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**A turbulent story : the status of Catholics in the People's Republic of China :
summary**

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SUMMARY

A Turbulent Story The Status of Catholics in the People's Republic of China

The book explores the political and social cooperation and negotiations of the Catholic Church in the communist People's Republic on mainland China from 1945 to the present day (2023). It provides an introduction to the history of the Catholic mission and an analysis of the contemporary situation of Catholics in the PRC. The data presented in the book builds on scholarly works and the results of independent field research on Catholics in China.

The Catholic Church faces two main pressures: pressure from its own need to adapt to the local Chinese culture (inculturation) and pressure from the totalitarian government and its legal requirements (political Sinicization).

While in the Chinese Catholic context, the two terms are often used interchangeably; the book distinguishes inculturation and political Sinicization. The term inculturation indicates the broad social process of intentionally transmitting a system of ideas and values from one culture to another. In the case of Christianity, it refers to the measures adopted by the church's representatives to pass Christian values and ideas onto a non-Western society – China. However, the message needs to be adapted to the local environment to succeed. The term can be translated into Chinese as 教会本地化 (*jiaohui bendihua*). The term Sinicization 中国化 (*zhongguohua*) was first used at the end of the Qing dynasty and the beginning of the Republic era by Christian missionaries. It was initially applied in the same sense as inculturation to describe the process of making Christianity 'more Chinese' and, therefore, more attractive to potential Chinese converts. More recently, the term has been used by political representatives in the context of official

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state policy. In the present-day People's Republic of China, it is the official religious policy enforced by the communist government on religious groups, which must sinicize (中国化) both their doctrine and their practice to make it more suitable for China, and in accordance with the official policy of the Communist Party of China. The term, therefore, has political overtones relating to following the dictates of the state. In the context of this book, the term refers to the political meaning of the term – to sinicize means to follow the official state policy.

The Chinese Communist Party considers one of its essential roles to ensure that religion does not interfere with the state's power. Since 2015, the Chinese authorities have advocated the (political) 'Sinicization of religions' (*zongjiao zhongguohua* 宗教中国化), which according to the government should eventually lead to the creation of a harmonious society in China. Catholics often face allegations of supporting foreign interests instead of the People's Republic of China. They are often considered less loyal to the Chinese Communist Party than other believers as they have strong connections outside the country, the Vatican. Therefore, the church is actively trying to rid itself of such labels by promoting religious inculturation and political Sinicization of the Catholic Church, such as using Chinese music during sermons but primarily by following the official direction of the Party and promoting socialism.

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Communist Party of China sought to break all ties between the Catholic church in China and Western powers, including the Vatican. Since 1957, there have been two distinct Catholic groups within the PRC: the (registered) Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) under the control of the Communist Party, and the "underground" church loyal to the Vatican. Chinese Catholics united under the CCPA have generally supported the communist regime. However, despite seeking to practice religious inculturation, the Catholic church has been repeatedly criticized for not being "Chinese enough" and has been accused of being more loyal to foreigners than to the PRC.

Despite economic liberalization in the PRC, the control and suppression of religious life in China continue. Cooperation between the government and local churches united under the CCPA is a complex issue that should be the subject of research. Still, the problems facing the Catholic church in China have been underrepresented. The church has been mentioned in only a few articles as the churches united under the CCPA are often perceived as unproblematic and not supportive of the domination-resistance model of church-state relations. However, even when a church is not opposing the government, church-state relationships continue to be complex.

The leaders and churches that are part of the CCPA choose to cooperate with the government rather than oppose it. The CCPA was established by the government and promotes government policy and the official state narrative. Such

cooperation might help the church retain at least some of the benefits that arise from its status as a government-recognized religious group. Choosing collaboration instead of opposition is not unproblematic, however, and CCPA churches and priests must make decisions about the most effective strategy for the church and its believers. It seems, that if the Catholic church is to be successful in its mission, it must adapt to the local environment, which has included following the directives of the Communist Party.

The underground Catholics face more obvious persecution than the members of the CCPA; however, all the Catholics are under intense pressure from the government, often culminating in outright oppression. The contemporary official political discourse of the Communist Party of China and religious legislation undoubtedly lead to further repression of the Catholic Church.