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April 13, 2010

China and its Minority Population: the History, Policies and Consequences of Ethnic
Tension in China

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ABSTRACT

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By Dongwon Eun

China is a multi-ethnic country composed of the Han Chinese and fifty-five different ethnic minorities. The PRC officially recognizes fifty-five ethnic minority groups within China in addition to the Han majority who occupy the dominant position in all sectors of society. While China is emerging as a new world leader, it is facing economic and environment problems, as well as immense ethnic minority problems. The ethnic minorities in China have various complaints such as inequality and they demand rights such as freedom of religion, and greater autonomy in the minority areas. The ethnic tension in China is getting worse, to the point where many minority groups are joining the separatist movement that threatens independence from China.

The tension between the ethnic minorities and the government is considered as one of the greatest threats and obstacles that China needs to overcome, in order to achieve true superpower status in the world. The minority problem is one of China's weaknesses, and it is thus making finding a solution, a priority. In order to properly handle this important issue, the Chinese government has been using various methods, such as creating economic developments in the minority areas and using coercive power.

The central questions of this thesis are as follows:

- 1) What are the origins of the ethnic tension in the PRC?
- 2) How does the PRC handle the ethnic tension?
- 3) How does ethnic tension contribute to the PRC's national and international position?
- 4) What does the ethnic tension means to the PRC?

This thesis concludes that if China continues with the status quo on its minority policy, the ethnic tension will never be solved and it will only continue to worsen. There is a tremendous need to modify China's minority policy and to change the Chinese government's attitude toward the minorities. When there is true respect and understanding between all of its citizens, China will be able to become a true unified nation. China must realize that it cannot achieve the economic development and stable society that is so desires, without true integration of all of its citizens.

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Thank you, Lord, for EVERYTHING. You are the way and the truth. Nothing would have been possible without YOU!

But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

(CORINTHIANS 15:10)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter One: Historical Background of Ethnic Minorities in China	4
A. General Information about Ethnic Minorities in China.....	4
B. The History of Ethnic Relation.....	13
C. Identification of Minority Nationalities.....	20
D. Public Display of the Ethnic Minorities in China.....	21
Chapter Two: Origins and Reasons of Ethnic Tension in China	26
A. Historic and Structural Reasons for the Tension.....	27
B. International Environment Reasons.....	32
C. PRC Policy Reasons.....	33
Chapter Three: Different PRC Responses to the Ethnic Tensions and the Consequences	40
A. Geographic Location of the Minority Area	40
B. China’s Sensitivity about Territorial Integrity	41
C. Different PRC Responses.....	43
D. The Effects and Limitations of Different Responses.....	50
Chapter Four: Case Studies in Tibet and Xinjiang	54
A. Xinjiang Case.....	55
B. Tibet Case.....	67
Conclusion	77

Bibliography	84
Appendix.....	90
1 Administrative division of China.....	90
2 Proportions of Ethnic Minorities in China's Total Population.....	91
3 Major Natural Resources of China's Minority Areas.....	91

LIST OF FIGURES

Chart 1: Fixed Assets Investment in the Minority Areas Since 1999.....	44
Chart 2: GDP and Fiscal Revenue of the Minority Areas.....	46

INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, the vast and diverse nation of China is quickly emerging as a new world leader. However, despite its growing international influence, China is currently facing economic and cultural problems, and an immense ethnic minority problem. China has been a multi-ethnic country for a long time. This has led to clashes between the Han Chinese, who composes the majority of the population and thus dominates all sectors of society, and the minority groups, who are constantly demanding rights and privileges. There are mainly two reasons why the Chinese government uses the term, “ethnic minority.” The first reason is to externally inform them that they are considered a part of Chinese society, despite being a small portion of the population. The other reason is to implement different public policy through the ethnic identification.

