents would use them for non-recognition and alternate identity creation.

Calhoun (1994) emphasizes the role of networks as part of the recognition process. Identity is not only formed through culture or ideology, but reinforced through organized social networks. The role of networks has at least two dimensions, first, the importance of social relations verify and confirm identity, especially if those networks consist of people with similar world views. The more diverse the opinions of a person's social network the less likely they will reinforce a particular identity. Networks also play a second role in that the power of recognition when it comes to defining identity will depend upon who is recognizing a person's characteristics. When Calhoun (1994) first

wrote, the internet had only recently been commercialized and the concept of social media had yet to be fully realized. Writing at a time when e-mail and news (mass media) was the most likely information network available, Calhoun logically focused on social relations as the basis for his book. Since writing the book, however, networks have gained a great deal in scale and scope because they now function globally and attract more attention.

The concept of recognition in defining identity remains important or has become more important because the internet and social media have extended the range of potential recognition audiences. Recognition in the internet era is multi-dimensional across many different factors. It is now possible to promote an identity globally and seek recognition well beyond traditional spheres. This elevates regional identities and issues from the local to the global because they now have the potential to reach much larger audiences. Countering the potential size of the recognition group, is the greater competition and noise in getting noticed globally.

For example Tibetans, in particular the Dalai Lama, have been very successful building global networks that reinforce their identity and promote their views. Tibetan interests are sophisticated users of Facebook, Twitter, and other media to reach a global audience with their preferred identity. In response China has been challenged to counter the positive global view of Tibet using the same social media strategy with an opposing message and alternate identity. In contrast, the research reported later in this thesis will show that Uyghurs have not been large scale or successful users of social media and have lacked the charismatic identity that Tibetans have been able to promote. In this case

China has been far more successful in its media campaigns to discredit Uyghur interests by showing them as terrorists and a threat to Asian security.

In 2004 Calhoun looked at network society from the perspective of information technology He calls for greater attention to be placed on how culture is produced in public and not to see it as simply as the characteristics of individuals or groups. As he notes, "…we need to ask how effectively the public opinion formed can in fact influence social institutions and wielders of economic, political, or indeed cultural power." (Calhoun 2004:248). This concern about the power of public opinion connects to his 1994 book that notes the importance of recognition as part of the identity construction process. Calhoun calls for the development of a global public sphere that is open to and supports activism and discourse.

Issues of culture and democracy are further addressed by Seyla Benhabib (2002) in her book *The Claims of Culture*. The focus is on culture and politics in the West with emphasis on culture and identity politics. Benhabib connects the identity of the self to political and social movements with emphasis on multiculturalism, which is recognition of the diversity and variety of cultures expressed in many western democracies. With globalization and extensive migration many once homogeneous countries find themselves comprising a number of distinct cultures with differing political and social agendas. Benhabib notes shows the transition from culture of the individual to the group and then to an institutionalized form that takes on a political character.

"Culture has become a ubiquitous synonym for identity, an identity marker and differentiator. Of course, culture has always been the mark of social distinction. What is novel is that groups now forming around such identity markers demand legal recognition and resource allocations from the state and its agencies to preserve and protect their cultural specificities." (Benhabib 2002:1).

In discussing culture, Benhabib (2002) identifies three mistakes that are commonly made in the literature, first is the error of seeing a culture as being easily defined. Second, that cultures are synonymous with population groups. And third, cultural differences do not cause a problem for politics and policy. Extending this approach recognizes culture as having a lack of clarity when it comes to the nature of culture and identity. It would also be a mistake to take surface characteristics of a population and ascribe to them a specific cultural identity. In its expression culture can also lead to political issues as cultural groups should not be assumed to have a simple or easily directed political agenda.

In defending social constructivism Benhabib (2002) distinguishes between observers and participants and in particular criticizes the way that observers impose unity and coherence on cultures from their external perspective. This approach shares similarities with Calhoun in that he recognizes the power of recognition as part of the process of defining cultural identity. In contrast to the external observer, participants share in the practices and narratives of culture and have a different perspective because of that experience.

Benhabib defines multicultural politics as having three elements: first, the discourse theory of ethics; second, the dialogic and narrative constitution of the self; and third, discourse as deliberative practice that utilizes action and shared understandings of culture. This suggests that awareness in cultural education produces a narrative that defines and advances cultural identity. She sees two problems in this approach as they are commonly applied, which is assuming group formation is not dynamic and a pre-occupation with what a group is. This approach emphasizes the evolution of political action based on culture and shows that group identity must be seen as changing rather than static.

Benhabib asks what processes are involved when groups adopt a political stance. For example Tibetans and Uyghurs have very different identities in the past, but, domination by China forced their political mobilization around autonomy, separatism or independence. In the absence of a democratic system that accepts multiculturalism, these groups confronted a dominant culture that left no room for cultural differences to be recognized or accepted. While Tibetans and Uyghurs have long standing cultures, their formation as political forces is much more recent.

In analyzing the identities of repressed groups Benhabib contrasts the democratic theorists interested in how culture is expressed in civil society with the multiculturalists who want to identify groups and provide theoretical explanations for their behavior. The goal of a deliberative democracy has three elements of egalitarian reciprocity: first, equal recognition of each culture; second, voluntary self-ascription, which allows the individual to define themselves and not be defined simply by the culture of their birth; and third,

freedom of exit and association allows for individuals to be recognized as part of the groups they choose. In defining the positive cultural benefits of deliberative democracy it's also possible to recognize those that lack any of these elements. In some societies cultural identity is determined by heritage or language and individuals may not easily change the groups they belong to or wish to join, or with whom they are associated against their will.

Bruns et al (2010) found political blogging in Australia was controlled by a very small circle of hyperactive bloggers and columnists who were dominated by the professionals paid to blog and a few independent highly active unpaid bloggers. Another political analysis by Auer (2011) produced analytical maps of social media that showed how political actors fit into political order, and the ways that political elites recruit skilled social media platforms and users to better navigate new technology. Golbeck, Grimes and Rogers (2010) and Jackson and Lilleker (2010) found basic use of social media in the United States Congress and British Parliament but the studies only had small samples. In the British case, gender and age were the strongest personal factors with women aged 35-54 most likely to use social media. Party affiliation and seniority were the biggest political factors, especially by the senior MPs from the 3 largest parties, particularly Labour and Liberal Democrats. Also, the rapid growth of social media means that these studies, which were conducted several years ago, may be different today as social media use is much more common and sophisticated.

In China, Tibetans and Uyghurs are constrained and classified by their surface characteristics and lack the ability to be recognized as different cultural identities. An

example of an anti-democratic act as defined by Benhabib (2002) would be China's ban on the wearing of headscarves by Islamist Uyghurs. The actions of China resonate with Benhabib's discussion of *laicité* and French attitudes of the wearing of headscarves. The irony revealed by these two cases is that the banning of headscarves by France was in support of a multicultural ideal, while the same action by China is in support of a homogeneous society and denial of Islamic identity.

Technology and Media

In *Transforming Technology: A Critical Theory Revisited*, Andrew Feenberg (2002) addresses the link between technology and society, when he notes that

> A good society should enlarge the personal freedom of its members while
> enabling them to participate effectively in a widening range of public
> activities. At the highest level, public life involves choices about what it
> means to be human. Today these choices are increasingly mediated by
> technical decisions. (Feenberg 2002:3)

Feenberg's perspective, as well as many who study digital technology, includes critique and discussion on Marx, Foucault, Habermas and Marcuse. Feenberg recognizes Marcuse's pessimistic stance on technology, but also offers a more hopeful interpretation. He notes that technology can harm, but it can also be designed to be a positive force. In this way Feenberg seems to see technology as neither neutral nor unique, but a product of its design and society. In his approach Feenberg shows that technology is socially

constructed and the intention of the designers and users is a crucial element in its ultimate

impact. Feenberg stresses his idea about designing technology in 'the right way' as a way

to deal with the socially constructed nature of technology. Society shapes technology just

as much as technology shapes society, this happens at different rates for different

societies causing a divergence of all societies based on their design of technology and

response to technology.

Having created the internet, current society is also challenged by some of the

consequences of technology. For example the technology that affords great

communication and interaction can also be monitored and recorded for other purposes.

Feenberg's belief that technology can be designed to be good or bad is seen in the

opposition of many to the invasion of privacy that the internet now allows. In digital

technology how something is used is as or more important than how it was designed. The

intention of a technology can quickly be forgotten or misused. Very rarely is a

technology used exactly as its intended use. This does not have to be bad, many of

humanities technologies came from "misusing" new technology, such as the first uses of

text messages. When Feenberg is discussing the design of a technology this goes beyond

the planning and engineering stage and includes the post-release state of the technology.

How society takes a finished technology and utilizes it forming a feedback loop. How the

technology affects the society, and the society affects the technology. (Snapchat, texts,

Arab Spring).

Feenberg emphasizes that design plays an important part in technological

outcomes and this is evident in the net neutrality issue. The internet can be used in many

ways, but the net neutrality debate has system owners wanting to design a multi-tiered system with different prices and quality of access. Feenberg would recognize in this issue the role of intent and design in making the internet do something that it does not have to do nor is it programed specifically to do. Just as system owners during the industrial revolution utilized new technologies to disenfranchise workers, today we are seeing a similar pattern.

One of the core themes of Feenberg's work is the role of design as part of technology. In the past this was particularly important because technology such as machine tools and automobiles could be designed for more or less safety depending upon the interests of the producer. One distinction that needs to be made for computers and the internet, however, is that these systems have a range of applications from the specific to the universal that depend on software design and the choices made by users to determine how devices are used (Kitchin and Dodge 2011).

Unlike task specific technology like the looms that prompted Luddite sabotage in the 19th century, computer technology can be tailored to multiple uses so that design becomes a matter of intent. Feenberg recognizes that society shapes how technology is used, but the challenge for the internet is that the technology has multiple uses that are not always evident. It's possible to observe the loom and recognize if it is safe or not, but it is difficult to use a computer and know whether it harbors any threat to the user. Safe design for the internet, therefore, is a matter of protocols and regulations to safeguard the interests of society, and those interests are politically determined. A further insight by Rey (2012) is that work is coercive so that employees do not have a choice about

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engaging with technology, but the exploitation of web content needs to recognize that use of social media is not the result of coercion. This view can be refined in that economic exploitation of web content may be different to other uses, such as state monitoring.

The internet is a pervasive but largely invisible electronic system that is frequently used without much thought or analysis. Feenberg argues that we need to be aware of and involved in the design of these systems. The role of public participation takes on a political form because the things that the internet enable are largely determined by regulation and the market. In a 2009 interview with Andrew Light, Andrew Feenberg noted that the Internet was becoming the 'framework of our lives' and that "If it is not democratized, at least to some degree…then I think it will become a very oppressive environment." (Feenberg 2009:2).

Users of the internet may not be aware of the privacy or commercial implications of their use of the internet nor be able to recognize subtle manipulation. The invisibility of the design makes it harder for society to understand what is happening. Occasionally issues do rise to the surface and prompt a public response such as the recent net neutrality debate, but generally the complexity of the system makes it difficult for the public to comprehend its design and many uses. Discussions about control and access to the internet is more than just an issue of content, but it is also a design issue that Feenberg would recognize as integral to the power and control exerted by the technology.

As social media, the internet, and video games become a common form of communication and entertainment, they can also be used for political expression and repression. Cyberspace is no longer open but a contested space where media are filtered

and controlled and people need to assess the trustworthiness of content. The many

political uses of social media, such as news, blogs, and tweets are just starting to be used

by politicians as citizens learn how much they can trust these messages. These media can

also be used to coordinate terrorist attacks and possibly prevent them too. Even

entertainment, in the form of video games, can be used to promote political agendas.

Feenberg raises the important issue of how technological systems are

designed. As computers and the internet advances from a hardware oriented system to

one run on software, this view is even more important. Kitchin and Dodge (2011) in

Code/Space: Software and Everyday Life consider how software now defines how

information technology is used and how people are affected by it. One troubling element

they raise is that the invisibility of software and what it does means that the public is

often unaware of the implications of the design of the systems they use. Kitchin and

Dodge use flying and health care as examples of systems that are hidden but essential.

One subject Kitchin and Dodge do not consider is the design of social media and

the ways that information and people are collected and tracked by information

systems. The study of Twitter in this thesis is a reminder that on the surface it can be an

information and communication system, but it can also reveal individuals and

organizations to governments that may want to silence opposition. Twitter can serve as

one way to reach many people, but it can also be seen as a way to reveal networks and to

be used to oppose freedom of expression. Social media is often touted as a force for

freedom but it can also be used to spread disinformation and to dilute the messages of

opponents. For every statement that social media is a force for freedom, there can be a counter argument that it can also be used to repress and oppose ideas.

Digital Activism

New media, like cell phones and the internet, have led to rapid growth in communications and the development of many applications for social media such as Facebook and Twitter. These new ways of communicating are changing political discourse and have both positive and negative impacts. Greater communication can improve understanding but can also be used for propaganda. The internet and social media are not outside forces but part of society, as Palfry (2010) notes, "What was once known as cyberspace is now an environment in which debates fly, activism flourished and fails, and political and military contests play out between states" (Palfrey 2010:994). This section discusses digital activism as a concept and then continues with examples of the use of social media and digital content by activists, governments, politicians and organizations.

As a commercial entity, the internet is only twenty years old but has already been through many changes. Before continuing it is important to note that digital activism is not always an option, and that cyberspace can be used to promote ideas as well as limit them. Palfrey (2010) reviews the "open internet" concept that the internet would be a free environment, and that cyberspace is a separate sphere. While initially the internet had few controls, it has passed through four phases of regulation: 1) the Open internet

(1960s to 2000); 2) Access denied (2000-2005); 3) Access controlled (2005-2010) and 4) Access contested (2010+).

With growing control over the internet and digital content in some countries, the opportunities for activism can be limited. Palfrey organizes the stages of the internet chronologically, and as a global concept that approach can be recognized. When seen at the national or regional level, however, these stages vary considerably. For example, China has never had a period of open internet and tightly controls access and use. In some cases, access has been denied, like in 2009 when China cut off internet access to the main Uyghur city of Urumqi after violent protests (Canaves 2009). Digital activism needs access to the internet and mobile phone devices and networks in order to function.

Digital activism is discussed by Edwards, Howard and Joyce (2013) who identify its start with the Zapatista rebels in Chiapas in 1994 using the World Wide Web as a way to gain international recognition for their cause. They collected information on digital media used in social movements over the past twenty years and defined the phenomenon of digital activism as "…an organized public effort, making collective claim(s) on a target authority(s), in which civic initiators or supporters use digital media." (Edwards, Howard and Joyce 2013:4). This definition would apply to the Tibetan and Uyghur comparative study in this thesis as those groups target the authority of the Chinese government using digital media. Edwards, Howard and Joyce continue by stating that most digital activism is civil and nonviolent, although digital media can be used to call for and facilitate protests and violence against the target authority.

A comparative study of digital activism is discussed by Howard and Hussain (2011) who use the example of Tunisia and Egypt to understand how social media can be used as part of political movements. In their study they found that social media

> were singularly powerful in spreading protest messages, driving coverage by mainstream broadcasters, connecting frustrated citizens with one another, and helping them to realize that they could take shared action regarding shared grievances. (Howard and Hussain 2011:37)

One valuable contribution of Howard and Hussain's work is the identification of stages of digital activism that are drawn from the experience of Tunisia and Egypt. While designed for a specific case, the stages can also be applied to other causes and movements. The phases of digital media use in the Arab Spring occurred in the following sequence: 1) Preparation phase when activists identified supporters and goals; 2) Ignition phase that used an incident the state-run media ignored but gained popular interest; 3) Protests facilitated by social media; 4) International recognition of issues due to digital-media coverage; 5) Climax that ranges from state control, to political change to civil war; and 6) Information warfare as the state and activists continue to seek control over the narrative. These stages could occur over different times, so that stage one may unfold over years while the ignition and incident phases could occur quickly, with the information warfare stage also having the potential to last a long time.

The experience of Tibetan and Uyghur protests is that both have experienced the preparation stage, and there have been incidents that ignite protests and violence that lead

to international recognition. What is different is that Tibetans and Uyghurs have not had events lead to the climax stage where major social and political change is forced. These groups experience a milder form of climax that may include tighter control by China over their actions and the loss of recognition for cultural and religious practices. For the Tibetan and Uyghur case the climax stage is not significant to date, but the information warfare stage does apply as social media are used to continue promoting the agendas of these groups.

With so many people connected across the country and the world it is important to understand how people and governments use this new technology and connectivity for political and propaganda purposes. How can Twitter posts or Facebook 'likes' be used to push government propaganda or political agendas? These two platforms are recognized by Edwards, Howard and Joyce (2013) as the most important forces in digital activism, although regional use varies and other platforms may be more important depending on the location. This section continues by showing some of the factors to consider when examining digital activism including access to the internet and mobile phones, the motivations for being online, the potential for a few active online sources to influence the public, and the role of social media in protest movements and terrorism.

One valuable distinction is the common division between real and virtual spaces, with activism taking place in both spheres. In his critique of this division, Jurgenson (2012) sees this digital dualism as mistaken and an incorrect perspective on the real and virtual world. He counters the dualism view with the concept of augmented reality whre digital media augment offline lives and can shape offline behavior as users consider their

offline lives also in online terms. As the internet and social media mature, Jurgenson

argues that they should not be considered as separate. The implications of this

perspective for analysis of Tibetan and Uyghur activism is that online actions should not

be seen as a separate sphere but fully integrated with the real world.

As social media, the internet, and video games become a common form of

communication and entertainment, they can also be used for political expression and

repression. Cyberspace is no longer open but a contested space where media are filtered

and controlled and people need to assess the trustworthiness of content. The many

political uses of social media, such as news, blogs, and tweets are just starting to be used

by politicians and activists as citizens learn how much they can trust these messages.

These media can also be used to coordinate terrorist attacks and possibly prevent them

too. Even entertainment, in the form of video games, can be used to promote political

agendas.

Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) discuss how social movements use media, noting

that there are many different groups within movements and that they "do not represent a

unified actor but an array of actors who are affected by each other's media transactions,

sometimes in contrasting ways." (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993: 115). Social movements

use media for several purposes including motivation of supporters, validation of

messages, and broadening the scope of the conflict to improve the relative position of the

movement against authority. The internet has added a widespread technology well

designed to collect and disseminate information, and to be used by many interests.

