

# *In Between the Divine and the Leviathan: Faith-based Charity, Religious Overspill and the Governance of Religion in China*<sup>\*</sup>

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## *Abstract*

This paper concerns religious charity, a phenomenon that has re-emerged as Chinese religious life has revived and expanded. Such charity offers a number of potential benefits to the party-state, but it also challenges regime efforts to limit the spread and public profile of religion. Religious charity is regarded as relatively compatible with the regime's secularizing ambitions in that it focuses adherents' attention on the problems of this world rather than on salvation in the next. Yet many faith-based philanthropic endeavors are forms of religious practice and expression in their own right, such as the two examples examined in this paper—the Gansu Province Association for Minority Nationality Cultural and Educational Promotion and the Gospel Rehab in Yunnan. By melding religiosity and public service, adherents sacralize the locations and activities of charity, bringing religion into spaces from which the party-state tries to exclude it. Charity thus enables religion to spill over its designated boundaries, enter the public square, and infuse even some institutions and organizations of the party-state itself.

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