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) officially recognizes fifty-five ethnic minority groups in China. While the Han Chinese makes up approximately ninety-one percent of the whole population in China, the ethnic minority is only nine percent of the PRC’s population. The ethnic populations are referred to as the “minority,” because they compose a relatively smaller population than the Han Chinese population. However, in terms of the land they live in, the ethnic minority therefore occupies about sixty percent of Chinese territory.

Most ethnic minorities often live with or near the Han Chinese in villages or cities. Consequently, some ethnic minorities lose their ethnic minority identity by adopting the Han Chinese culture. However, there are autonomous regions of ethnic minorities in China where they are able to keep their unique cultural heritage. The populations of ethnic minorities are strongly concentrated in Guangxi, Xinjiang, Yunnan,

Guizhou, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia. The strongest autonomous regions of ethnic minorities in China are Xinjiang and Tibet. In these regions, they have managed to preserve their unique cultural traditions. Consequently, their failure to assimilate with the Han culture has created friction with the PRC.

Since the founding of the PRC in 1949, it seems that the PRC properly handles the ethnic minority problem by effectively using both tough and moderate policies toward the ethnic minority. However, despite these efforts by the PRC, there are currently separatist movements and anti-Chinese protests by the ethnic minorities. Particularly in Tibet, Xinjiang, and other autonomous regions, the resistance is the most active and serious. Though the ethnic peoples of both Xinjiang and Tibet have the same protest goals, each region has a protest different strategy. For example, while the Muslims in Xinjiang usually resist the PRC by engaging in bombing and violent protests, the Tibetans use non-violent and peaceful protests. The Dalai Lama has repeatedly called for help from the international community to solve Tibet's issues with the PRC. Currently Tibet is receiving a lot of worldwide attention, and it is making the PRC very uncomfortable. The movement towards independence in Xinjiang and Tibet strengthened as China's communist party weakened. The government had serious concerns about the separatist movements. If China were to fear anything, it would fear the separatist movement by the ethnic minorities. In other words, the ethnic tension in China is the greatest tool that other nations can manipulate China's domestic and international reputation.

The chapters of this paper will give a detailed account of the ethnic minority problem. In the first chapter of this paper, the historical background of ethnic minorities

in China will be discussed by introducing general information and data about ethnic minorities in China, and by explaining how they became a part of China. In order to understand the deeper historical background of ethnic minorities, the public display of the ethnic minorities will be explored by examining film and literature during the communist era.

In the second chapter, the origins and causes of the ethnic tension with the PRC will be discussed by examining the history, social structure, and international influences of China and its minority populations. Also, it will provide reasons for why the PRC implemented a different policy towards the ethnic minorities in China, in various different time periods.

The third chapter will explain the PRC's different responses towards the ethnic tensions, such as economic power, coercive public power and diplomatic power. It will also explain the impacts and limitations of each type of response.

The fourth chapter will introduce the two case studies of Xinjiang and Tibet. For each study, it will examine the history of the region's ethnic tension and it will explain how the PRC has addressed the ethnic tension in each region. Furthermore, it will cover how the impacts of ethnic tension, especially the separatist movement, have contributed to the PRC's national and international reputation.

In the conclusion, it will explain what the ethnic tension means to the PRC and it will provide suggestions of possible solutions to the problem.

CHAPTER ONE: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN CHINA

This chapter provides a general introduction to the history and to the distinctive characteristics of the Chinese minority populations. It is important to specifically discuss minority demographics, languages, rituals, and customs. Furthermore, it will provide the history of ethnic relations from imperialist China to modern China, and an explanation of how the minority nationality is viewed and represented in China. Based on this information, the chapter will thus identify the identity of the minority population, uncover how the ethnic communities joined China, and reveal their status in Chinese society.

A. General Information about Ethnic Minorities in China

China is a multi-national state and “in itself a United Nations.”¹ Throughout the history of China, the Han have always been the most populous ethnic group, but there have also been numerous smaller groups of diverse ethnicity living inside China. Although China has long been perceived to be an “empire of uniformity,” the members of various ethnic minorities actually number one hundred and ten million, and comprise nine percent of the PRC’s population.¹ Surprisingly, several of the ethnic minority groups in China are larger in terms of population and territory than some states within the United Nations. Most contemporary authorities describe China as being a unified multi-national socialist country.