Social media have a strong voice in shaping opinions and are increasingly used in politics and for propaganda. Both citizens and governments have already discovered how social media changes how politics can be discussed and viewed. A central question today is how governments and citizens use these new media outlets to discuss/share/protest politics as well as how governments and populations alike can use social media to spread ideas and propaganda. Delwiche (2007) developed a working definition of propaganda as "…the deliberate and systematic attempt to share perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist." (Delwyche 2007:93).

Auer (2011), Bruns (2010), Delwiche (2007), Golbeck, Grimes and Rogers (2010), Jackson and Lilleker (2011) and Evans et al (2014) all address the link between social media and politics and how new media can be used for propaganda or political purposes. Auer (2011) identifies Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn as media used to influence opinions on politics and policy, while Golbeck, Grimes and Rogers (2010) focus on how Congress uses Twitter to promote political views. Their study showed Congress members using Twitter to post information mainly about news articles about them or their blog posts and reporting their daily activities. Twitter was seen as a way to foster dialogue between congress members and the public and as a way to increase transparency, although it is also a way to shape political agendas.

Jackson and Lilleker (2011) studied how British members of Parliament used Twitter, focusing on the personal and political characteristics that predict the likeliness of an MP to use Twitter for political reasons. The behavior of candidates for the US House

of Representatives during the 2012 election was studied by Evans et al (2014) who conducted a content analysis of the Twitter behavior of candidates. Their findings showed how members of different parties, incumbents vs challengers, and gender differences all affected how Twitter was used.

Social media have emerged as actors in the democratic process. Rishel (2011) uses Iris Marion Young's model of deliberative democracy to focus on inclusion, political equality, reason, and publicity. Social media have the capacity to fundamentally shift the normative dimensions of deliberative democracy by changing the process. Rishel examines the potential for audience response systems (ARS) to replace deliberation as a democratic process, and finds that while it could play a role there is need for caution as it can also exclude participation. Bruns et al (2010) map the Australian blogosphere and explore the way that blogs play a role in politics. They found that a very small circle of hyperactive bloggers and columnists, dominated by the professionals for whom the publication of blog-style columns is part of their paid work with a handful of independent highly active unpaid bloggers.

Auer (2011) studies the processes and outcomes of information collection, manipulation, and transmission and its effects on various audiences. He looks at how Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn are influencing user's opinions on politics and policy using Laswell's model of communication to map social media aimed at public affairs. This model explores value dispositions, identities, and the strategies of actors who use social media content for political and policy purposes.

The internet and information technology offer many options for the expression of political power. One form that may not be recognized is the use of video games are an emerging form of expression by game developers and government. For example, the US military uses a video game, *America's Army*, as a training tool as well as a way to shape ideological views. Delwiche (2007) identifies four traits (Four I's) of video games that might function as mechanisms for influencing attitudes: Immersion, intense engagement, identification, and interactivity. Immersion is when players are fully occupied with a game, while intense engagement refers to motivation to be persuaded. Identification is the connection between the body and psychology of the character in the game, and Interactivity is the judgment-behavior-feedback loops that reward players for following desired behavior. These traits play a role in influencing attitudes and behavior. Similar traits may also apply to online platforms like Twitter and Facebook when users become immersed, engaged and dependent on the technology as central to their identity expression.

Akin et al (2012) analyze the role of social media in the 2010-11 Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings that were organized by activists using Facebook and Twitter. They argue that the new technology allowed the organization and assembly of protesters; communicated ideas to large audiences; and enabled the use of horizontal rather than hierarchical forms of organization. In particular, they note that social networking builds community around common interests and that mobile technology allows people "to carry their internet-based social ties into the diverse communities that they physically inhabit" (Akin et al 2012:90). One of the important roles of social media they identify is the

ability to use events, often with video content, to inform global audiences as the events

are happening. One distinction they make is about the role of technology as a part of life

that is also used for protest:

> In Egypt and Tunisia, activists did not, therefore, embed their mobilization
>
> and decision-making infrastructure into the Internet because it was the
>
> only way to accomplish their goals, but because these networks were at
>
> the center of their social life to begin with. Once they had incorporated
>
> cyberspace into their lives, it became necessary for it to take a central role
>
> in their political organizing as they lacked both interest and resources to
>
> construct other platforms that might serve the same purpose. (Akin et al
>
> 2012:94-5).

This means that for many people, the use of social media in their daily life creates

a platform that can be used for organization and protest if and when motivation

occurs.

Reuter and Szakonyi (2015) note how the role of social media in non-democratic

countries is ambiguous, so they conducted a study of how Facebook and Twitter were

used in the Russian elections of 2011 to see if these media influenced how the public

perceived electoral fraud. They found that Facebook and Twitter are not commonly used,

but those who used them were more aware of electoral fraud. One distinction is that the

more tightly controlled domestic social media platforms were not as politically useful in

raising awareness of electoral fraud. Another result was that Facebook and Twitter were

more effective in areas with more press freedom to provide content and prompt online discussion.

Calingaert (2010) discusses how social media are used by authoritarian regimes, such as in the Iranian elections in 2009 with the government limiting bandwidth to slow image transmission and blocking all text messages. Use of the internet under repressive regimes also comes with a high cost because websites and messages can be analyzed to identify individuals and their networks. In countries like China, internet control is

> increasingly focused on impeding the spread of domestically generated content that authoritarian regimes find objectionable, such as news about government incompetence or online discussions about abuses of power, and obstructing the organization of political opposition. Internet censorship and surveillance are used first and foremost by authoritarian regimes to silence their domestic critics and to prevent the emergence of political alternatives. (Calingaert 2010: 67)

Another element of authoritarian states is the role of disinformation when government pays for positive reporting or uses state information sources. For example, China's government "employs an estimated 250,000 or more "50 Cent Party" commentators, who reportedly receive 50 cents for each pro-government post" (Calingaert 2010: 69).

Authoritarian regimes may also seek to control access to information and digital content. Palfrey (2010) found that internet filtering is common but inconsistent, forming a barrier to free political discussion in many countries. Different countries filter different websites, and use different institutions to control access. Different forms of filtering are

found in most countries, from filtering from schools in the US to large-scale controls in countries like China. Countries use filters, or require registration of technology and access, licensing, and permission to publish online. He concludes that there is growing opposition to state control in the current "access contested" stage of the internet. One outcome of filtering and controls on access is that online content is moved to countries where there is greater freedom. The Tibetan government in exile has their online operations in India, while the World Uyghur Congress is based in Germany.

Perhaps the most extreme form of political action is the use of social media as a platform for terrorism. Jefferson (2007) and Oh, Manish and Rao (2011) discuss terrorism in their articles and their connection to social media both in how terrorist groups are using social media and how people are spreading information or collecting information. Jefferson (2007) argues that information technologies are used in 3 ways: "(1) spreading information, viewpoints and propaganda; (2) gathering information to support operations; and (3) directly supporting operational activities." (Jefferson 2007 p. 14).

This approach is reinforced by Oh, Manish and Rao (2011) who find that the Mumbai terrorists utilized social media, such as Twitter, to mount attacks against civilians. The information that was broadcast through social media contributed to the terrorist's decisions, resulting in increased effectiveness of hand-held weapons to accomplish their goals. Recently, Islamic State has proven to be successful in its use of social media as a way to promote its message and attract jihadists. Blaker (2015) notes

that there are more than 90,000 pro-ISIS tweets daily, and that ISIS is particularly effective in its use of media as a way to reach young people with messages in English that have good production values and music.

The literature on digital activism shows that it is of growing importance for many purposes, from raising awareness of political and social issues to igniting and facilitating protests, to aiding terrorism. The internet and social media are increasingly used to promote issues, and also controlled by authorities that do not want issues to be raised or use their access to disseminate disinformation or dilute issues with unrelated content. Many of the factors noted in this section on digital activism apply to the comparative study of Tibetan and Uyghur use of social media presented in the next section of the thesis. Tibetan and Uyghur groups use social media, especially Twitter and Facebook, against the Chinese government's control and actions in Tibet and Xinjiang, while the Chinese government controls access within China by limiting access and filtering content, or by distributing content that promotes their perspective, or focuses on innocent news to dilute politically charged content from Tibetans and Uyghurs.

3. COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TIBETAN AND UYGHUR ONLINE MOVEMENTS

Theories about social movements and social media will be applied to a case study of two ethnic groups that share similar context, yet exhibit different experiences. The two groups analyzed in this thesis are Tibetans and Uyghurs, who share a similar recent political history. Tibetans see their homeland as Tibet, Xizang, or the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China, while Uyghurs are concentrated in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region of China. Figure 3.1 illustrates the political and linguistic boundaries of China, showing the concentration of Tibetan speakers in Xizang, and of Uyghur speakers in Xinjiang. In addition to Chinese homelands, members of each group are found in nearby provinces and countries as well as forming a global diaspora. This chapter will present a profile of each of these ethnic groups and their geopolitical status.

A comparative analysis of Tibetan and Uyghur experience is valuable because they share a recent history under Chinese control yet exhibit significant differences as well. Among the similarities is the location of a majority of the population of each group in autonomous regions under Chinese control. Both groups also are subject to discrimination and political repression by China, which is also seeking to dilute their population presence by promoting in-migration of non-indigenous ethnic groups. Both groups have a goal of some independence or autonomy from China. Among the

differences between Tibetans and Uyghurs include religion, language, organizational structure, and political tactics.

Chapter 2 discussed the construction of identity and using this foundation it is possible to classify the Tibetan and Uyghur populations of this study. Calhoun (1994) considers identity creation in a global context and how groups can maintain the integrity of their identity in an environment with many global cultural influences. Identity can be recognized at multiple levels from the individual, to the group, to ethnicity, and nationality. In creating identity, not only do people in groups form perspectives on their own identity, but external perceptions and recognition can also shape how identity is seen from within and outside. For this research, identity is important as it relates to social movements, and to the classification of the groups being studied.

Identity as a Tibetan or Uyghur can be applied in terms of simple demographics, but can also carry deeper meaning depending on how identity is seen. This chapter will try to describe the two groups in terms of their basic characteristics as well as indicators of their identities. This means that the universe of Tibetans and Uyghurs incorporates many different identities that could include religion, gender, and nationality. Basic demographic data allows the scale and scope of each group to be specified.
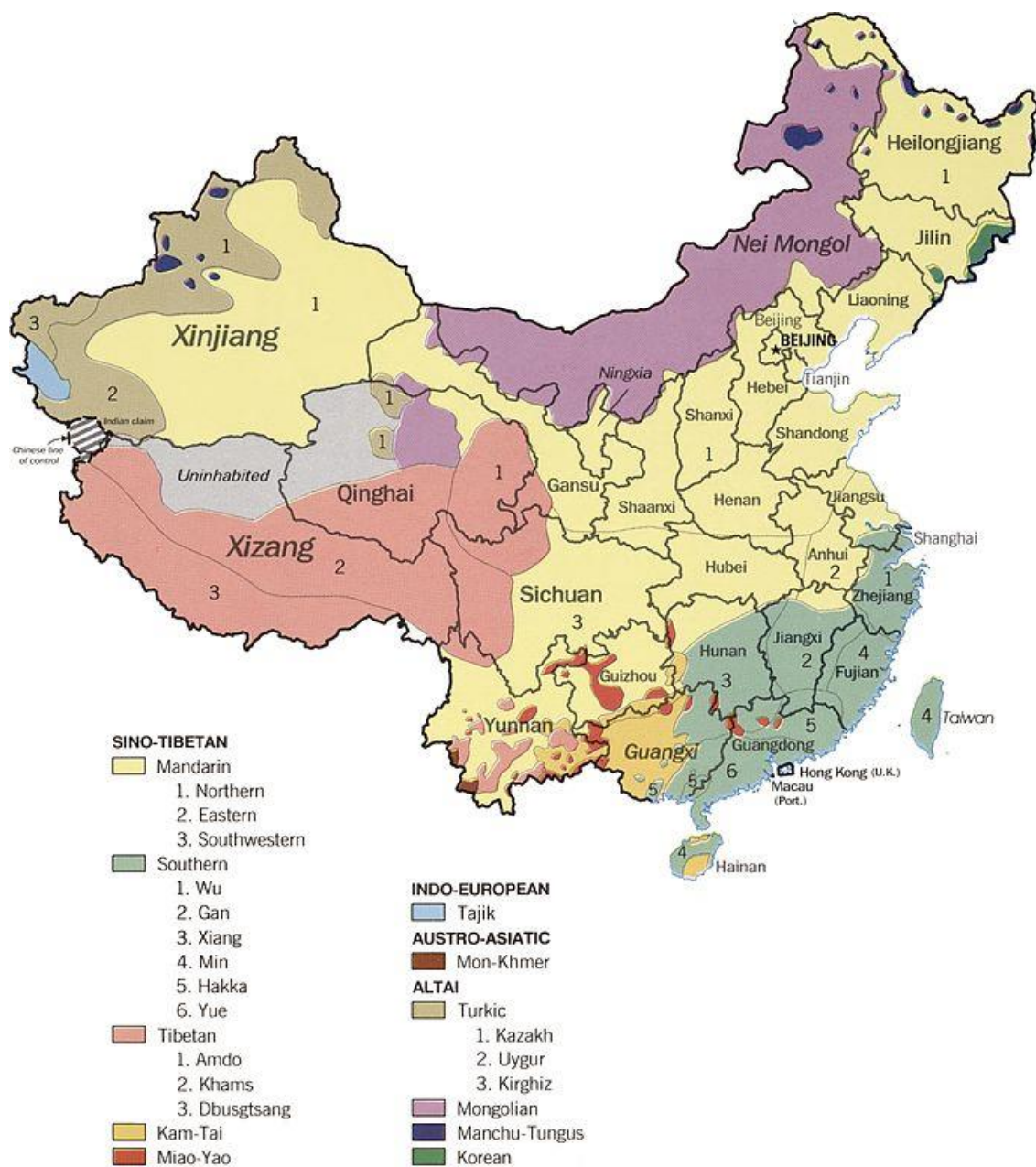
Figure 3.1: Linguistic Map of China

Source: By U.S. Central Intelligence Agency [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/55/China_linguistic_map.jpg

Tibetan Social Movements

Tibetans are an ethnic group who has traditionally lived on or around the Tibetan Plateau of Western China and Central Asia. Their ethnic tradition incudes a long history of group identity surrounding religion and language. Tibetans share a language with three primary dialects – Ü-Tsang, Amdo, and Kham – which are spoken not only in Xizang province, but also in surrounding provinces and countries (Refer Figure 3). In addition to language Tibetans also have a long history of Buddhism that dates back to the 6th century. Tibetan Buddhism is a distinct branch of Buddhism that is centered on the Tibetan Plateau and surrounding areas.

In terms of both language and religion there is a significant difference between Tibet as a place and places that hold Tibetan populations with common attributes. Sperling (2000) discusses the complexity of the Tibetan population, which has a geographic home in the Xizang Province of China, but also includes populations around the world. With a worldwide population of approximately 7.5 million people, Tibetans are most often found in China (7 million), India (110,000), Nepal (20,184), United States (9,000), Canada (4,275), and fewer than 2,000 people in Bhutan, Switzerland, Taiwan, United Kingdom, Australia, Scandinavia, New Zealand, and Japan. Of the Tibetans living in China, most live in Xizang province, which is 92.8% Tibetan with other concentrations in Gansu (1.8% Tibetan), Qinghai (22% Tibetan), and Sichuan (1.5% Tibetan) (Guo, 2013).

Traditionally the Tibetan population was synonymous with the region or country recognized as Tibet. The geographic home of Tibetans, however, has changed over the

past 1500 years as Tibet as a place has ranged from independence to domination by a neighboring culture. In the early 20th century the Kuomintang saw Tibet as being part of China with Tibetans as one of the five races that comprise the Chinese population (Smith 2008). In the 1930s Tibet was initially recognized by the communist party of China as deserving self-determination as a people (Heath, 2001). With the outcome of the Chinese civil war and the creation of the Peoples Republic of China in 1949 the status of Tibet changed from being seen as quasi-independent to being a target for an expanded Chinese state. The attitudes of the KMT and the Communist party illustrate the ambiguous position that Tibet has often found itself in by being both a part and separate in the mindset of the Chinese political leadership. The modern future of Tibet was determined by the 1950 invasion by China when any pretense of independence or autonomy was lost (Heath, 2001).

Accompanying the invasion of Tibet was a series of actions to dilute the political and cultural influence of the Tibetan population as a way to marginalize the aspirations of independence that the region expressed. Woeser and Lixiong (2009, 115) note the importance of the connection of political and cultural power: "political imperialism has been transformed and extended to become a cultural imperialism as well." The political control of Tibet is inextricably linked to China's desire for cultural control even though it gives the impression of cultural support. China's invasion and subsequent control of Tibet in the 1950s ultimately led to an exodus of more than 850,000 Tibetans including the Dalai Lama in 1959. This political and culturally motivated diaspora led to the establishment of a government in exile in Dharamsala, India (Heath, 2001). Over the past

60 years China has increasingly imposed conditions on cultural expression and banned religious and political protests in Tibet (Human Rights Watch, 2010). As Woeser and Lixiong (2009, 116) note "The empire seeks to control all forms of expression so that all transgressions are punished." In repressing cultural and political expression, China has forced a group with an internal Chinese identity to become one that looks to the external world for its cultural validation.

The result of the Chinese control of Tibet and the resultant diaspora of Tibetans created an ethnic group whose home region limits expression, which forces expression to take place outside Tibet and China. China blames the Dalai Lama for any internal disruptions associated with Tibetan identity (Human Rights Watch, 2010) and seeks to blame external forces for any distributions within Xizang province. The result is an ethnic group with many members forced to leave Tibet yet maintaining calls for autonomy and independence outside the political sphere in which those decisions would be made.

From the late 1950s to 1987 there was limited global activism around Tibet although countries like the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and China's neighbors supported Tibet's cause (Knaus, 2012). The significance of Tibet was elevated in 1987 because of independence demonstrations in Tibet that prompted international condemnation. The Free Tibet campaign was founded in 1987 followed by the International Campaign for Tibet the following year and Students for a Free Tibet 6 years later (Downing, 2011). In 1993 the Tibetan government in exile started to use media to promote its cause. The institutionalization of Tibetan activism through non-governmental

organizations and the subtle political actions of the Dalai Lama have raised the profile of the Tibetan cause internationally (Lixiong 2011).