The Chinese word for ethnic minority is *Shaoshu minzu*, which denotes a member of one of China’s fifty-five officially recognized ethnic minority groups. Within the term

¹June Teufel Dreyer, “Ethnic Relations in China,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 433 (1977): 100.

Shaoshu minzu, the word *Shaoshu* means small number or minority and the word *minzu* refers to “a people” and “an ethnic group.” There is considerable disagreement among scholars about the origins of the word *minzu*.² For example, some scholars, like Mackerras, argue that Westerners combined *min* and *zu* in 1882 and that the term was a “product of Western notions of nation and nationality.”² According to Mackerras, nationality or *minzu* means an ethnic group “forming part of one or more political nation.”³

On the other hand, the majority of scholars argue that the word, *minzu*, was directly taken from the Japanese term *minzoku* at the start of the twentieth century.⁴ Dr. Sun Yat-sen who stayed in Japan for a long time often used this term. Dr. Sun Yat-sen was the first provisional president when the Republic of China was founded in 1912.

Despite these non-Chinese origins of the word *minzu*, there is ironically much confusion in the West about the translation of this term to English. The word *minzu* was translated as ‘nationalities’ in accordance with Marxist terminology.⁵ However, the term ‘nationality’ in the West rather refers to people’s citizenship of a country or nation-state and all the ethnic minorities in China are already Chinese citizens, regardless of the fact that they are sometimes referred to as different “nationalities” in English. Moreover, the Chinese-language term that is used to refer to different ethnic groups, *minzu*, is not specific on citizenship status.

²Colin Mackerras, *China's Minority Cultures: Identities and Integration Since 1912* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995) 23.

³Ibid., 45.

⁴Robyn R. Iredale, *Contemporary Minority Migration, Education, and Ethnicity in China*, (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Press, 2001) 20.

⁵Ibid., 34.

Therefore, on the one hand, Western scholars or politicians who support the independence movements of Tibetans, Uyghurs and other minority groups in China often refer to them as "nations." On the other hand, Western scholars whom are more aligned with the Chinese government tend to use the terms "ethnic groups" or "ethnic minorities," placing these groups on a similar footing as African-Americans, Asians, or Hispanics in contemporary US society.⁶ As a result, this uncertainty led some scholars to propose adoption of the Chinese transliteration rather than attempting a translation, given that none of the English words convey the correct meaning.⁷ Nonetheless, the confusion provides useful insight into the theoretical sources of 'minzu issues' in contemporary China.

Demographics of the Ethnic Minority in China

There are about eighteen minority nationalities with a population of over one million.⁸ Zhuang nationality is the most populous nationality among ethnic minority group with a population of fifteen million, mostly living in the Guangxi-Zhuang Autonomous Region in Guangxi Province. The smallest nationality is the Lhoba with a population of around 2,300 people mostly living in the Tibet autonomous region.⁹

Many areas that are occupied by the minority people have similar characteristics. Firstly, the areas inhabited by the minority people are typically vast in territory and rich in resources. Although the population of the ethnic minority cannot even reach ten percent of the whole population in China, the territory that they occupy is over sixty

⁶ Rong Ma, "A New Perspective in Guiding Ethnic Relations in the Twenty-first century: De-politicization of Ethnicity in China," *Asian Ethnicity* 8 (3): 199-218.

⁷ Steven Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic in Southwest China* (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington, 2001)

⁸ Iredale 123.

⁹ MaryJo Benton Lee, *Ethnicity, Education and Empowerment: How Minority Students in Southwest China Construct Identities* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001) 21.

percent of the total area of the country.¹⁰ In his speech “On the Ten Major Relationship,” Mao said: “We say China is a country vast in territory, rich in resources and large in population; as matter of fact, it is the Han nationality whose population is large and the minority nationalities whose territory is vast and whose resources are rich.”¹¹ Moreover, the deputy director of the United Front Work Department, Zhang Zhiyi, highlighted the richness of the resources in the minority areas by saying that “These areas possess fabulous wealth in the form of coal, iron, petroleum, and nonferrous and other rare metals. China’s chief livestock-producing areas, representing two-fifths of the total area of the country, are in the national minority areas; the forest reserves in the national minority areas are also exceptionally rich, amounting to one-sixth of the country’s total forested area.”¹²

For example, Inner Mongolia and Ningxia are mainly responsible for China’s crop production. Xinjiang produces cotton, Guangxi is responsible for sugar cane, Tibet is producing a great amount of rice and rye, and Yunnan and Hainan produce diverse tropical fruit in China.¹³ Furthermore, the areas of ethnic minorities cover thirty-seven percent of the China’s national forest area. Lastly, the top five natural pastoral areas in China are Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Tibet, Qinghai, Gansu, which are the areas of ethnic minority groups.

Secondly, in the areas that are originally occupied by the minority people, there are more mixed residences and less living together as the same ethnicity. Many ethnic

¹⁰Ibid., 23.

¹¹Jian Xin Yang, and Ming De Cui, *Zhong Guo Min Zu Guan Xi Yan Jiu (Study of ethnic relations in China)*(Beijing: Min Zu Chu Ban She, 2006).

¹²Yang and Cui, 6.

¹³Hangyu Kim, *Tibet and China: an Understanding of the Historical Relationship* (Seoul: Sonamu, 2000).

minorities moved out of ethnic minority group areas to big cities like Beijing, Tianjin as a means of pursuing higher social and economic status and also as a part of the modernization process.¹⁴ As a result, in most ethnic minority areas, Han Chinese is the majority even in the ethnic minority autonomous regions. However, ethnic minorities do have their autonomous regions though many of them live in different areas with other ethnic people instead of living in their autonomous regions. This phenomenon led to a mixture of different ethnicities living together. For example, there are 0.8 million Hui people that live in China. However, only 0.1 million Hui live in Ningxia, the Hui nationality autonomous region.¹⁵ These features of the distribution of ethnic minorities in China reflect the close relationship between the ethnic minority and the Han nationality. Furthermore, this became an important foundation for the united multi-ethnic country.

Thirdly, most of the ethnic minorities are located along its borders. Therefore, ethnic minority groups in China were also referred to as *bianjiang minzu*, the border nationalities. Ulanhu, a member of the Mongolian elite who joined the Communist Party of China in 1929, explains the strategic importance of the ethnic minority areas:

Whether the relationship between nationalities is good or bad has always been an important factor affecting the political stability of our country, the tranquility of the frontier areas, and the strength of our national defense. Eighty to ninety percent of China's vast frontier lands are inhabited by minority peoples.... The Mongolians and other nationalities in Inner Mongolia are defending the national border of the motherland; in Xinjiang the Uygurs and other nationalities are guarding the western gate; the Tibetans and other nationalities in Tibet are contributing to the defense of the motherland's Southwestern frontier; and the Zhuangs and other nationalities have been heroic in repulsing Vietnamese aggression.¹⁶

¹⁴ Iredale 21.

¹⁵ Morris Rossabi, *Governing China's Multiethnic Frontiers* (Seattle: University of Washington, 2004) 6.

¹⁶ *Beijing Review*_Nov. 4, 1981:17.