Applying Calhoun to this case study would characterize Tibetans as people who share an ethnicity and cultural heritage connected to Tibet and its region. From the 9th century until the mid-20th century Tibet was controlled by external forces so that Tibetan identity was always cast in terms of opposition to another power. Residents of Tibet and the Tibetan diaspora share common interests in Tibetan culture and identity and rely upon the leadership of the Dalai Lama to provide direction for action. While the Tibetan identity has some focus because of this leadership, however, there is not necessarily one unique voice being expressed about the future of Tibet and Tibetan people.

Uyghur Social Movements

Uyghurs are a Turkic ethnic group living in northwest China and Central Asia to the north of Tibet, primarily in the Xinjiang Province. Estimates of Uyghur populations vary and range from 10 to 15 million people with most concentrated in Xinjiang Province as well as large populations in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkey. The discrepancy stems from the use of population data for political purposes with China underestimating numbers and using a narrower definition of minority identity, while external interests inflate numbers to raise awareness. 2010 data shows 10.02 million Uyghurs in Xinjiang compared to 8.4 million Han, although the Han population has increased from 6% in 1952 to 39% in 2010 approaching the 46.4% share of the Uyghur

population. Chinese census data show far fewer Uyghurs living in Xinjiang than outside sources. Most likely due to China attempting to get Han Chinese population above 50%, which will allow the Chinese government more legal options to displace Uyghurs. (Fuller and Lipman 2004).

Guo (2013) notes that Uyghurs are found predominantly in Xinjiang with all other provinces in China having less than a 1% Uyghur presence. Along with Tibetans, Uyghurs are a recognized minority under Chinese law although treatment of minorities in China officially is very different to reality. The primary location of Uyghurs in China is Xinjiang Province, which, like Tibet, is an autonomous region. Uyghur culture is identified by religion, language, and location. Uyghurs are predominantly Sunni Muslims although there is variation within northwest China in the practice and interpretation of Islam (Fuller and Lipman 2004).

Uyghurs speak a Turkic language with dialects of Kazakh, Uygur, and Kirghiz (See Figure 3). The Turkic linguistic sphere extends from Turkey through Central Asia to Western China and into Siberia. Language is an important part of Uyghur identity with Zang (2013) and Dwyer (2005) each emphasizing the importance of language in the definition of Uyghur identity. From initially prompting pluralism and recognizing both Uyghur and Mandarin as common languages in Xinjiang the Chinese government in 2004 promoted Mandarin while minimizing the importance of Uyghur (Zang 2013). The change in language policy was framed by the Chinese government as a way to improve the economic opportunities of Uyghurs, but Uyghurs saw the change as an attack on their identity. Rather than being classified as different from the majority Han population

before 2004 Uyghurs are now presented as being anti-majority (Dwyer 2005). One result of this change in language policy according to Zang (2013) has been a change in reference away from Xinjiang to the use of Eastern Turkestan as a regional identity.

While religion and language are important elements in defining Uyghur identity they are not universally adopted by the Uyghur population in Xinjiang. Davis (2008) identifies three groupings of Uyghurs based upon their ethnic identity: 1) those who want a separate state, 2) those who want to maintain their cultural identity but remain autonomous within China, and 3) those who are assimilating into the Han Chinese mainstream. Zang (2013) further notes that some Uyghurs feel that they must adopt Chinese language and culture in order to be successful in the current economy. A counter argument is that educated Uyghurs who speak Mandarin may be better able to divide their identity and still support Uyghur identity with a professional life in Mandarin (Zang 2013). The complexity of Uyghur identity is discussed by Davis (2008) who notes that there are different levels of support by Uyghurs so that there is no single or unique Uyghur voice in Xinjiang. In the absence of a clear leader and direction within China there are splinter groups that form and dissolve depending upon the interests of the group.

As Baranovich (2003, p.726) notes in his discussion of Uyghur identity in China, "ethnicity is a negotiated process and minorities are active agents in the negotiation of their ethnic identities." Ethnic identity flows from religious and linguistic traditions, but is also shaped by the political actions of Uyghurs. While Tibetans achieved widespread recognition for their independence cause and human rights conditions, Uyghurs have not received the same consistent support internationally. China's characterizations of Uyghur

independence movement as a terrorist action has led to other countries using similar language to classify Uyghurs. Dwyer (2005) notes that before 2001 China classified Uyghurs as separatists, but after 2001 characterized them as Islamic terrorists with many Uyghur groups also seen as terrorists. Chinese internal politics in terms of Uyghurs has also influenced how other countries see this group. As Dwyer notes "…the United States has conflated Uyghur nationalism with 'terrorism,' thus justifying U.S.-Chinese government collaboration in the Chinese Communist Party's project to suppress its own minorities."

Uyghur grievances have led to protests and violence, with Hastings (2011) identifying several causes including the in-migration of Han Chinese into the previously Uyghur majority province of Xinjiang; the exclusion of Uyghurs from the economic benefits of development; limits on the practice of Islam (religious events and training of Imams) and participation in the hajj. Chinese control has limited the ability of Uyghurs to undertake violent acts, so that the successes recently have all been creative and opportunistic needing little material or planning.

Growing tension between Uyghurs and Han Chinese as china exerts increasing control over the minority. The problem stems from the 1930s and 1940s when Uyghurs had some autonomy and identity with the East Turkestan republics, but lost this when china took over the area and formed it into Xinjiang province (Kanat 2016). Chinese control led political leaders to relocate to turkey and the central Asian countries to seek independence externally. This means that for the past seventy years, the internal Uyghur political movements has been shared between external and domestic actors. Kanat

(2016) notes that the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia led to Chinese fears that the same fragmentation may happen to some of China's regions, with the result being greater control over political action. As former Turkic Soviet republics, like Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, gained independence, China feared Uyghurs would be empowered to seek their own independence.

To contain Uyghur aspirations of independence China used its relations with neighboring countries, where many Uyghurs lived, to offer economic assistance in return for repression of Uyghurs (Kanat 2016). This means that the externally based Uyghur communities were controlled in similar ways to the domestic Uyghurs, and that forced Uyghur action further away from Central Asia. China's concern over Uyghur identity and political action was met with domestic repression as well as the use of post 9/11 anti-Islamic sentiment to label Uyghurs as a threat not only to china but also to the West. The violent actions of some Uyghur groups provided an opportunity for China to label Uyghurs as terrorists.

Chinese Context

China reserves the administrative status of an autonomous region for provinces with concentrations of minorities. The current autonomous regions are Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Guangxi, Ningxia, and Tibet. Both Tibetans and Uyghurs experienced some recognition for their minority culture and status after the founding of the communist state in 1949. For the next decade cultural identity was recognized, but soon became a concern

for the communist leadership who imposed greater controls over China's ethnic

minorities (Davis 2008). In 1957 China began limiting religious expression and in the

Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) imposed greater controls over ethnic minorities.

Cultural identifiers such as religion, language, food, and dress were suppressed (Davis

2008). Starting in the 1970s and continuing through the 1990s there was greater

recognition of ethnic identity, but from the mid-1990s China increasingly repressed these

minorities. In response to protests and uprisings China initially focused on improving

economic opportunities as a way to balance minority demands, but after 2000 increasing

protests lead to greater repression once again.

A summary of Tibetan and Uyghur characteristics is presented in Table 1. The

majority of both Tibetans and Uyghurs live in autonomous regions in China, but exhibit

several important differences around their language and religion. Among the similarities

are being subject to Chinese law, residing in autonomous regions in China, and being

subject to Chinese linguistic domination and Han Chinese population dilution. Each

group has experienced out migration from China as a result of Chinese political and

cultural actions. The Chinese homelands of Tibetans and Uyghurs are geographically

peripheral to the core Chinese political system and economy while serving as a buffer

against neighboring countries. Each group has been subject to repression and human

rights suffering inside China and has a shared history of protesting China's rule and

promoting social and political activism.

In contrast there are a number of important differences between Tibetans and

Uyghurs. Each group has its own language and religion. Tibetans have a strong and

charismatic leader in the Dalai Lama, while Uyghur leadership is more diffuse and less tightly controlled by Rebiya Kadeer. External perceptions also vary contrasting the perceived identity of 'peaceful' Buddhism versus a 'violent' Islam. Tibetan activism has focused on developing relationships with Western powers around the circumstances of Tibetans, while Uyghurs have some Western support, but also a recent history of terrorism against Chinese targets.

Table 3.1: Tibetan and Uyghur Characteristics

	Tibet	**Uyghur**
Population - China	2.5 Million (Tibet) (2015), 6.2 Million (China) (2010)	10.1 Million (China) (2010)
Population - Worldwide	7.5 Million	10 to 15 Million
Location	Xizang	Xinjiang
Political Status	Autonomous Region	Autonomous Region
Language	Tibetan (Ando, Khams, Ü-Tsang)	Turkic (Kazakh, Uyghur, Kirghiz)
Religion	Tibetan Buddhism	Islam (Majority Sunni, Minority Sufi)
Leadership	Dalai Lama	Rebiya Kadeer

Sources: Guo (2013), China National Bureau of Statistics (2010)

In the following chapters the methodology of analysis is discussed followed by how Tibetans and Uyghurs use social media as a way to promote their causes, and how others see them through social media. In particular, this analysis will focus on the content

of social media and the ways that each group characterizes itself and argues for its

cultural and political identity in the global public sphere.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The literature review of culture, identity and politics identified themes that can be analyzed using social media. Calhoun argued that the construction of culture includes external forces and noted that networks, like the internet and social media, are powerful forces in shaping identity. Benhabib warns that culture is diverse and complex and cannot be taken as a surface factor. Feenberg saw that technology affects people as much as people affect technology. This analysis informs the case study of Tibetan and Uyghur social media use and how it represents cultural identity. The use of the internet, in particular social media, draws on Feenberg, and the content and use of social media connects Calhoun and Benhabib.

Social media are a useful source of information because they represent networks of actors and ideas, can be global or local and show a geographic context for communication, and offer a way to capture expression often without subjects knowing they are being analyzed. At its core, social media is communication and language and an expression of identity and ideas. By analyzing the words used in social media it is possible to show how groups and individuals represent themselves and how others can use of oppose those representations using the same social media. This chapter will discuss the methods used to analyze social media use by and for Tibetans and Uyghurs.

The two areas of analysis will be content analysis of Twitter in general, as well as by the core social movement organizations associated with each group.

This analysis uses a comparative approach that contrasts Tibetan and Uyghur use of social media, in particular Twitter. Smelser (2003) argues for comparative, interdisciplinary and international approaches to sociological research. He identifies the scientific principle of experiments that have a control group against which another group can be compared:

> Comparative analysis has come to mean the description and explanation of similarities and differences (mainly differences) of conditions or outcomes among large-scale social units, usually regions, nations, societies and cultures. (Smelser 2003:645)

A second theme for Smelser is the importance of interdisciplinary research and the value of using different concepts and perspectives to understand a sociological phenomenon. His third theme is internationalization and the seeking of broadly applicable knowledge that transcends international boundaries by being valuable across different countries. In particular, Smelser discusses the importance of international research and collaboration as a way to remove ethnocentrism from research and to obtain knowledge that applies to many countries.

The approach used in this analysis of Twitter use by Tibetans and Uyghurs adopts a comparative framework that contrasts two groups that share many similarities including political status in China as autonomous regions; peripheral location to the economic and

political center of china; subject to in-migration of Han that dilute Tibetan and Uyghur minorities; growing repression of culture, language and religion by China; and externally based movements for cultural and political identity. Some of the differences include: Tibetan Buddhism and Uyghur Islam; more advanced organization of social movements for Tibetans and Uyghurs; and the capacity to engage with external political and social interests. Other groups that share a similar comparative status could be Basque and Catalan movements in Spain or Francophone and Anglophone interests in Canada. The analysis is based in sociology but is also informed by other disciplines such as political science and communications. The study is not an international collaboration as preferred by Smelser but it does attempt to see how cultural differences affect Tibetan and Uyghur actions to result in widely accepted knowledge.

Social Media Analysis

Social media refers to the information technology based tools that allow people to create, share, and exchange information across the street and across the globe. Obar and Wildman (2015) identify the following four elements of social media: 1) Social media services are Web 2.0 Internet-based applications; 2) based on user-generated content; 3) Online profiles are defined by users using a social media platform; and 4) Social media facilitate the development of social networks. Common platforms for social media include Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, with different platforms used in different locations. For example, Facebook and Twitter are little used in China, where WeChat,

QQ and Baidu Tieba are more popular. Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social networking and media as a system that allows users to construct a profile, identify others users they communicate with, and the ability to use the connections made by others. Whiting and Williams (2013) identify a range of uses for social media, such as social interaction, information seeking, pass time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, convenience utility, expression of opinion, information sharing, and surveillance/ knowledge. Many of these uses apply to social movements that use social media for political or cultural purposes.

Social media is used as a form of expression by individuals, organizations, and governments, so analysis of the language and ideas expressed through social media offers insights into the significance of events and ideas. The meaning derived from social media is called content analysis or sentiment analysis. Martinez-Camara et al (2012) discuss the sociological use of social media, especially Twitter, and note that being limited to 140 characters (though often extended through external tools such as TwitLonger) means that Tweets use an informal style without correct grammar, and use repetition and short forms to express ideas, which can make determination of context difficult. While Twitter is widely used and noted as a force in social media, Thompson (2015) found that very few recipients of a tweet actually followed though and clicked on a link included in a tweet. In his example he found that only 1% of recipients clicked through to the website listed in the tweet.

Social media are of growing interest as a research subject as a way to capture broad networks addressing a wide range of topics. As the internet and mobile phone use

has grown, so has the use of social media. Examples of research that use social media around social activism were discussed in the section on Digital Activism and include Akin et al (2012) on social media and the Egyptian and Tunisian protests of 2010-11, Reuter and Szakonyi (2015) on social media and authoritarian regimes, Aharony (2012) on Twitter use by political leaders, and Whiting and Williams (2013) on motivations for the use of social media. A common theme across these studies is how social media are used as a tool and weapon to influence ideas and actions, especially in elections, political arenas, and as protests. The analysis of social media has also led to the creation of software to facilitate the study of networks and content such as TweetArchivist and NodeXL, discussed later in this section.

The organizations associated with Tibetan and Uyghur identity and causes have a social media presence but it is limited given the scale of the online content that surrounds it. To understand how social media is used, by whom and for what issues, this study developed a theoretical framework in Chapters 1-3 around identity, culture and technology. To connect theory to practice, a detailed analysis of one medium, Twitter, was conducted. Twitter was chosen because it is widely used and tends to be an active source of content for analysis, with many dimensions including links to other social media like Facebook and YouTube. Twitter is easier to search for content because it has its own classification system with tweets having their own metadata about content (Ahmed and Bath 2015, Williams, Terras and Warwick, 2013).

Twitter Content Analysis

The approach used was to collect tweets from core organizations and individuals with strong ties to Tibetan and Uyghur causes in order to identify common words and hashtags. After several weeks analyzing Twitter content, the subjects for detailed analysis were #Tibet and @Dalai Lama for Tibetan issues, and #Uyghur and @Uyghur Congress for Uyghur issues. The hashtags and users studied were in English but before making this decision other languages were tested.

The Tibetan and Chinese words for Tibet were used first, finding that the Tibetan language tweets that included #Tibet (བོད་) averaged less than one per month. The Chinese language tweets that referenced #Tibet (西藏 or Xizang) tended to be apolitical and focused on tourism and basic news averaging 2-5 tweets per week. The term Uyghur in its Turkic language (ئۇيغۇرچە) showed only five tweets in two years. These results are not surprising as political content for both groups within China is limited, and Twitter would not be a good internal medium as China blocks access to it, and more popular social media would be more effective if they could be used, such as WeChat and QQ.

For each group, several weeks of Twitter and social media activity was analyzed and for Tibet and Uyghur social movements a commonly used descriptive hashtag was chosen along with the identity of the leading individual or organization associated with the group. Tweets were collected during March and April 2016 using Tweet Archivist. As noted above, Tibetan issues get far more attention than Uyghur issues and this was no different for the Twitter analysis. The summary data for the Twitter content is presented

in Table 4.1. #Tibet generated almost 25,000 tweets that reached over 150 million accounts, while the Dalai Lama tweeted five times but the term @Dalai Lama was used over 50,000 times and reached 168 million accounts. #Uyghur generated almost 5,000 tweets and reached over 10 million accounts, while the Uyghur Congress was noted on over 500 tweets reaching over 1.5 million accounts.

Table 4.1 Summary of Tibetan and Uyghur Twitter Analysis

	#Tibet	**@Dalai Lama**	**#Uyghur**	**@Uyghur Congress**
Tweets	24,980	50,512	4,767	563
Audience	150,570,367	168,919,371	10,314,182	1,517,660

In the two following chapters is a detailed analysis of the four Twitter content terms listed above emphasizing the following areas of content analysis:

- Language – the languages used in each tweet indicate access by different groups or the source of the tweet. Language shows intended audience, with English the most common language used for the tweets studied.
- Content – the most frequently used words and phrases in each set of tweets, and their significance in terms of culture, identity and politics. The meaning of each tweet was derived from its content, either through text or the hashtags used.

Often, it was necessary to review complete tweets for common terms and expressions in order to determine its context directly and by association.

- Links – the websites, Facebook pages and videos linked from each tweet, including details of their content. The links form part of the content and showed the associations users wanted to make with their tweets. The limited space for textual content in Twitter makes references using hashtags and links necessary to expand meaning. The most common links found in the analysis were reviewed for their content.

- Users – the individuals and organizations sending tweets that contain the subject terms were identified, and the most common users were further researched to find their perspective and possible connection to the social movement.

- Hashtags – the issues and terms associated with the four subject tweets, which also shows what groups, causes and issues are presented as related. Tweets often contained several hashtags, which showed the relationship between ideas and issues as seen by the tweet author. The most common hashtags were further studied to identify their meaning and significance.

- Influence – shows how many followers the most active users have as a way to indicate the reach of the twitter content. Individuals and organizations wanting to raise awareness of an issue need to use the reach of users to spread their message. Some major users were neutral, such as news sources, while others were proponents or opponents of the issue and using their platform to support or dilute it.

Network Analysis

Network analysis shows the relationship between individuals and organizations, and how they are connected through ideas, online content, documents etc. Calhoun (1994) saw networks as powerful forces that shape the expression of identity, as well as the imposition of identity by external interests attempting to shape the identity of others. This makes Twitter a useful subject because it embodies users, ideas and networks. In addition to analysis of language and content Twitter can also be the basis for network analysis that can reveal the relationships between actors that share similar interests.