Lastly, because many of the ethnic minorities reside in border areas and have small populations, there is a great disparity among their respective stages of socio-economic development. Since the ethnic minority areas are vast and are thus inconvenient for transportation, those areas are relatively under-developed behind compared to other parts of China, not only economically but also culturally.¹⁷

Language

While hundreds of Chinese dialects are spoken across China, a minority language is not simply a dialect. Rather, each minority language is a language with its own distinct grammatical and phonological characteristics that differentiate it from Chinese.¹⁸ In the speech and writing of China, there are mainly six language families. Many of them are dissimilar morphologically and phonetically and are mutually unintelligible. Language families include Sino-Tibetan, Altaic, Indo-European, Austro-Asiatic, and Austronesian.¹⁹

Although almost all fifty-five ethnic minority groups in China have their own unique spoken languages, only twenty-one ethnic minority groups have their own unique written languages. While the Hui, the Manchu, and the She use Chinese characters, the Mongols, Zhuang, Tibetans, Xibe, and seven other minority groups have their own unique written language.²⁰ Although Yi, Naxi, Miao and four other ethnic minority groups do have their own unique written language systems, they rarely use them. The rest of the thirty-four ethnic minorities do not have their own written language systems.

¹⁷Yang and Cui 3.

¹⁸*China's Minority Nationalities* (Beijing: China Reconstructs, 1984).

¹⁹Rossabi 10.

²⁰Lee 24.

While all of the languages are theoretically equal under the Constitution, it is argued that Han is the language of China's socially, economically and politically most-advanced majority nationality, from whom their less advanced minority brethren need to learn. It is also the officially chosen lingua franca between all linguistic groups in China.

The first effects of the move toward a Chinese language monopoly were seen in the "Plan for the Phonetic Spelling of Chinese," which established the Pinyin Romanization system for Mandarin Chinese. It pushed for the adoption of similar romanization methods in all of the minority language writing systems. This approach was designed to encourage minorities to learn Chinese. It also encouraged the adoption of Chinese loan words into minority languages, attempting to lay the groundwork for an eventual convergence of language. Minority communities were collectivized, forced to abandon traditional customs deemed primitive, and they were placed on a fast track to sinicization through the promotion of Chinese.²¹

To promote the language of *Putonghua*, the Chinese government nationally standardized curriculum, which was designed to create a smooth transition for students into speaking *Putonghua*, and to instill the ideology of the Chinese state. Although minority languages are used in instruction at lower levels of schooling, almost all higher education is taught in *Putonghua*. Throughout all of the ethnic minority areas where non-Han languages are spoken, great efforts are being made to teach and to spread the use of the Northern variant of the Han language, *Mandarin* or *Putonghua*. The country's rapidly developing economy, along with a central government-supported Mandarin promotion campaign, is pushing some of these tongues to the brink of extinction.

²¹ Yang and Cui 5.

The future of the endangered minority languages in China, therefore, can best be described as grim. Both governmental policies and economic factors favor the adoption of Chinese, and many minority communities seem unwilling to resist. The next few decades are likely to see the continued loss of languages and the destruction of the unique minority identity in China, as rapid economic development is treated as the paramount goal.

Rituals and Customs

In general, most ethnic minority groups have some sort of religion. They are also strongly influenced by several of the world largest religions, such as Islam and Buddhism. Consequently, the majority of China's minorities are adherents of one of the three major religions: Buddhism, Islam, or animism. "The seven minorities said to adhere to Buddhism are the Tibetans, Mongols, Koreans, Thai, Naxi, Tu and Yugur. Ten minorities are listed as Muslim: the Hui, Uygur, Kazaks, Dongxiang, Kirgiz, Salars, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Bonan, and Tatars. The remaining thirty-seven minorities believe in animism."²² Animism is the belief that a spiritual force is in all living creatures, and even in inanimate objects such as rocks and trees. As the majority of the minorities have some sorts of religions, it makes the religion question an important aspect of the minority policy.

In terms of customs, almost all ethnic minority groups have very unique and distinctive rituals and customs. The distinctive customs range from marriage rituals, holidays, clothing, cuisine, and so forth. They all have their unique traditions. For example, some ethnic minority groups that practice Islam prohibit people to eat pork.

²²*China's Minority Nationalities*_(Beijing: China Reconstructs, 1984).