Hansen, Schneiderman and Smith (2010) show how networks place a person or organization in relation to others that share the network. A network consists of two elements: vertices, which are nodes or agents, and edges, which are the connections between vertices. The edges between the vertices show the level of connection between vertices, and whether nodes are central or peripheral to a network. The edges have several characteristics, such as being undirected or directed. Directed edges have a source and destination that identifies the flow in the network, while undirected edges show a connection without a clear direction.

In this analysis, the nodes of the network are the people and organizations that are active on Twitter based on their association with an idea or concept as shown by the usernames they use. The focus of the network analysis is on the identities of @Dalai Lama and @Uyghur Congress. Analysis of networks for Tibetan and Uyghur use of Twitter used NodeXL, although the tweet archive used for the analysis does not offer the

range of connections and variables of a directly captured data set optimized for NodeXL use.

NodeXL provides a range of summary data that describe networks. The metrics generated for this analysis of Tibetan and Uygher social media use include the following measures:

- Vertices, which are the nodes in the network

- Edges (connections between vertices) comprise unique edges and edges with duplicates.

- Self-Loops refer to vertices that connect to themselves and occur when the sender responds to themselves.

- Geodesic distance is the number of connectors needed to link nodes. The maximum geodesic distance shows the number of connectors needed to cross the network, while the average geodesic distance averages the paths.

- Graph density is total edges divided by the number of possible edges and shows the density of linkages for the network. Graph density lies between 0 and 1 with higher numbers indicating greater levels of inter-connectivity.

- Modularity measures the structure of a network, with high levels showing strong connections within modules and weak ties between modules. High modularity indicates networks with communities with dense internal connection but weak connections to other communities.

Tibetan, Uyghur and Human Rights Organizations

The use of social media by Tibetans and Uyghurs is studied by analyzing the

organizations and individuals active in Tibetan and Uyghur identity and culture,

frequently around human rights issues. These organizations were identified through

online sources and social media that frequently connected an organizations with a cause.

The intention was to focus on how Tibetan and Uyghur organizations used social media,

but as the analysis progressed it was clear that Twitter activity was far more diverse and

included many different individuals and organizations. The human rights organizations

listed, which are the major actors for Tibet and Uyghur causes, were a small part of the

identity, culture and political context for these two groups, so the analysis was expanded.

In addition to showing the role of organizations, it showed the breadth of activism and

identity expression associated with the two groups.

Activist Organizations for Human Rights

These organizations have broad interests in human rights as well as having interests in

Tibetan and Uyghur issues, with summary data presented in Table 4.2. The organizations

are mainly based in the United States and are active in social media, but have little

spending on advertising to promote their cause. All of the organizations list Tibet and/or

Uyghur issues and refer to them in social media.

Of the seven organizations listed, most have multi-million dollar budgets from

grants and fund raising, as well as a social media presence that in many cases is their

main form of advertising or promotion. Most organizations spend little on advertising, although Oxfam America, Amnesty International, and International Justice Mission do have advertising budgets. All organizations have an online presence through their own websites as well as social media. Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are most used by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, while the most active organizations in terms of mentioning Tibet or Uyghur issues are Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. Common for all organizations in this group is much greater activity around Tibetan than Uyghur issues.

Tibetan Rights Organizations

Organizations that focus on Tibetan issues are listed in Table 4.3. They tend to have small budgets, the highest being close to $6 million, and to be based in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and in Dharamsala, India, where the Tibetan government in exile is located. Tibetan organizations have no advertising and a small presence on social media. Most have Facebook, Twitter and YouTube content but the reach is very limited, with the exception of the Dalai Lama, who has around thirteen million Facebook likes and Twitter followers. In all cases, YouTube plays a small role as indicated by the limited viewership of content. Besides the Dalai Lama, whose social media content is spiritual rather than political, the other active organizations would be Free Tibet, Students for a Free Tibet, and International Campaign for Tibet.

Table 4.2 Human Rights Organizations and Social Media – May 2016

Organization	Revenue 2013 $'000	Advt 2013 $ '000	Facebook Likes '000	Twitter Followers '000	You Tube	Tibet Mentions	Uyghur Mentions
Amnesty International	$36,047	$237	1,149	1,880	38,911 sub; 2.4 million views	137	3
Human Rights Watch	$74,214	$0	2,157	2,880	44,021 sub; 4.6 million views	1,084	40
Oxfam America	$67,958	$1,001	155	253	2,625 sub; 256,396 views	1	0
International Justice Mission	$44,807	$491	260	159	3,360 sub; 158,935 views	0	0
Human Rights First	$12,016	$23	118	47	990 sub; 3,621 views	0	0
Human Rights in China	$1,672	$0	4.5	17	N/A	253	107
Advocates for Human Rights	$1,555	$0.9	6.2	4	62 sub; 1,439 views	17	0

Sources: www.amnesty.org, www.hrw.org , www.oxfamamerica.org, www.ijm.org, www.hrichina.org, www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org, National Center for Charitable Statistics

Table 4.3 Activist Organizations for Tibetan Rights – May 2016

Organization	Budget	Advertising	Facebook Likes	Twitter Followers	YouTube
Free Tibet			142,729	17,900	N/A
International Campaign for Tibet	$4,018,716	$0	81,285	10,400	681 sub; 62,837 views
Students For A Free Tibet	$653,644	$0	97,565	5,553	2,309 sub; 130,620 views
Tibetan Women's Association			1,832	2,989	97 sub; 6,721 views
Australia Tibet Council			8,244	2,718	120 sub; 18,906
Dalai Lama			13,334,292	12,700,000	67,088 sub; 500,031 views
Tibet Fund	$5,817,045	$0	16,365	83	106 sub; 25,069 views
Tibet Center for Human Rights and Democracy			5,693	3,084	130 sub; 16,433 views
Tibet House	$2,096,057	$103,211	14,482	9,878	1,187 sub; 7,385 views
Committee of 100	$1,829,915	$8,600	838	1,325	800 sub; 15,839 views
Tibet Justice Center	$159,650	N/A	1,027	287	10 sub; 740 views

Sources: www.freeTibet.org, www.saveTibet.org ,www.studentsforafreetibet.org, www.tibetanwomen.org, www.dalailama.com, www.tibetfund.org, www.tchrd.org, www.tibethouse.us , www.c100tibet.org , www.tibetjustice.org, National Center for Charitable Statistics

Uyghur Rights Organizations

In comparison to the Tibetan organizations, Uyghur interests are far more limited with fewer resources and less influence, as shown in Table 4.4. Research showed five Uyghur rights organizations including the World Uyghur Council. Budgets are small (less than $500,000) with no spending on advertising. Most of the organizations have a social media presence but they have fewer than 5,000 likes/followers for the most active organization. Uyghur issues have far less organizational and media support than Tibetan causes.

Table 4.4 Activist Organizations for Uyghur Rights – November 2015

Organization	Budget	Advertising	Facebook Likes	Twitter Followers	YouTube
Uyghur American Association (UAA)	$505,426	$0	243	833	Shared with Uyghur Human Rights Project
Uyghur Human Rights Project	$277,810	$0	1,233	Shared with UAA	106 sub; 1,551 views. Shared with UAA
International Uyghur Human Rights and Democracy Foundation	$277,810	$0	1,038	46	N/A
World Uyghur Congress			4,000	4,488	1,421 sub; 77,739 views

Sources: www.uyghuramerican.org , www.uhrp.org, www.uyghurcongress.org, www.iuhrdf.org, www.uyghurculture.org, National Center for Charitable Statistics

5. FINDINGS: TIBET SOCIAL MEDIA AND MOVEMENTS

This chapter presents the analysis of Twitter use by Tibetan movements and organizations. The focus is on the languages, content, links, users, hashtags and influence of those tweeting with the #Tibet and @Dalai Lama terms, and the networks associated with these terms..

#Tibet Analysis

The most common hashtag used in online interaction about Tibet was #Tibet. Between March 16 and April 11, 2016 there were 24,980 tweets that included the term #Tibet. The volume of tweets varied from a low of 437 tweets (April 3) to highs of 1,445 tweets (March 29, 2016) and 1,360 tweets on March 19, 2016. The March 19 peak was associated with the vote by Tibetans outside China for a political successor to the Dalai Lama (Reuters 2016 March 19), while the March 29 peak coincides with election results and a statement by China that the Dalai Lama was "making a fool" of Tibetan Buddhism (Reuters 2016, March 28). This section will analyze the different dimensions of Twitter activity over the three week period.

Languages

The most common languages that referenced #Tibet are presented in Table 5.1. The

hashtag is used overwhelmingly in English (84.4%) followed by Japanese (2%), French

(1.9%), Italian (1.1%), Chinese (1.1%), and Spanish (1%).

Table 5.1 Language used with #Tibet

Language	Number of Tweets	% of Tweets
English	21,075	84.4
Japanese	488	2.0
French	463	2.0
Italian	281	1.1
Chinese	273	1.1
Spanish	223	0.9
German	175	0.7
Indonesian	122	0.5
Dutch	120	0.5
Tagalog	61	0.2
Russian	53	0.2
Haitian	41	0.2
Hindi	40	0.2
Estonian	38	0.2
Vietnamese	26	0.1
Norwegian	24	0.1
Danish	15	0.1
Swedish	13	0.1
Portuguese	12	0.1
Turkish	11	0.1

Content

Tweets containing #Tibet are associated with the words and phrases presented below in

Table 5.2. Single words and short phrases provide some indication of meaning, but need

to be understood in context. This section will first note the words commonly used,

followed by context gained from analysis of tweets using the most common terms. The

messages can be grouped into several themes, including China and politics (China,

Chinese, China's, CCP, Tibetan), countries with Tibetan populations (Nepal, India), the

Dalai Lama and Buddhism (Dalailama, Dorjeshugden, Dharma, Tsemtulku), protests

(HumanRights, Against, FREE) and China's state visit to the Czech Republic (Czech, Xi

Jinping).

The themes from the content of #Tibet messages include:

China: Tweets that contained #Tibet and China, China's and Chinese primarily

referenced Chinese policy towards Tibet and were negative about China. Common

phrases included Chinese propaganda, Chinese Imperialism, China's disinformation,

China's occupation, China's illegal occupation, and against Chinese. The exceptions

were Tweets referring to travel to Tibet and China. A negative pattern was found for use

of China's, Chinese, and CCP (Chinese Communist Party) as the reference was always to

anti Tibet or repressive policies. Xi Jinping refers to China's president, used both in

general and also specifically to his state visit to the Czech Republic.

Tibetan: The term Tibetan was used frequently in relation to many topics including

Tibetan culture, Chinese policy, travel and photography about Tibet, Chinese actions

against Tibet, environmental impact of railways, protests and torture, and religion

Dorje Shugden: This is a sect within the Tibetan School of Buddhism that is currently a source of controversy that was included in more than 1,800 Tweets. A related term in this analysis is Tsem Tulku Rinpoch (Tsemtulku) who is a Buddhist activist and blogger. His comments link to a website that refers to an announcement by Tsem Tulku Rinpoch about the leading masters of the Dorje Shugden school of Buddhism.

Buddhism: religion was the base for many Tweets including the Dalai Lama, Dorje Shugden, and Dharma (a spiritual element in Buddhism).

Political action: Some terms refer to political actions, such as Human Rights, Free is often linked to the phrase Free #Tibet. Against is mainly used to describe actions taken by China against Tibet, with 'against #Tibet' or 'against #Tibetans' used 262 times. The term occupied is used mainly in association with the phrase 'occupied #Tibet,' used over one thousand times in the Tweets analyzed.

Czech Republic: References to the word Czech arose during the analysis period when President Xi Jinping of China visited the Czech Republic leading to two sentiments on Twitter: 1) President Xi referenced Tibet in his remarks, and 2) Czech support for China was interpreted as a lack of support for Tibet by Twitter participants.

India: The term India has many associations including travel, political relations with

China and Nepal, and the host country of the Tibetan government in exile in Dharamsala,

India (with 414 mentions).

Table 5.2 Word Frequency for #Tibet Tweets

Term	Count	% of Tweets
China	5,457	21.8
Tibetan(s)	3,096	12.4
Dalai Lama	3,020	12.1
Chinese	2,279	9.1
Chinese propaganda 107		0.4
Chinese Imperialism 27		0.1
Free	1,836	7.3
Free #Tibet 769		3.1
CCP	1,658	6.6
Dharma	1,611	6.6
Tsemtulku	1,589	6.4
Occupied	1,433	5.7
Occupied Tibet 1,021		4.1
China's	1,141	4.6
China's disinformation 103		0.4
China's invasion 36		0.1
China's occupation 15		0.1
China's illegal occupation 12		0.1
Free #Tibet	769	3.1
India	711	2.8
Love	693	2.8
Czech	683	2.8
Against	656	2.6
Against #Tibet(ans) 262		1.0
Against Chinese 42		0.2
Human rights	643	2.6
Travel	636	2.6
Xi Jinping	636	2.6
Nepal	629	2.6

Travel: Travel is used in reference to pilgrimages and travel to India and Tibet, and tweets by Native Travel about adventure tourism in Asia.

Love: Love is used to signify general emotion and affection, linked to places and Buddhism

Links

The links in the #Tibet tweets tended to be URLs of Tibetan websites, news sources, bloggers, activists and video links. Table 5.3 below shows the URLs, frequency and a summary of content most often referenced in the tweets analyzed. Most tweets did not include a link to a website or video, showing little use of Twitter as a vehicle to drive traffic to other online sources. The twenty-five most commonly linked URLs reflect diverse opinions, including activists (FreeTibet, Amnesty International, Phayul, China Digital Times), critics of the exiled Tibet government (Gilded Cage, Xinhua, English News China), and discussions about Buddhism and the Dalai Lama (Tsem Tulku Rinpoch). The most commonly listed URL was to a website managed by Tsem Tulku Rinpoch about ongoing tensions about the role of Dorje Shugden in Buddhism, especially the role of the Dalai Lama as an opponent of the sect. The low counts for URLs dealing with human rights and Tibetan identity suggest that Twitter is not used to link these two resources or to connect Twitter uses to online content.

Table 5.3 Common Links Associated with #Tibet

Count	%	URLs	Content
1,446	5.8	http://goo.gl/i0xB43	Blog posting on Dorje Shugden by Tsem Tulku Rinpoch
177	0.7	http://ow.ly/ZV9tA	Website of FreeTibet campaign to urge people to contact the British Government about torture in Tibet
106	0.4	http://ow.ly/1032yC	FreeTibet website post about release of political prisoner Ngodup Phuntsok
100	0.4	http://ow.ly/ZVaxP	FreeTibet website post about release of prisoners Sonam Gonpo and Joleb Jigme
89	0.4	http://gildedcagearticles.com/fraudulent-elections/	Gilded Cage posting about exiled Tibetan elections and claims that Sikyong Sangay has fallen out of favor with the Dalai Lama
80	0.3	http://ow.ly/105UWg	FreeTibet post about protests against Chinese mining operations in Tibet
74	0.3	http://www.tsemrinpoche.com/?p=92860	Blog posting on Dorje Shugden by Tsem Tulku Rinpoch
68	0.3	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwhBVC0_958	Video posting by Tsem Tulku Rinpoch on Dorje Shugden
64	0.3	http://usat.ly/1MTD3oy	USA Today editorial critique of China's policies
62	0.3	http://ow.ly/ZRvB7	FreeTibet post on Tibet's history of resistance to China
60	0.2	http://gildedcagearticles.com/religionandpolitics/	Gilded Cage posting on Dalai Lama's rule as Fascist
58	0.2	https://youtu.be/Kb6OApM0xnY	Video of Richard Gere's critique of Xi Jinping
56	0.2	http://xhne.ws/78Z14	English News China report on duty free shopping in Tibet
55	0.2	http://xhne.ws/u4XWb	English News China report on fire in an ethnic Tibetan town in Yunnan
55	0.2	http://www.amnesty.org.au/action/action/41541/#.VwoNOL-PccA.twitter	Amnesty International (Australia) report on forced medical treatment of Tibetan woman
54	0.2	http://youtu.be/EEzagvTvpyc	Video by Stratfor (global intelligence service) on status of Tibet
54	0.2	http://Phayul.com	Phayul (English news for the Tibetan diaspora) report on Tibetan and Uyghur meeting.
53	0.2	http://xhne.ws/fDtm3	Xinhua report on anti-separatism sentiment in Tibet
49	0.2	http://www.firstpost.com/	FirstPost (online India news service) article

		world/tibet-is-seething-in-pain-of-chinese-oppression-adityanath-2702838.html	on Indian MPs statement about Tibet suffering under Chinese rule
47	0.2	http://xhne.ws/J2HkL	English News China report on free wifi on buses in Lhasa
44	0.2	http://ow.ly/ZFXRF	FreeTibet report on US critique of China at United Nations
42	0.2	http://www.tsemrinpoche.com/?p=94052	Blog posting on Dorje Shugden by Tsem Tulku Rinpoch
42	0.2	http://bci.hatenablog.com/entry/2016/03/25/112727	Japanese language report on forced removal of Tibetans by police in Tibet
41	0.2	http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2016/03/open-letter-devoted-party-members-urge-xis-resignation/	China Digital Times (US based news service on China) report on opposition to Xi Jinping
40	0.2	http://www.tsemrinpoche.com/?p=94304	Blog posting on Dorje Shugden by Tsem Tulku Rinpoch

Users

The leading users of #Tibet as indicated by the @ symbol are presented in Table 5.4 which also lists details about each user. Most users are associated with Tibetan identity and freedom activists or organizations such as Free Tibet and Save Tibet. Of note is the reference to Xinhua, the Chinese official news agency, which often tweets about noncontroversial topics to dilute the Twitter traffic about Tibet. Xinhua often refers to tourism, new infrastructure, and evidence of China's positive role in the province.   Most of the remaining users of #Tibet are individual activists. There is crossover from some of the #Uyghur users.

Table 5.4: Leading Users of #Tibet

Users	Count	Identity
@Tibetans	6,120	Handle of Tibet Truth advocacy group
@clara111	2,846	Tibetan activist
@BhoRangzen	2,722	Rangzen, Tibetan activist
@tsemtulku	2,318	Buddhist activist and blogger
@XHNews	1,003	Xinhua News
@freetibetorg	809	Free Tibet nonprofit advocacy
@SowterTracy	594	Individual Tibet activist and Buddhist
@JigmeUgen	401	President, Tibetan National Congress, US based advocacy organization
@SaveTibetOrg	341	International Campaign for Tibet
@shedancestibet	305	Tibet activist
@Britanniacomms	296	Britannia Communications Partnership, UK based marketing agency
@DossierTibet	258	Claudio Tecchio, Italian activist against Chinese repression of minorities
@HongKongHermit	245	Anti China activist
@PDChina	230	People's Daily
@TibetanReview	213	Tibetan Review, monthly periodical on Tibetan issues
@DalaiLama	191	Dalai Lama
@indianinterest	187	Indian activist
@karma_gunz21	171	Karma Rangzen, Indian activist
@YouTube	171	YouTube
@GildedCage_	167	Gilded Cage anti Dalai Lama administration
@TibetinExile	155	CTYA – Central Tibetan Administration, Tibetan government in exile
@VenBagdro	155	Former monk campaigning for free Tibet
@tibetsociety	151	Tibet Society promoting a free Tibet
@tomolicouse	149	Japanese activist, posts primarily in Japanese on global issues
@Piclogy	135	Photography, images from around the world

Hashtags

Tweets often include multiple references to issues, people, places and events through the use of hashtags. Analysis of this data shows how topics can be connected in the minds of those making tweets on Tibetan issues. The top 25 hashtags used with #Tibet are presented in Table 5.5. Many of the hashtags match the common words noted earlier. The main references with #Tibet include:

- Terms associated with China's role in Tibet (#China, #CCP, #XiJinping, #Chinese)

- Comments on Tibet (#Tibetan)

- Buddhism and religion (#Dalailama, #Buddhism, #Dharma, #Buddha, #zen, #spiritual)

- References to India, either as a neighboring country with a political relationship or as the host country for the Tibetan government (#India)

- Comments on Nepal (#Nepal)

- Comments by or about Tsem Tulku Rinpoch and Dorje Shugden (#tsemtulku, #dorjeshugden, #shugden, #liftshugdenban)

- Protest messages (#humanrights, #freeTibet) and the similar circumstances faced by Uyghurs (#Uyghur)

- Nonpolitical tweets include topics such as #travel, #yoga, and #namaste

Table 5.5: Hashtags Used with #Tibet

Hashtags	Count	% of Tweets	Content
#china	5,748	23.0	China
#dalailama	3,818	15.3	Dalai Lama
#buddhism	2,519	10.1	Buddhism
#tsemtulku	2,189	8.8	Tsem Tulku Rinpoch
#dorjeshugden	1,958	7.8	Dorje Shugden sect of Buddhism
#dharma	1,652	6.6	"Cosmic law" in Buddhism
#ccp	1,610	6.4	Chinese Communist Party
#humanrights	1,105	4.4	Generic reference to human rights
#tibetan	961	3.8	Tibetan
#buddha	929	3.7	Buddha
#zen	866	3.5	Element of Buddhist practice
#india	827	3.3	India
#spiritual	812	3.3	Generic term
#xijinping	639	2.6	President Xi of China
#nepal	637	2.6	Nepal
#travel	625	2.5	Travel
#freetibet	607	2.4	Free Tibet movement
#namaste	579	2.3	Namaste (Hindu greeting)
#shugden	560	2.2	Dorje Shugden sect of Buddhism
#bbc	515	2.1	British Broadcasting Corporation
#yoga	509	2.0	Yoga
#liftshugdenban	487	1.9	Dorje Shugden sect of Buddhism
#uyghur	469	1.9	Generic Uyghur reference
#us	437	1.8	United States
#chinese	383	1.5	Chinese

Influence

Tibet attracts a lot of attention online and has many influential figures producing tweets. Overall, the messages with #Tibet were sent to over 150 million Twitter accounts. Ironically the most influential person associated with Tibet is the Dalai Lama, who has 12.7 million twitter followers yet rarely tweets and does not use the Tibet hashtag or any of the hashtags associated with Tibetan issues. Much of the power of the Dalai Lama's tweets comes from their retweeting by followers who quickly extend the reach of the Dalai Lama's messages. The major social media actors for #Tibet are listed in Table 5.6 along with background details on each individual.

Many of the most influential users of #Tibet are news services, although Xinhua, China.org and the People's Daily would represent the views of the Chinese government. These organizations are often active diluting anti Chinese comments online with general news and travel information about Tibet. Xinhua has more followers than any other user of #Tibet. #Tibet is followed and used by a number of news services, including India Today, Agence France Presse, ARD, Mediaset, and RTL. The ability to reach these global organizations provides opportunities for messages containing #Tibet to reach a broad audience. In these cases the power of Twitter is not the direct audience reached by a tweet but the ability to access news sources that can extend the spread of messages. This connection for Tibetan causes is far stronger than for Uyghur issues, as will be shown in the next chapter. The remaining influencers are individuals, activists and journalists. As a group, the users of #Tibet show a wide range of influence and reach

many followers, so messages by and about Tibet and the Dalai Lama have a direct path or media audiences.

@Dalai Lama Analysis

The use of the @ symbol in Twitter has several functions, including associating the tweet with a subject or person, attracting the attention of the subject, or referencing the origin of a retweeted message. The Dalai Lama tweets occasionally, with over 1,100 tweets since his first message in February 2010, and having 12.7 million followers in April 2016. The Dalai Lama's tweets are philosophical, closely tied to Buddhism and always in English, with most activity on Twitter caused by the retweeting of his messages. Between March 16 and April 8, 2016, there were 50,512 tweets that referenced @Dalai Lama yet only five tweets were sent by the Dalai Lama:

- April 8: Creating a better world will require will-power, vision and determination. And for that we need a strong sense that humanity is one family. 14,938 retweets 20,489 likes
- April 1: The distinction between violence and non-violence lies less in the nature of the action and more in the motivation with which it is done. 8,342 retweets 12,686 likes
- March 28: Physical comfort alone does not bring inner peace. We create inner peace within the mind. 10,591 retweets 16,783 likes

Table 5.6: Most Influential Users of #Tibet

Users	Followers	Identity
XHNews	3,703,916	Xinhua news service
IndiaToday	2,462,655	India Today online news source in English
afpfr	1,795,020	Agence France Presse news service in French and English
PDChina	1,420,755	People's Daily
deelestari	1,381,284	Dee Lestari writer in Indonesia
tagesschau	1,070,592	ARDGerman public broadcasters network with content in German
911well	1,056,644	Mindfulness Wellness is a Canadian health and wellbeing organization
MediasetTgcom24	727,417	Online Italian news service
CollChris	683,760	Chris Collins writer
NMenonRao	626,753	Nirupama Rao former Indian Foreign Secretary, Ambassador to the U.S & China
TW_nextmedia	525,387	Apple Daily, online news source based in Taiwan
suhasinih	377,179	Suhasini Haidar is an Indian journalist with *The Hindu*
rtl2	293,069	RTL German television station
rayswain	276,480	Ray Swain is a US based blogger
chinaorgcn	270,057	China.org an official Chinese news service in multiple languages
GWPStudio	254,924	Greg Wilson is an Australia based photographer
philharmonie	231,758	Paris based music venue
wenyunchao	225,827	Yunchao Wen human rights activist based in New York
BoingBoing	224,047	Technology oriented website
dibang	204,509	Dibang is a journalist on ABP News in India
OrbisTertius3	160,330	Orbis Tertius is a network inspired by Jorge Borges
Gabriele_Corno	152,614	London based blogger and photographer
tengbiao	143,265	Human rights lawyer based in New York
museiincomune	133,515	Civic museum network in Rome
MaresLeos	130,146	Leoš Mareš is a Czech TV presenter based in Prague

- March 25: We need friendship, which depends on trust. And that depends on concern for others, defending their rights, and not doing them harm. 17,533 retweets 23,747 likes

- March 21: Watch: HHDL talks about how we can contribute to a better humanity in this clip from the Mayo Clinic on February 29. 1,099 retweets 2,039 likes

The volume of tweets varied from a low of 524 tweets (March 24) to highs of 8,805 tweets (March 25, 2016), 7,849 tweets (March 28, 2016) and 7,732 tweets (April 8, 2016). The peaks coincide with the initial tweet by the Dalai Lama that is retweeted. This section will analyze the activity associated with @Dalai Lama over the three week period.

Languages

The most common languages using @DalaiLama are presented in Table 5.7. The tweets are primarily in English (95.8%) followed by Hindi (0.7%) and Spanish (0.5%) The dominance of English reflects the original tweets by the Dalai Lama being in English and then retweeted.

Table 5.7: Languages Used with @Dalai Lama

Language	Count	% of Tweets
English	48,369	95.8
Hindi	352	0.7
Spanish	257	0.5
Italian	191	0.4
Japanese	117	0.2
French	74	0.1
Turkish	71	0.1
Indonesian, Chinese, Portuguese, Tagalog, German, Russian, Polish, Arabic, Estonian, Korean, Dutch, Haitian Creole, Danish	20	<0.05

Content

Tweets containing @DalaiLama feature the messages presented below in Table 5.8.

Unlike the analysis for #Tibet, the content of @Dalai Lama closely reflects his messages

so analysis shows the intent of the message but is not as revealing as content written by

Twitter users.   Of the five tweets attributed to the Dalai Lama in this period, all but one

have high levels of retweeting, and the low retweeted numbers apply to a message noting

his appearance on a television interview. The words used all feature the content of the

initial five Dalai Lama tweets and reflect the themes of these core messages. In this case,

content analysis of language does not add much to understanding, but users, influence

and links do show how the Dalai Lama's tweets are used by others.

Table 5.8: Content of Tweets using @Dalai Lama

Tweet	Retweets	%
We need friendship, which depends on trust. And that depends on concern for others, defending their rights, and not doing them harm	17,533	33.4
Creating a better world will require will-power, vision and determination. And for that we need a strong sense that humanity is one family	14,938	28.5
Physical comfort alone does not bring inner peace. We create inner peace within the mind	10,591	20.2
The distinction between violence and non-violence lies less in the nature of the action and more in the motivation with which it is done	8.342	15.9
Watch: HHDL talks about how we can contribute to a better humanity in this clip from the Mayo Clinic on February 29	1,099	2.1

Links

The links connected to @DalaiLama tweets have generally been added by retweeters and

show by association how users see the Dalai Lama or seek his attention. Table 5.9 shows

the URLs, frequency and a summary of content most often referenced in the tweets

analyzed. The twenty-five most commonly linked URLs mainly reference videos and

analyses of the Dalai Lama's writing and interviews, Buddhism, Tibetan political and

social concerns, as well as unrelated political issues (Palestinian issues, Bernie Sanders).

As was noted earlier in the analysis of #Tibet, there is not a strong association between

Twitter and other online sources as tweets rarely mention URLs, so the ability to use

Twitter to drive traffic to other information sources seems limited.

Table 5.9: Links Most Associated with @Dalai Lama

Count	%	URLs	Content
970	1.9	https://youtu.be/TRaqC_FyRwM	YouTube video of Dalai Lama "Contributing to a Better Humanity" from March 21 tweet
68	0.1	http://dalailama.com/liveweb	Webcast planned for April 29 on "Ancient Indian Philosophy and Modern Science"
61	0.1	http://www.ndtv.com/video/player/the-ndtv-dialogues/i-am-a-son-of-india-have-survived-on-dal-rotis-dalai-lama-to-ndtv/410946	Dalai Lama interview with NDTV (New Delhi TV)
59	0.1	https://amp.twimg.com/v/c96f9f16-4457-415b-96b1-077b6acef518	Link to NDTV interview
53	0.1	https://www.facebook.com/radioradicale/photos/a.409323888865.189663.31379583865/10153997937563866/?type=3&theater	Facebook page of the Radical Party in Italy
49	0.1	http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/i-am-a-son-of-india-have-survived-on-dal-rotis-dalai-lama-to-ndtv-1339906	Article on NDTV interview
25	0.1	https://youtu.be/KiZF_wPvI9g	New Year's message from Dalai Lama on YouTube
24	0.1	http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2014/12/19/dalai-lama-pannella-commovente-incontro/1285788/	Website of Italian newspaper *il Fatto Quotidian*
21	<0.1	http://nyti.ms/1MpHJSR	Link to April 3, 1959 *New York Times* article on Dalai Lama's departure from Tibet
18	<0.1	https://amp.twimg.com/v/3f89e668-21ea-473c-b245-687bf2208504	Link to NDTV interview
17	<0.1	https://youtu.be/vRwlygihP7I	Link to Dalai Lama YouTube channel
16	<0.1	http://goo.gl/DuSXMb	Article on Tibetan elections in *The Irrawaddy*
16	<0.1	http://j.mp/1SfmJQI	Review of co-authored book by Dalai Lama *A Force for Good*
14	<0.1	http://bit.ly/1KiXWf9	Tsem Rinpoche article on Dorje Shugden
13	<0.1	http://thenowapp.com	Link to iTunes app for

			inspirational quotes
13	<0.1	https://www.change.org/p/sydney-university-venues-management-sydney-university-let-ali-abunimah-speak	Petition for pro Palestinian speaker at University of Sydney
12	<0.1	http://thndr.me/2gAQJK	Webpage of Central Tibetan Administration
12	<0.1	http://ow.ly/ZTmE9	Webpage for Lion's Roar Foundation for Buddhism
12	<0.1	http://spr.ly/6014Bi9O4	Webpage for Reader's Digest quotes by Dalai Lama
12	<0.1	http://bit.ly/229b1fB	English webpage of *Al Arabiya* news (Saudi Arabia) on Israel-Palestine conflict
11	<0.1	http://facebook.com/radioradicale/	Facebook page of the Radical Party in Italy
11	<0.1	http://tinyurl.com/gvxrqlk	Webpage of Adnkronos news service
11	<0.1	https://twitter.com/amitrajwant/status/710165434549477377	Hindi twitter account of Amit Rajwant (Indian journalist)
10	<0.1	http://www.tibetanreview.net/dalai-lama-urges-preventive-measures-to-improve-tibetan-healthcare/	Webpage of *Tibetan Review*
10	<0.1	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bm0XvRAjK-w	Link to Bernie Sanders YouTube channel

Users

References to users of @Dalai Lama are presented in Table 5.10 which also lists details about each user. Given the parameters of data collection, @DalaiLama was used in every tweet. The low numbers of other users shows that the Dalai Lama is referenced by many rather than a few. Those who used @Dalai Lama most were political and media organizations, although Tibetan political campaigns were not referring to the Dalai Lama. Many users of @Dalai Lama were spiritual and political leaders, but there were a number

of users that had no obvious connection to the Dalai Lama such as astronaut Buzz Aldrin, marine scientist Philippe Cousteau, Team India Cricket, and a number of Syrian and Islamic activists. Despite the common circumstances of Tibetans and Uyghurs, the latter group was not active in its use of Tibet or Dalai Lama references.

Table 5.10: Users of @Dalai Lama

User	Count	% of Tweets	Identity
@DalaiLama	50,527	100.0	Dalai Lama
@UN	376	0.7	United Nations
@ndtv	331	0.7	New Delhi TV
@Pontifex	302	0.6	Pope Francis
@narendramodi	260	0.5	Narendra Modi, Indian Prime Minister
@RashtrapatiBhvn	256	0.5	Rashtrapati Bhavan, President of India
@ArtofLiving	250	0.5	Art of Living nonprofit based in Bangalore
@amitrajwant	247	0.5	Amit Rajwant (Indian journalist)
@PutinRF_Eng	244	0.5	Vladimir Putin, President of Russia
@Pontifex_it	243	0.5	Pope Francis in Italian
@JunckerEU	241	0.5	Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Union
@KremlinRussia_E	240	0.5	President of Russia
@pcousteau	236	0.5	Philippe Cousteau, TV/Documentaries
@Maurizio_52	234	0.5	Maurizio Tentor, Italian blogger
@mrcrto	213	0.4	Website for Italian marines accused of killing two Indian fisherman
@TheRealBuzz	181	0.4	Buzz Aldrin, astronaut
@tomolicouse	149	0.3	Activist, primarily Japanese
@Piclogy	135	0.3	Travel and photography website
@POTUS	136	0.3	President Obama
@BCCI	130	0.3	Team India cricket

@snhr	130	0.3	Syrian Network
@SyrianCoalition	130	0.3	Syrian Coalition (in Arabic)
@CanadaFP	130	0.3	Foreign Policy Canada
@Iran	130	0.3	The Iran Project
@islamic_front	130	0.3	Islamic Front, rebel group in Syria

Hashtags

Unlike the issue based tweets where hashtags identify causes, there were few hashtags associated with @Dalai Lama, as shown in Table 5.11. The main references were:

- The Dalai Lama's interview and quotations, including references to Buddhism, philosophy and motivational thought.

- News reporting

- Many hashtags may reference the Dalai lama but serve interests and causes unrelated to his work, such as Biafra, cricket, St Patrick's Day and the NCAA March Madness

Influence

The Dalai Lama is an influential figure who receives media and celebrity attention. Alone, he has 12.7 million followers and his tweets are frequently forwarded and reported. In the analysis period, messages with @Dalai Lama were sent to over 168 million Twitter accounts. The most influential 25 individuals and organizations that use @Dalai Lama are listed in Table 5.12 along with background details on each user.

Table 5.11: Hashtags Used with @Dalai Lama

Hashtags	Count	% of Tweets	Content
#dalailamatondtv	301	0.6	Dalai Lama interview on New Delhi TV
#wcfexperience	253	0.5	World Culture Festival organized by Art of Living
#mediahateshindus	240	0.5	Claims that mainstream Indian media has biased reporting against Hindus
#tibet	175	0.3	Tibet causes
#quote	136	0.3	Dutch quotation website
#wt20	136	0.3	International Cricket council World Twenty20 competition in India
#ind	126	0.2	Indian cricket
#throwbackthursday	115	0.2	Social media practice of reposting past content on Thursdays
#stpatricksday	115	0.2	St Patricks day fell at the start of the data collection process
#marchmadness	115	0.2	NCAA March Madness
#quotes	109	0.2	Dutch quotation website
#china	85	0.2	China content
#aldubyayawho	80	0.1	
#mindfulness	73	0.1	Everyday Mindfulness website
#dalailama	64	0.1	Dalai Lama
#inthenow	63	0.1	Event planner and blogger
#india	54	0.1	India
#wisdom	52	0.1	Motivational and spiritual applications
#philosophy	51	0.1	Philosophy
#biafrans	49	0.1	Biafra (Nigeria) content
#spirituality	48	0.1	Spiritual references
#buddhism	48	0.1	Umbrella for Buddhist content
#freennamdikanu	48	0.1	Nnamdi Kanu UK based Biafran activist, detained in Nigeria
#love	46	0.1	Love
#stopchildrapeinturkey	46	0.1	Primarily Turkish tweets about child abuse

Many of the accounts forwarding or reporting on @Dalai Lama were major news services like the BBC, New Delhi TV, and CNN, along with celebrities, bloggers, and media personnel who have large Twitter followings. The Dalai Lama has a strong following that want to report on him or to be linked by association. The following of the Dalai Lama by individuals, and news services, can amplify his messages and lend some authority as he is treated by the media as a spiritual leader. The extended reach of the Dalai Lama and ability to reach news services gives the Tibetan cause a powerful and sophisticated tool to shape public opinion.

Table 5.12: Most Influential Users of @Dalai Lama

User	Followers	Identity
BBCWorld	13,897,106	Website of BBC News
ndtv	6,485,032	New Delhi TV
BBCNews	6,430,677	Website of BBC News
BCCI	2,261,852	Team India cricket
PatrickDempsey	1,182,770	Actor and Motor sports celebrity with cancer foundation
stephanieadams	1,096,450	Media personality and model
VictorMochere	800,132	Nairobi based teen blogger
kmerritt777	749,047	Florida based blogger
ViaJuani	643,625	Buenos Aires based blogger
LouiseAThompson	610,206	Fashion retailer
desianwar	610,007	Journalist with CNN Indonesia
ADDAMBLAKK	556,009	German blogger
WMutunga	545,702	Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Kenya
morrowchris	525,068	Journalist iCNN
Highway_30	482,140	Minnesota based mental health advocate
SkollFoundation	473,060	Foundation promoting social entrepreneurship
RTtheBEST	422,987	Blogger specializing on retweeting content
maxehrich	388,808	US actor
mshowalter	383,095	California blogger

sharkkteethsolo	358,789	Indiana based musician
kittischnitti	358,138	Japanese blogger
V_Heritier	352,993	French blogger
Adnkronos	345,119	Andkronos news service
alphabetsuccess	333,776	CEO of Tweet Jukebox, tweet management software
KeyaMorgan	323,667	New York based filmmaker

Network Analysis

A summary of the network data for @DalaiLama is presented in Table 5.13 Results showed that the network comprised 3,183 vertices linked by 2,639 unique edges plus 439 duplicate edges. From over 50,000 tweets there were only two self-loops identified. There are 472 connected components that are linked to each other with only one component in isolation. The maximum vertices in a connected component are 1,222, which is the most vertices to occur in a connected component. The maximum edges in a connected component is 1,398, indicating that one component accounts for a significant share of the total.

The maximum geodesic distance of 19 shows the number of connectors needed to cross the network, while the average geodesic distance is 6.91. This is a large network around the Dalai Lama, especially when compared to Uyghur networks. The graph density of .0005 means a low density of linkage for the Dalai Lama as references to him spread across many interests. . The modularity result of 0.868, is in the upper level of the range from 0 to 1 indicating that the groups in the network have strong connections within groups rather than between groups.

Table 5.13 NodeXL Analysis of @Dalai Lama

|	
Vertices	3183
Unique Edges	2639
Edges With Duplicates	439
Total Edges	3078
Self-Loops	2
Connected Components	472
Single-Vertex Connected Components	1
Maximum Vertices in a Connected Component	1222
Maximum Edges in a Connected Component	1398
Maximum Geodesic Distance (Diameter)	19
Average Geodesic Distance	6.907116
Graph Density	0.000546982
Modularity	0.868132

The NodeXL graph of the @DalaiLama tweet archive (Figure 5.1) reveals a number of clusters around core ideas associated with the Dalai Lama.   Presented in terms of size, Group 1 (top left) refers to the WCFexperience or the World Culture Festival which was held in New Delhi in 2016 around themes of spirituality that included messages from the Dalai Lama. Group 2 (middle left) refers to the group Media Hates Hindus, which is an Indian activist group that is concerned by the treatment of Hindus, especially in comparison to other religious groups. Group 3 (lower left) is Dalai Lama to NDTV and focuses on the Dalai Lama's appearance on New Delhi Television.

The fourth group (top, second column) is the Free Tibet movement, while beneath it is the graph of Group 5, WT 20 Ind, which is the World Twenty20 Cricket tournament.

The social media activity was prompted by a visit to the Dalai Lama by the Indian women's WT20 team (Kashmir Guardian 2016). While the groups listed so far all have a link to the Dalai Lama, Group 6 (column2 graph 3) represents Throwback Thursday and St. Patrick's Day which have no direct connection to the spiritual leader. The only connection is that March 17 is the anniversary of the Dalai Lama's visit to the United States 25 years ago and earlier his escape from China. Group 7 (column 2 last graph) refers to ALDUBYayaWho which is often cited but to date lacks an identity, while Group 8 (top, column 3) is Super Soul Sunday and Self Help Buddhism referencing the appearance of a Buddhist teacher on video program Super Soul Sunday. Group 9 also refers to the appearance of the Dalai Lama on New Delhi television, with Group 10 commemorating Mindfulness and the International Day of happiness.

The two remaining large groups have no direct connection to the Dalai Lama but appeal to him as a leader or seek benefits through association. Group 11 concerns Biafra and the Buhari killing which was the murder of a woman in Nigeria accused of blasphemy. The second association (Group 12) linked the Bernie Sanders political campaign in the United States to Buddhism and meditation.

Figure 5.1 NodeXL Graph of @Dalai Lama
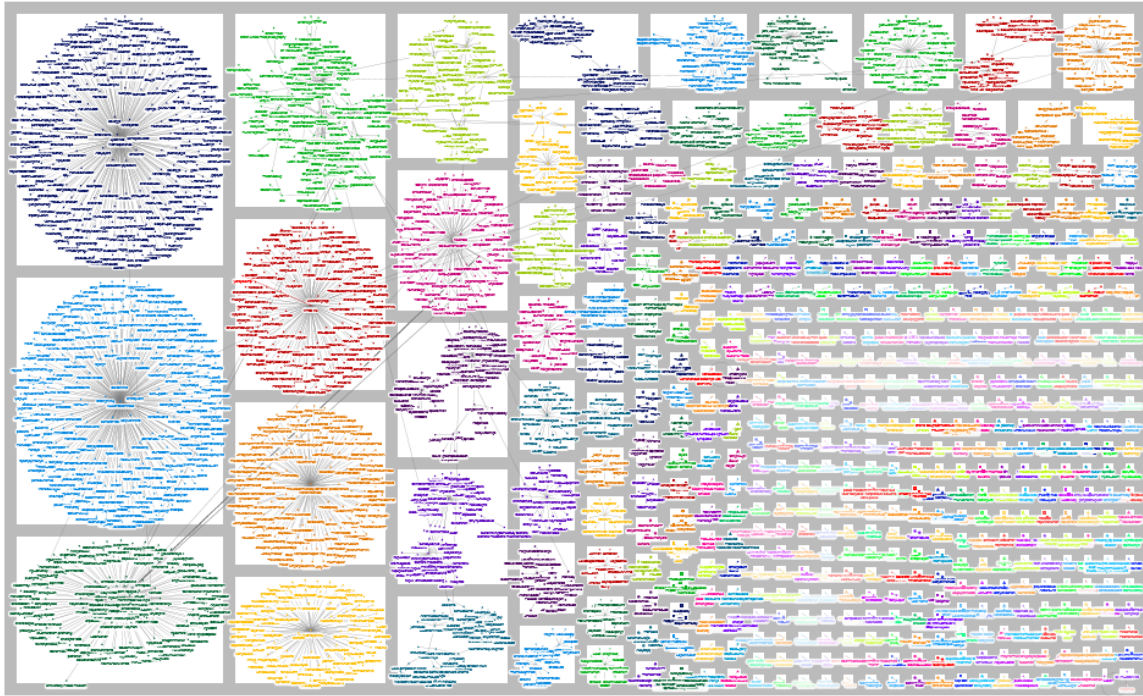
Discussion

Analysis of the use of #Tibet and @Dalai Lama showed a number of patterns. In terms

of language for #Tibet, the Tibetan language was not used at all while Chinese was also

little used (around 1%).   In addition the Chinese and Tibetan terms for Tibet were also

rarely used. The dominant language of #Tibet was English, suggesting that Tibet's issues

are being framed in English, which is a language external to the Tibetan and Chinese

condition. Japanese was the second most used language, in tweets by nationalist activists

who saw in Tibet an opportunity to attack China. For activists using the Tibetan cause, it

may be more about opposing China than there being a strong concern in Japan for the fate

of Tibet.   Content about @Dalai Lama was significantly in English, which is the

language used by the Dalai Lama in his communications. The languages used with

@Dalai Lama may reflect interest in Buddhism more than Tibetan politics.

The content expressed by users of #Tibet is primarily about the political status of

Tibet and campaigns for a free Tibet. Terms include propaganda, imperialism, and

occupation. There are also references to Buddhism, travel and human rights. The tone of

the tweets is more about the political status of Tibet rather than human rights. @Dalai

Lama refers very little to political issues but focusses on Buddhism and motivational

content. Given his position, the Dalai Lama does not tweet explicitly about politics and

Tibet but concentrates on spiritual values. One theme that emerges through the analysis

is the internal Tibetan Buddhism tension over the status of Dorje Shugden and its

promoter Tsem Tulku Rinpoche.

A small percentage of tweets contain links that enable users to connect to more

detailed information and video sources. The links associated with #Tibet are about

political issues, with the exception of the dominant link to the Dorje Shugden debate

within Tibetan Buddhism. The links for @Dalai Lama are spiritual and philosophical

rather than political. The low utilization of links in tweets suggests that messages are not

being used to direct people to other sources, but to state a claim or condition without

substantiation.

Individuals and organizations using #Tibet are primarily activists promoting a free Tibet, although the Chinese official news service, Xinhua, is also active. Xinhua uses #Tibet in two ways, to dilute political issues by reporting everyday Tibetan events, and to promote a Chinese perspective on Tibet. The users of @Dalai Lama are, unsurprisingly, dominated by the Dalai Lama although he only made five tweets during the period studied. The leading users tend to be political leaders (Pope Francis, US and Russian Presidents, United Nations, Indian Government) who can endorse the Dalai Lama without making an explicit statement about Tibet, or seeking to be associated with a widely respected spiritual leader. The Dalai Lama through apolitical content can be used as a surrogate for Tibet without users being politicized by their actions. China has a history of punishing leaders and countries that support the Dalai Lama but as a religious figure he is politically protected.

The hashtags that appear with #Tibet suggest related causes, primarily the political status of Tibet and China's actions towards it. There is a strong theme about Dorje Shugden and its ongoing tension with Tibetan Buddhism and its leader the Dalai Lama. @Dalai Lama continues the theme of apolitical content and mainstream international media reporting on the Dalai Lama.

Influencers show the twitter power and audiences of the users of #Tibet, which tend to be media. The top two influencers are China's news service and India today, showing how both countries with and interest in Tibet have active twitter users. In contrast, the Dalai Lama is followed by many mainstream news sources such as the BBC plus celebrities and individual bloggers.

Overall the analysis shows that Tibet is a politicized issue for China and many other countries, while the Dalai Lama remains apolitical through spiritual tweets that world leaders recognize. The Dalai Lama is inherently apolitical in his statements while being highly connected to global political power, but Tibet is political but is not connected to the same political forces that link to the Dalai Lama. The issue of Tibet is used by unrelated political forces to make a statement (Japanese Nationalists), or by issues unrelated to the political status of Tibet, such as Dorje Shugden.

6. FINDINGS: UYGHUR SOCIAL MEDIA AND MOVEMENTS

This chapter studies the use of Twitter around Uyghur causes, organizations and individuals. The analysis focuses on use of #Uyghur and @World Uyghur Congress. The presentation follows the same structure used to discuss Tibetan use of Twitter in Chapter 5. Overall, Uyghur terms and links were less common than Tibetan references on Twitter, with this analysis finding ten times more references to Tibet than to Uyghur. The themes, users and strategies of Uyghur use of Twitter contrasts Tibet, as will be discussed in the conclusion.

#Uyghur Analysis

Analysis of social media activity around Uyghur causes focused on the #Uyghur hashtag. This term was selected over the alternate spelling of Uighur as this alternate term was used far less and was often used with #Uyghur. During the analysis period #Uyghur was used twenty times more often than #Uighur, so the analysis will focus on the spelling most commonly recognized and used. Between March 7 and April 11, 2016 there were 4,767 tweets that included the term #Uyghur. The volume of tweets varied from a low of 76 tweets (March 27-28) to highs of 218 tweets (March 23, 2016), 188 tweets (April 2, 2016) and 181 tweets on March 9, 2016. Of these three days of highest tweets, there was nothing unique about activity connecting it to an event, announcement or action.

Language

The most common languages that incorporated #Uyghur are presented in Table 6.1. The

hashtag is used overwhelmingly in English (84.6%) followed by Japanese (4%), Finnish

(1%), Indonesian (1%), Spanish (1%) and German (1%).

Table 6.1: Languages Used with #Uyghur

Language	Frequency	% of Tweets
English	4,035	84.6
Japanese	189	4.0
Finnish	50	1.0
Indonesian	40	0.8
Spanish	36	0.7
German	35	0.7
Turkish	29	0.6
Swedish	28	0.6
Hungarian	25	0.5
Italian	19	0.4
Chinese	9	0.2
French	3	0.1
Estonian	2	<0.1
Tagalog	2	<0.1
Hindi	1	<0.1

Content

The words used in messages are presented below in Table 6.2. The terms used can be

classified into several groups associated with the Uyghur geographic presence (China,

Xinjiang) and Uyghur religious culture (Islam, Allah, Muslim, Muslims). Most of the

terms used, however, relate to Uyghur political movements. The most common terms, in

approximately one third of tweets are China and East Turkistan, followed by the Japanese characters for Uyghur.

A summary of the political terms used in #Uyghur messages includes:

- East Turkistan refers to the Uyghur name for Xinjiang, with the name also referring to a future independent country dedicated to Uyghur culture. Use of this term is politically charged because it is associated with independence from China.
- China is the most commonly used term and is used in reference to the authority and state against which Uyghur protests are directed, while CCP refers to the Chinese Communist Party, another target of Uyghur action.
- A number of terms are protest oriented such as 'Boycott China,' 'Human Rights,' 'Stop China,' and 'Demonstration.' All terms are anti-Chinese or refer to Uyghur action.
- Twitter is often used to promote two slogans of Uyghur independence, 'Voice of Uyghur' and 'Every Voice Matters,' with these phrases used in about 15% of Tweets.
- Genocide is used by Uyghurs to describe the actions of China and the Chinese military against Uyghurs.

Table 6.2: Word Frequency with #Uyghur

Term	Count	% of Tweets
China	1,774	37.2
East Turkistan	1,639	34.4
ウイグル (Uyghur)	1,165	24.4
Free Uyghur	1,121	23.5
CCP	951	19.9
Boycott China	709	14.9
Voice of Uyghur	681	14.3
Every Voice Matters	673	14.1
Chinese	650	13.6
Human rights	559	11.7
Stop China	453	9.5
Muslims	445	9.3
Tibet	421	8.8
Genocide	412	8.6
Uighur	284	6.0
Xinjiang	243	5.1
Islam	175	3.7
Demonstration	173	3.7
Muslim	172	3.7
Allah	172	3.7
Terrorist	171	3.7

- Uighur is often used as an alternate spelling of Uyghur with hashtags of both terms used in many tweets.

- Tibet is often seen by Uyghurs and observers as sharing similar treatment by China, so general tweets on independence and separatism in China refer to both spellings.

- The term 'terrorist' when associated with Uyghur actions can have several meanings. One meaning is how China uses the term to label Uyghur actions and to link Uyghurs with Islamic extremists, while another meaning may be

appropriately applied to some Uyghur actions that have attacked public spaces in China.

- Uyghurs have a following in Japan as illustrated by Japanese being the second most common language using the #Uyghur term, along with the Japanese characters for Uyghur (ウイグル) being one of the most frequently used words in tweets. The Uyghur cause appeals to Nationalists who see China as a common enemy with Uyghurs and a challenge to Japanese power in the past and today.

Links

A number of tweets reference URLs of Uyghur websites and video links associated with Uyghur causes, but they represent a small share of total tweets. Twitter is not used as a way to drive interest towards Uyghur websites and videos and seems to exist separately in parallel with other forms of social media. Table 6.3 below shows the URLs, frequency and a summary of content most often referenced in the tweets analyzed. The twenty-five most commonly linked URLs all promote Uyghur causes, often referencing past events such as protests against the 2008 Beijing Olympics, demonstrations against China in Washington DC, and reporting on current news about treatment of Uyghurs in China.

Table 6.3: Links Most Associated with #Uyghur

Count	% of Tweets	Link URL	Content
92	1.9	https://youtu.be/JL4o8OBoOD0	Uyghur Families Colonize Syrian Village
64	1.3	http://rbl.ms/1FQPx0J	Voice of Uyghur East Turkestan
47	1.0	http://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/	World Uyghur Congress
42	0.9	http://www.whatsonweibo.com/chinas-imams-online-preaching-on-weibo/	Weibo report on unfair trial of Uyghur Imam
42	0.9	http://youtu.be/4AyLkO47U4A	Chinese Terrorist massacring Uyghur Muslim in East Turkistan
40	0.8	https://youtu.be/Oz2t9sH7WXI	East Turkestan nuclear-tested 46 times by Chinese government
40	0.8	http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/uyghur-imam-farmers-sentenced-for-illegally-practicing-religion-in-chinas-xinjiang-03162016112010.html	Radio Free Asia: Uyghur Imam, Farmers Sentenced For Illegally Practicing Religion in China's Xinjiang
39	0.8	https://youtu.be/AZeInA6FU8w	History of East Turkestan
36	0.8	http://youtu.be/BYmUSHjZyMM	Uyghur protest in Washington DC
34	0.7	http://youtu.be/eliGfRRM3KM	Interview With Uyghur Scholar Ilham Tohti
34	0.7	http://saveeastturk.org/en/index.php/Ethnic%20Assimilation	Peace and Liberty for East Turkistan
34	0.7	https://youtu.be/GBvEkF3CjwY	Oral History Spotlight on the Ghulja Massacre [in East Turkistan]
33	0.7	http://goo.gl/ExXtQF	Radio Free Asia: Mother of Uyghur Who Disappeared in 2009 Faces Charges Over Interview

31	0.7	https://youtu.be/cssWeP_iPXU	East Turkestan National Anthem
31	0.7	http://youtu.be/C-vj5NqdhuQ	East Turkistan
31	0.7	http://goo.gl/4304Rd	Radio Free Asia: Uyghur Imam, Farmers Sentenced For Illegally Practicing Religion in China's Xinjiang
30	0.6	http://youtu.be/itFbSxtk7RE	East Turkistan World Wide Demonstration for Beijing Olympic
30	0.6	http://saveeastturk.org/en/index.php/Tohti%2C%20the%20student%20detained%20unjustly	Student detained unjustly
30	0.6	http://youtu.be/CaYKHYSlm2g	Tibet, Mongol and Uyghur- 3 Nations Solidarity Demonstration
30	0.6	http://youtu.be/wGR1OHYCtjw	East Turkistan Demonstration against Beijing Olympic
29	0.6	http://saveeastturk.org/en/index.php/Family%20Planning	Birth-control policy in China
29	0.6	https://youtu.be/yltzFNPP44s	East Turkestan In 50 Seconds
29	0.6	http://youtu.be/yftf1n6D22c	Uyghur demonstration in DC
28	0.6	http://saveeastturk.org/en/index.php/Undeserved%20Arrests%2C%20Detention%20and%20Death%20Punishment	Undeserved Arrests, Detention and Death Punishment
28	0.6	http://youtu.be/iDg1Bqa7g5Q	A Cry for Humanitarian Help from YARKAND Uyghur Channel

Users

The leading users as indicated by the @ symbol are presented in Table 6.4 which also lists background on each user. The only established organizations associated with #Uyghur are the World Uyghur Congress and the United Nations. Most of the remaining leaders are individual activists, either for Uyghur causes or similar groups such as Tibetans, Kurds, and Muslims. There is a strong presence of Japanese users, with several

focused on Uyghur causes but the remaining promote a patriotic image of Japan by

denying past Japanese actions, especially with Korea and China in World War II. The

remaining category would be individuals or scholars who have broad interests that

include Uyghur causes.   Uyghur interests through Twitter rely on individuals, with major

organizations and news sources largely absent from the analysis.

Table 6.4: Users of #Uyghur

Users	Count	% of Tweets	Identity
@AbdugheniSabit	662	13.9	Thabit, Uyghur activist
@UyghurCongress	253	5.3	World Uyghur Congress
@pl4et	219	4.6	Silver Wolf, Uyghur Activist
@VoiceUyghur	210	4.4	Blog, Voice of Uyghur
@Tibetans	171	3.6	Tibetan activist
@MuslimFromChina	162	3.4	Muslim activist
@JPY_Kurdish	140	2.9	Kurdish activist (Japan)
@champion1969111	134	2.8	In Japanese
@iamgul8	121	2.5	Uyghur activist
@BhoRangzen	92	1.9	Rangzen, Tibetan activist
@F117J	82	1.7	Nationalist Japan
@PakkuIntl	69	1.4	Nationalist Japan
@clara111	59	1.2	Clara, Tibetan activist
@XHNews	57	1.2	China Xinhua News Agency
@jadwigajoy1310	46	1.0	Vietnamese activist
@shams1919	46	1.0	Pakistan activist
@Terror_Monitor	42	0.9	Nonprofit monitoring terrorist groups
@Pakkurareman	41	0.9	Nationalist Japan
@EliseMaAnderson	39	0.8	Ethnomusicologist, Uyghur scholar
@q333tnnqsg	39	0.8	Personal
@Ahmad5Jamil	39	0.8	Student in Pakistan
@farahaair	39	0.8	Artist in Washington
@SowterTracy	36	0.8	Human rights activist
@UN	35	0.7	United Nations
@Tenam108	28	0.6	Tibetan activist

Hashtags

Many tweets reference other issues through the use of hashtags. Analysis of this data

offers insights into causes and issues that are clustered in the minds of those producing

tweets on Uyghur issues. The top 25 hashtags used with #Uyghur are presented in Table

6.5. There is a close match between hashtags and the common words noted earlier. The

most common references are to China, political action by Uyghurs, Japanese interest in

Uyghur issues, and promotion of human rights and attacks on Chinese actions labelled as

genocide. Among the differences are:

- The role of #rt, the Russian news source

- Connecting issues for Uyghurs with Syria with a shared sense of Islamic causes.

- Connecting Kurdish issues with Uyghurs (#ypg refers to the Kurdish People's

  Protection Unit), which also intersects with current tensions in Syria, Turkey and

  Iraq.

- #ChineseMuslimInTrouble is an activist for Uyghur causes

Table 6.5: Hashtags Associated with #Uyghur

Hashtags	Count	% of Tweets	Content
#china	1,609	33.8	China
#freeuyghur	1,518	31.8	Free Uyghur movement
#eastturkistan	1,433	30.1	East Turkistan, Uyghur name for Xinjiang
#ウイグル	1,416	29.7	Japanese for Uyghur
#ccp	956	20.1	Communist Party of China, used to protest government action
#rt	952	20.1	RT, Russian English news service
#boycottchina	744	15.6	Boycott China
#humanrights	609	12.8	Human Rights
#tibet	591	12.4	Tibet, usually used as a shared struggle
#stopchina	453	9.5	Stop China
#genocide	419	8.8	Genocide
#chinese	338	7.1	Chinese
#uighur	282	5.9	Uighur
#muslims	266	5.6	Muslims
#xinjiang	204	4.3	Xinjiang, main Uyghur province
#turkistan	179	3.8	Turkistan, Uyghur home
#syria	177	3.8	Syria
#freeuyghurs	168	3.5	Free Uyghurs
#muslim	165	3.5	Muslim
#islam	164	3.5	Islam
#chinesemuslimintrouble	159	3.3	Chinese Muslim Trouble, used by Uyghur activist
#ypg	142	3.0	Kurdish People's Protection Unit)
#mongolia	137	2.9	Mongolia
#freedom	134	2.8	Freedom
#savemuslimcommunity	127	2.7	Save Muslim Community

Influence

One element of social media is how many people see tweets and how respected

individuals are by their followers. Uyghur issues do not have the media or major blogger

connections of Tibetan causes nor the leadership of the Dali Lama to drive social media

attention. The major social media actors for #Uyghur are listed in Table 6.5 along with

details of each individual. While Tibetan causes count on users having millions of

followers, Uyghur users are generally less than 100,000 followers. Also distinctive is the

lack or major media sources with users often being individuals who have broad interests

across human rights and freedom rather than a focus on Uyghur issues. The Japanese

connection continues with four users writing in Japanese or supporting Nationalist

causes.

Uyghur Congress Twitter Analysis

Unlike the Tibetan causes, Uyghur issues do not have an easily recognized figure who is

able to motivate social media for the cause. Uyghur issues are led by the World Uyghur

Congress, based in Munich, and its president, Rabiya Kadir. While leading Uyghur

causes outside China, Rabiya Kadir has a small footprint in social media, in fact, since

2010 she has made seven tweets and has 404 followers. In the absence of a recognizable

leader for social media analysis, the focus of this analysis is the World Uyghur Congress

(@Uyghur Congress).

Table 6.6: Most Influential Users of #Uyghur

User	Followers	Identity
tengbiao	143,979	Human rights lawyer
NozNewz_com	113,940	Greek media website
humanrightsgrow	97,564	Human/environmental rights
HinduRajyam	85,790	Indian activist
Brent_Huffman	80,873	Scholar, filmmaker
Terror_Monitor	69,880	Nonprofit monitoring terrorist groups
PeterTatchell	64,257	Human rights advocate
feliciasonmez	49,117	Journalist
E_Turkistan	47,669	Turkistan Times (Arabic)
kohyu1952	45,783	Writer (Japanese)
natsocialist	27,523	National Socialist Party
IraqSurveys	25,789	Iraqi news
ridlwandjogja	25,667	Indonesian blogger
gallina_fiedler	25,468	Animal rights activist
Deenmedia	25,419	TV broadcaster (South Africa)
CrackingUpGOD	24,969	Individual
bci_	24,819	Blogger (Japanese)
Chavern_Club	24,486	Blogger (Japanese)
Tibetans	23,435	Tibetan activist
ErylmazZeynep	23,383	Individual
Pakkurareman	22,238	Nationalist Japan
aboutworldlangs	22,055	About World Languages
aydinnurii	19,831	Social Media (Turkish)
YaxueCao	19,385	China democracy advocate
rudol9h	18,670	Individual

@UyghurCongress tweeted 563 times between April 7 and April 30, 2016 and has

5,033 followers leading to 1.5 million impressions. The World Uyghur Congress tweets

political issues associated with Uyghur identity and Chinese treatment of Uyghurs. The

volume of tweets varied from a low of 3 tweets (April 19) to highs of 93 tweets (April 25,

2016) and 91 tweets (April 21, 2016). The peaks coincide with the World Uyghur

Congress conference in Berlin on April 25, and conference promotion and release of

press freedom rankings on April 21.

Language

English is the primary language used by the Uyghur Congress, used for 90.1% of all of

their tweets, while other languages accounted for around 1% or less of tweets, as shown

in Table 6.7.

Table 6.7: Languages used for @Uyghur Congress

Language	Count	% of Tweets
English	507	90.1
Japanese	7	1.2
Chinese	6	1.1
Turkish	2	0.4
French	2	0.4
German	1	0.2
Indonesian	1	0.2

Content

Tweets containing @UyghurCongress included the words presented below in Table 6.8.

The content of @UyghurCongress tweets focus on political issues and the management

and events of the World Uyghur Congress, in particular conferences and highly visible

trials and issues that can capture public attention. When analyzed in context of complete

tweets, the main themes include:

- Uyghur identity (Uyghur, Uyghurs)

- Political relations (China, India)

- Human rights issues mainly Uyghur Human Rights and Human Rights Watch (Human, Rights), as well as illegal extradition for years (yrs).

- Trial of Patigul Ghuman for seeking information about her Uyghur activist son who disappeared in 2009 (Patigul, Trial)

- Dolkun Isa, chairman of the World Uyghur Congress, planned to attend a conference in Dharamsala, home of the Tibetan government in exile. (Dolkun Isa, Visa, India). India revoked his visa, which Uyghurs interpreted as India bowing to Chinese pressure (Pant 2016).

- Refugees refers to a widely publicized statement by the deputy prime minister of Malaysia that Uyghurs were not terrorists but refugees

- World Uyghur Congress events include a conference in Berlin April 25-26 (Conference, Berlin, Germany, April 25-26)

Table 6.8: Word Frequency of @Uyghur Congress Tweets

Term	Count	% of Tweets
Uyghur(s)	311	55.2
China	148	26.3
Human rights	112	19.9
India	57	10.1
Visa	55	9.8
Patigil Ghuman	41	7.3
Refugees	41	7.3
April 25-26	40	7.1
Conference	38	6.8
Trial	33	5.9
Berlin	32	5.7
Challenges	32	5.7
Dolkun Isa	32	5.7
Germany	28	5.0

Links

The links included in @UyghurCongress tweets are mainly political, with details
presented in Table 6.9. There are very few links included in Uyghur tweets, with the
most cited link (3.9% of tweets) being for the World Uyghur Congress website. As was
found for Tibet, there is little coordination across Twitter to drive attention to other
websites and videos. The websites are primarily for Uyghur causes and organizations,
reports by media sources, and human rights organizations.

Users

The most common users of @UyghurCongress are listed in Table 6.10, which also
provides the identity of each user.   In addition to itself, the World Uyghur Congress is
mainly referenced with Uyghur and Islamic activists, human rights organizations, Tibetan
activists and organizations and Japanese nationalist bloggers. Missing from this list are
news agencies and other organizations that can promote information about Uyghur issues.
A lot of the attention in these tweets focusses on ther World Uyghur Congress and its
actions rather than showing issues to attract popular attention. Also significant is the
presence of nationalist Japanese bloggers who see a shared enemy in China.

Table 6.9: Links Included in @ Uyghur Congress

Count	% of Tweets	URLs	Content
22	3.9	http://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/	Website of World Uyghur Congress
19	3.4	https://goo.gl/JEb0BE	Petition on Change.org to free eight Uyghur political prisoners
17	3.0	http://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/?p=28327	Website of World Uyghur Congress announcement about Berlin Conference
16	2.8	http://goo.gl/sHoysg	Website of Uyghur Human Rights Project on trial of Patigul Ghulam
16	2.8	http://goo.gl/iMHMbj	Website of World Uyghur Congress on trial of Patigul Ghulam
15	2.7	http://goo.gl/FjuA5h	Website of *Hindustan Times* article on Dolkul Isa visa issue
14	2.5	http://banangostreet.com/issue-11/tahir-hamut/	Website of Banango Street, a literary journal, with poetry about Ürümchi
14	2.5	http://goo.gl/M1Lv2Q	*CNN* report on Chinese abductions of activists
13	2.3	http://goo.gl/t4hfH2	*The Straits Times* (Singapore) report on Malaysian government recognizing Uyghurs as refugees
12	2.1	http://goo.gl/pmF4D9	World Uyghur Congress newsletter
11	2.0	http://goo.gl/nw11Ff	*New York Times* report on jailed Uyghur scholar
10	1.8	http://m.timesofindia.com/india/India-cancels-visa-for-Uyghur-leader-Dolkun-Isa/articleshow/51974329.cms	*Times of India* report on Dolkul Isa visa issue
8	1.4	http://goo.gl/1Eh4IG	World Uyghur Congress announcement of its General Assembly in July in Paris
8	1.4	http://rbl.ms/1FQPge0	Website of Voice of Uyghurs
8	1.4	http://goo.gl/QfTIh7	Radio Free Asia report on Petigul Ghulam

8	1.4	http://bit.ly/1SUCzXh	Website of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization
7	1.2	https://goo.gl/gepULf	Human Rights Watch letter to Prime Minister Turnbull of Australia urging support for human rights on visit to China
7	1.2	https://twitter.com/nzayed07/status/717748184160854016	Link to tweet about Uyghur human rights in China
5	0.9	https://twitter.com/MuslimFromChina/status/720500201409134593	Link to tweet about Uyghur human rights in China
5	0.9	http://bit.ly/214mwG8	Website of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, report on Dolkun Isa
4	0.7	https://goo.gl/P4it96	Amnesty report on executions in 2015
4	0.7	http://goo.gl/Db5fwo	Radio Free Asia report on Chinese retaliation against Uyghur families of activists
4	0.7	http://goo.gl/3wxeQm	Websire of Indian news service NewsX, report on Dolkul Isa
4	0.7	http://www.tibetanreview.net/china-expects-india-to-hand-over-alleged-uyghur-terrorist/	Tibetan Review report on China's request to India to extradite Dolkul Isa
4	0.7	http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/press-releases/china-scrap-foreign-ngo-law-aimed-at-choking-civil-society	Amnesty report on new Chinese law to limit foreign nonprofit organizations

Table 6.10: Users of @Uyghur Congress

User	Count	% of Tweets	Identity
@UyghurCongress	563	100.0	World Uyghur Congress
@UNPOintl	85	15.1	Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization
@Dolkun_Isa	42	7.5	Dolkul Isa, chairman of the World Uyghur Congress
@Rightsbehindyou	29	5.2	Website for Germany based human rights organization Society for Threatened Peoples (STP)
@savetibet	16	2.8	International Campaign for Tibet - Germany
@truejapan	14	2.5	Japanese nationalist website
@kumi_kumiJP	14	2.5	Japanese nationalist website
@VoiceUyghur	13	2.3	Twitter site for Voice of the Uyghurs
@LoneWolf_Garud	12	2.1	Twitter site for LoneWolf_Garud
@LouisaCGreve	12	2.1	Louisa Greve, Vice-President of National Endowment for Democracy
@NEDemocracy	11	2.0	Twitter site for National Endowment for Democracy
@martinennals	11	2.0	Website for Switzerland based human rights organizations Martin Ennals Award
@JigmeUgen	10	1.8	Jigme Ugen, President of Tibetan National congress
@iamgul8	9	1.6	Twitter page for Gulnaz Uighur
@uyghurproject	8	1.4	Twitter page of Uyghur Human Rights Project
@oka004	7	1.2	Japanese blogger
@erkocharun	7	1.2	Twitter page of Turkey bases Islamic blogger
@4ronlu	7	1.2	Twitter page of Kemal Demircan, in Turkish
@kaiunmanzoku	7	1.2	Japanese rights blogger
@moejunko	7	1.2	Japanese blogger
@BhoRangzen	7	1.2	Twitter page for Tibetan activist Rangzen
@TibetanReview	7	1.2	Website for India based *Tibetan Review*
@friendsoftibet	7	1.2	Twitter page of Friends of Tibet
@SowterTracy	6	1.1	Twitter page of human rights activist Tracey Sowter

@hikmetabdul91	5	0.9	Twitter page of activist Hikmet Abdul

Hashtags

The hashtags associated with @UyghurCongress were primarily issue based, as the function of the Uyghur Congress is to promote Uyghur culture and identity especially given Chinese policies. The details of hashtags are shown in Table 6.11. The hashtags show many links to Uyghur issues, but also to groups who wish to link to the Uyghur experience, such as Kashmir and India's treatment of Uyghur Congress activist Isa Dolkun.

Table 6.11: Hashtags used with @Uyghur Congress

Hashtags	Count	% of Tweets	Content
#uyghur	201	35.7	Uyghur causes (see full analysis of this hashtag in this chapter)
#china	88	15.6	Refers to China in general, although usually with a negative connotation with @UyghurCongress
#uyghurs	65	11.5	Uyghur causes (see #Uyghur analysis)
#eastturkistan	24	4.3	East Turkistan refers to the Uyghur name for Xinjiang
#dolkunisa	23	4.1	Isa Dolkun, Chair of World Uyghur Congress
#worldnews	22	3.9	Generic hashtag for world news on Twitter
#uighur	22	3.9	Alternate spelling of Uyghur
#genocide	22	3.9	Generic hashtag used by Uyghur Congress to describe China's actions
#uhrp	19	3.4	Uyghur Human Rights Project
#unpo	18	3.2	Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization

#earthday2016	18	3.2	Earth Day 2016
#stp	16	2.8	Society for Threatened Peoples
#india	13	2.3	Generic hashtag, refers to Kashmir and visa issue for Isa Dolkun
#modislapschina	13	2.3	Modi Slaps china refers to Prime Minister Modi's visa denial to Chinese activists after China's protest of Isa Dolkun
#refugees	13	2.3	Generic hashtag, in this case refers to Malaysian statements about Uyghurs
#humanrights	11	2.0	Generic human rights hashtag
#modisarkar	11	2.0	Modi Sarkar, refers to Prime Minister Modi as a person of authority (Sarkar)
#freeilham	11	2.0	Free Ilham Tohti, Uyghur academic jailed by China
#tiananmen	8	1.4	Tiananmen Square as place and also human rights/democracy cause
#islam	7	1.2	Generic hashtag
#dissidents	5	0.9	Generic hashtag applied to Chinese dissidents attending conference in India
#dolkun	5	0.9	Isa Dolkun, Chair of Uyghur Congress
#asylumseekers	5	0.9	Generic hashtag, applied to Uyghur asylum seekers outside China
#refugee	5	0.9	Generic hashtag tied to Malaysia's recognition of Uyghurs as refugees
#amnestyinternational	4	0.7	Amnesty International, specifically recent report listing China as leading executioner

Influence

Unlike Tibetan causes, which have highly influential tweeters like the Dalai Lama, CNN, BBC news etc., Uyghur issues do not get the same level of attention. The most influential Tibetan tweeters have millions of followers but Uyghur facilitators have only tens of thousands. The individuals and organizations that use @UyghurCongress are listed in Table 6.12, along with background details on each user. Uyghur issues seem to attract

individuals rather than organizations, and have difficulty attracting global media sources

to be interested in Uyghur activities.

Table 6.12: Influential Users of @Uyghur Congress

User	Followers	Identity
DrShobha	84,613	Journalist with India Facts
kohyu1952	49,525	Kohyu Nishimura Japanese writer
Tibetans	24,298	Tibetan activist
manojsirsa	22,299	मनोज – Manoj Indian blogger in Hindi
zehrayavuz1	21,356	Turkish activist
YaxueCao	19,583	Yaxue Cao, Washington based founder of China Change
smailTiryaki	18,175	Twitter page of Ismail Tiryaki, Turkish activist
pjmooney	17,620	Paul Mooney, journalist in China and now Myanmar
truejapan	16,349	Japanese Nationalist website
dharam_vj	14,218	Twitter page of Indian activist
NEDemocracy	13,804	National Endowment for Democracy
MBilalKenasari	13,499	M. Bilal Kenasari, Washington DC based journalist
DanHongTang	12,330	Chinese activist
s_navroop	11,475	Navroop Singh, geopolitics website Asian Warrior
ahsan_jehangir	11,426	Pakistani human rights activist
tibettruth	10,422	Website of Tibet Truth promoting Tibet's independence
SaveTibetOrg	10,358	International Campaign for Tibet
withoutisrael	10,216	World Without Israel
BhoRangzen	9,828	Rangzen,, activist for Tibetan Independence
UHRP_Chinese	8,884	Uyghgur Human Rights Project (Chinese)
KejriwalFanCIub	8,636	Fan club for Arvind Kejriwal, Chief Minister of Delhi
Quickieleaks	8,230	Carol Anne Grayson, blogger
Uyghurspeaker	7,316	Uyghur activist
tizutyan	7,290	Japanese activist
ombodhicitta	6,803	Buddhist activist

Network Analysis

A summary of the network data for @Uyghur Congress is presented in Table 6.13 Results show a much smaller network than seen for @Dalai Lama social media use, with 243 vertices linked by 291 unique edges plus 4116 duplicate edges. There were no self-loops identified. There are 12 connected components that are linked to each other with no component in isolation. The maximum vertices in a connected component is 216 which is the most vertices to occur in a connected component. The maximum edges in a connected component is 369, indicating that one component accounts for a significant share of the total.

The maximum geodesic distance of 10 shows the number of connectors needed to cross the network, while the average geodesic distance is 3.81. This is a much smaller nDtwork than for the Dalai Lama. The graph density of .011 means a low density of linkage for the Uyghur Congress. The modularity result of 0.518, is in the middle of the range from 0 to 1 indicating that the groups in the network are equally likely to have strong connections within groups as between groups.

The graph of the @Uyghur Congress network is presented in Figure 6.1 and shows the clustering of eight groups. The network around the Uyghur Congress comprises many people and organizations that do not produce a lot of tweets, and without the involvement of politicians and news sources the Twitter environment is limited for this group. Group 1 in the center of the graph focusses on Uyghurs, the UNPO (Unrepresented nations and Peoples Organization), World Uyghur Congress and Dolkunisa (Isa Dolkun, chair of the World Uyghur congress). Group 2 (top left)
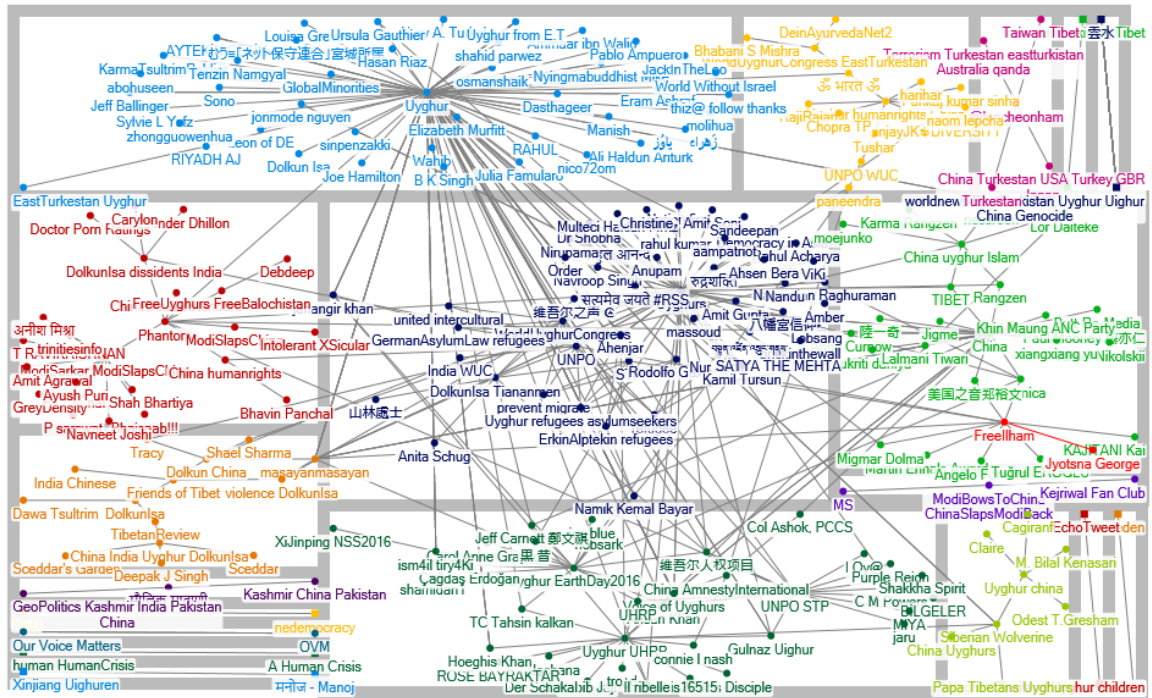
Table 6.13 NodeXL Analysis of @Uyghur Congress

Vertices	243
Unique Edges	291
Edges With Duplicates	116
Total Edges	407
Self-Loops	0
Connected Components	12
Single-Vertex Connected Components	0
Maximum Vertices in a Connected Component	216
Maximum Edges in a Connected Component	369
Maximum Geodesic Distance (Diameter)	10
Average Geodesic Distance	3.809035
Graph Density	0.011053294
Modularity	0.517872

comprises many activists who focus on Uyghur issues, while Group 3 (lower center) comprises Uyghur human Rights, Earth Day 2016, and Voice of the Uyghurs. Group 4 (right center) comprises China's human rights record especially the free Illham movement to free Ilham Tohti, Uyghur academic jailed by China.

Group 5 (Left, second row) concentrates on India's relationship with China over Uyghurs including Prime Minister Modi, and activists angry over china's demands that India deny a visa for the leader of the Uyghur Congress. Group 6 is presented below group 5 and represents the Friends of Tibet and activists around the china-India relationship. Group 7 (top right) is sparse and includes Indian activists concerned about

human rights and the environment in Xinjiang. Group 8 (lower right) centers on activist

Siberian Wolverine with a small group focusing on Uyghur human rights.

Figure 6.1: NodeXL Graph of @Uyghur Congress

Discussion

In general, analysis of #Uyghur and the @Uyghur Congress showed greater consistency

in message than that found between #Tibet and @Dalai Lama. This may be caused by

Tibetan issues being a stronger force in public opinion, and the attraction of Tibet's status

and the role of the Dalai Lama attracting world leaders. In contrast, China is able to use

Islamic issues and terrorism as a way to shape opinions about Uyghur interests that are options that cannot be used against Tibet. #Uyghur was used far more often than the Chinese or Turkik terms, which the World Uyghur Congress as a voice for Uyghur issues does not have the significance of comments by the Dalai Lama. English is the dominant language for both #Uyghur and @Uyghur Congress as they seek to influence external political opinion rather than the internal debate within China. While a Chinese and central Asian issue with links to Islam, the twitter content uses English to discuss Uyghur issues.

The content of #Uyghur tends to be political, especially around Chinese politics and detained activists. Noteworthy is the Japanese presence in Uyghur tweets driven by nationalist interests using Uyghur issues, like they did with Tibet, to attack China. The Uyghur Congress uses Twitter as part of its media campaign for separatism or independence. The Congress content matches the #Uyghur content rather than being different as is the case for Tibet.

Tweets on Uyghur issues link to websites and videos about Chinese political treatment of Uyghurs, while the Uyghur Congress has a broader view connecting to a platform about Uyghur freedom. The Congress has a clearer direction than the different groups that come together around the hashtag.

The users of #Uyghur are activists in several countries, with interests in China, Tibet, Japan, Vietnam and Kurds. One of the leading users of #Uyghur is the Uyghur Congress, as is Xinhua, the Chinese news source. The users of @Uyghur Congress are

organizations that promote the cause plus Japanese nationalists using Uyghur issues to attack China. Content for #Uyghur continues to reinforce the use of Twitter as a political tool, with a similar pattern for @Uyghur Congress.

Uyghur issues do not have the power and audience of supporters of Tibet, with the range of influence much lower. Tibet has users who can reach millions while the most influential Uyghur is a human rights lawyer with 140,000 followers, with the Uyghur Congress having fewer than 90,00 accounts reached through its leading user. The networks around Uyghur issues are smaller and extensive, without the intensity of the Tibetan networks. The Uyghur Congress does not have the social media reach of Tibetan causes, nor does it have the same quality of connections through world leaders and major news sources.

7. CONCLUSION

The analysis of social media use around Tibetan and Uygher interests addressed three themes: 1) the sociology of culture, identity and politics; 2) the sociology of technology and media; and 3) digital activism. The concepts were applied to a comparative analysis of Tibetan and Uyghur use of Twitter with emphasis on culture, identity and digital activism. The comparative study groups were chosen because they shared similarities, which make comparison of remaining characteristics clearer. The two groups share a history and political status with China that is similar, yet there are several important differences associated with culture and activism. Tibetans are predominantly Buddhist, have a charismatic leader, are well received globally and have a well-established government in exile. In contrast, Uyghurs are Islamic, lack a well-recognized leader, are increasingly associated with terrorism by governments, and do not have a strong political infrastructure as a foundation. These themes were applied to a content analysis of more than 70,000 tweets associated with two hashtags (#Tibet and #Uyghur) and two users (@Dalai Lama and @Uyghur Congress). The results showed that these different groups, while having much in common, also adopted and used social media in different ways..

Given the format and technology of social media, the first theme of cultural identity in cyberspace was discussed by Calhoun and Benhabib, who identify networks and social relations as a growing part of social identity formation. This approach shows

the importance of external context in defining cultural identity. Many of the actors involved in social media around Tibetan and Uyghur issues are defining identity at the same time they are also shaping their own agendas. The findings for the tweet analysis show many different groups, sometimes quite distant from the issue, participating in online discussions. Results also showed global and regional influence playing out in what were once local issues.

Tweets addressing culture and identity were linked to expected sources, such as political leaders, non-government organizations with an interest in human rights, religious groups, and activists supporting Tibetan or Uyghur causes. Some of the unexpected results include the role of Japanese nationalists, who share in Tibetan and Uyghur opposition to Chinese policy, and individuals who have large followings who follow a range of causes. Differences include the much stronger association between Tibetan tweets and Buddhism than between Uyghurs and Islam. Religion is important to both groups but Tibetans lead with Buddhism while Uyghurs tend to emphasize political issues and grievances first.

Another important difference is the ability of each group to gain media attention. Tibetan issues are closely followed by mainstream media sources (BBC, CNN, RT, Agence France Presse etc) while Uyghur issues attract little attention from these sources. It is difficult to assess the success of social media use as the data measure what is sent but not how the information affects attitudes and action. A few tweets that reach the right media sources could be far more powerful if picked up and disseminated than a large Twitter audience alone. Tibetans seem to be able to reach global media sources and can

raise issues and influence reporting, while Uyghurs do not have the same success in keeping their issues in the news. Another measure of success would be the willingness of world leaders to publicly support a cause. The Dalai Lama is frequently retweeted and engages with tweets from Presidents (US, India, Russia) and religious figures such as Pope Francis, while Uyghurs do not have the same success.

The second theme of social media and social action was primarily informed by Feenberg who argued that technology is socially constructed and that the intended use of technology is not necessarily how it will be used. Feenberg was concerned that internet design could be used to hamper democratic action and create oppressive environments for social and political interaction. This occurs for Tibetans and Uyghurs within China because of controls over access to, and use of, the internet, as well as monitoring of online content. Online discussions for these groups tend to use external sources and platforms that do not have the same controls as those internal to China. The main organizations for social, political and cultural action are in India for Tibetans and in Germany for Uyghurs. In addition, many of the non-governmental organizations supporting these groups are located in the United States, Europe and Australia. The design of social media platforms can be universal until governments limit access and control content.

A comparative analysis was used to contrast two groups in similar circumstances using similar technology. Findings showed that Tibetans and Uyghurs had very different patterns of Twitter use. Tibetans showed a sophisticated use of social media, especially around the Dalai Lama, who maintains a social media office in the Tibetans exiled capital

of Dharamsala. The Dalai Lama tweets motivational content with political statements coming from other sources. The Dalai Lama has a large online following to support Tibetan causes. As a global figure, he is also able to attract many news sources that further disseminate Tibetan perspectives. In summary, tweets about Tibet tend to be in English and picked up by mainstream media, and to be followed by political and media celebrities ranging from Richard Gere, to Pope Francis to Presidents Putin and Obama. Tibetans seem to be able to attract broad attention to their issues, both directly and indirectly. One unexpected finding was the use of #Tibet and @Dalai Lama as part of an internal debate within Tibetan Buddhism about the status of the Dorje Shugden sect.

Uyghur use of Twitter was very direct and political without the support of mainstream news media and political and social celebrity. The Uyghur tweets display greater variation around themes and lack the focus that Tibetans seem to be able to achieve. Uyghur issues were also used by a wider range of causes that wanted to be associated with Uyghur interests. For example, the strong showing of Japanese nationalists aligning themselves with Uyghurs against China, yet Tibet can also serve the same purpose but is not used by nationalists in the same way.

Similarities across both groups include their use of English, targeting of western political and social institutions, and the use of social media to bring events to the news cycle. For both groups, fringe interests also associated themselves as a way to gain traction for their own causes. Differences include the better targeting and message definition of Tibetans compared to Uyghurs and the significant role of the Dalai Lama as a focus that the Uyghurs do not have in their leadership. Uyghur tweets tend to be

political, and not cross over into spiritual matters in the same way as Tibetan content. Both groups have a religious base, but Buddhism appears far more strongly for Tibetans than Islam does for Uyghurs.

One major distinction is scale, with Tibetans able to generate far more social media activity than Uyghurs. The Dalai Lama has millions of followers as the face of Tibetan Buddhism, while the Uyghur Congress and Rebiya Kadeer only have thousands of followers on Twitter. Also, mainstream media picks up and uses Tibetan content but does not follow or retweet Uyghur issues. Over a similar period, Tibetan sources (#Tibet and @Dalai Lama) generated ten times the Twitter activity of Uyghur sources (#Uyghur and @Uyghur Congress).

A second major difference is the tone of Twitter discussions, with Tibetans leading with a strong spiritual message followed up by a political theme, while Uyghurs lead with their political message leaving religion in the background. Uyghurs do face a greater challenge as Buddhism has a peaceful public image, even when Buddhist violence occurs in some areas, while Islam is viewed as violent in many western societies. This distinction was found in an analysis of YouTube content by Chechen and Uyghur jihadists. Vergani and Zuey (2015) found that Chechen videos were a way to reach young audiences at home, while Uyghur content reached only a small audience and was more likely to be used as anti-Uyghur propaganda. Chechens led with religion, while Uyghur content tended to feature separatism first with religion a secondary theme, and as such did not get the visibility that the Chechen cause received.

The expected role of nongovernmental organizations was far less than anticipated. While promoting human rights and political freedom, these organizations did not emerge as major sources of online social media content. When they did engage online, they tended to focus more on Tibet than on Uyghur issues. Even organizations with a history of support for both tended to focus on Tibet more than Xinjiang.

The social media content around Tibetan and Uyghur issues has focused on output but not effectiveness. Twitter, and social media in general, are a good source of timely information about the issues, ideas and moods of social movements, but their existence does not necessarily translate into action. In the section on digital activism a number of studies showed that social media played a role in raising awareness or organizing protests, but these addressed events that were later connected to social media. It remains difficult to assess how effective social media can be for social movements. As was noted by Thompson (2015), few of his tweets led to recipients accessing further information.

Another element may be the scale of social media networks compared to quality. A large network can be presented as a sign of involvement and engagement, such as the Dalai Lama's audience of more than 13 million people on Twitter and Facebook, but passive recipients may not translate into action compared to a smaller audience of very influential users. One argument supporting the quality of users is that the Tunisian protests did not have a large social media audience, but that audience included media outlets and journalists who then promoted the issues in that country.

This comparative study of Tibetan and Uyghur use of social media reinforced the theoretical foundation discussed in the literature review, especially the role of

information technology as a form of cultural expression and identity building. Content

analysis of Tweets showed very different scale and scope of social media operations for

two groups that share a similar political context with China. Tibetans and Uyghurs have

adopted and embraced social media in different ways even though they seek similar goals

of independence and recognition. The world has also received them differently, with the

content of Tibetan social media having a wider and more powerful audience than that of

the Uyghurs.

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