Also, each ethnic minority group has their own traditional holidays. An example of this is the Bai ethnic minority group, which has very distinctive customs in the wedding ceremony. On the wedding day, the bridegroom's family begins to arrange a banquet to entertain guests in the morning. After the guests have enjoyed the food and the rice wine, the bridegroom and his groomsman begin to toast guests at one table after another with the background music played by suona horn, which has a loud high-pitched sound and is often used in Chinese traditional ensemble. Carrying the bride on the back is a typical marriage tradition in the Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province. Whenever the bride and the groom pass a crossing, people will stop and wait for the groom to carry the bride on his back and walk around the marriage portion in the shape of the number "8" because the number "8" refers to good luck in China.

While most ethnic minority groups have understandable unique customs, some ethnic minority groups have rather very exotic customs. For example, Uzbek ethnic minority group has quite unique and distinctive features of their wedding ceremonies. Before the wedding ceremony begins, the bride and groom's parents must negotiate together with the matchmaker about the issue of "divorce compensation." The so-called "divorce compensation" is the money that the husband needs to pay his wife if he seeks a divorce after marriage²³. For Uzbek people, divorce is a shameful thing. This is perhaps the reason why divorce is so scarce in this ethnic group. However if there is no way for a couple to continue with their marriage under any circumstances, the husband will ask for a divorce. Then the wife can take back her betrothal gifts and ask for a certain amount of "divorce compensation" from her husband.

²³*China's Minority Nationalities* (Beijing: China Reconstructs, 1984).

B. The History of Ethnic Relations

Early China

Since the first identifiable and attested dynasty in the second millennium B.C.E., China's history has been a story of an immense land with several diverse tribes. It is a story of migration and conflict, and of the separation and fusion of cultures. In other words, it is the product of the intermingling of many tribes. Among these many tribes, the Han nationality was the first to settle down and develop an agrarian society. The cradle of Chinese civilization is in the Wei and the Yellow river valleys in central China near present day Xian, approximately three thousand years ago.²⁴ The rest of what is now Chinese territory was inhabited by other people whom Chinese historical sources refer to as "barbarians."

Even though the modern concept of fifty-six ethnic groups is often considered an arbitrary and conservative summary of the hundreds of diverse peoples in China, it pales in comparison to the simplicity by which the ancient Han people distinguished their nomadic neighbors. The Han nationality believed they were the center of the world, and the only distinction that they gave to the non-Han nationalities was their location. For example, some ethnic minority groups were called "Di" (northern), "Rong" (west), "Yi" (east), and "Man" (south).²⁵

During much of its early history, China was a collection of disparate kingdoms competing for supremacy, called a feudal state. At the end of the Warring States period (453-221 B.C.), the ruler of the state of Qin subdued all the rival states and proclaimed

²⁴ Dreyer 100-11.

²⁵ "Chinese Ethnic Minorities." *Chinese Culture Center*. Web. 22 Mar. 2010. <<http://www.c-c-c.org/chineseculture/minority/minority.html>>.

himself “Qin Shihuangdi, First Emperor of Qin.” The word “China” comes from the word “Qin.” He ruled with an iron fist, demanded that the teachings of Confucius be abandoned and conscripted thousands of people to construct canals, roads, and defensive walls, including the beginning of what would become the Great Wall. ²⁶ However, the Qin Dynasty was short-lived, extending only from 221 to 206 B.C. ²⁷

Han Dynasty to Ming Dynasty

After the period of disunity, the real unification of China occurred during the long and stable Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). ²⁸ As their culture flourished with the development of a written language and advanced theories of statecraft, they gradually expanded from their original base along the bend of the Yellow River. The expansion of the Han Chinese state involved the displacement of many indigenous people as some were conquered by Han armies, others became absorbed into the Han through intermarriage, and still others were pushed aside, with the Han taking over the more desirable lands. ²⁹ At that time, the indigenous people were tribal people, many of them living a semi-nomadic life without any permanent, large-scale structures of government and without any written languages. ³⁰ Gaining additional territory was translated into the absorption and gradual assimilation of native peoples, who themselves contributed cultural or linguistics traits to the current China.

Generally the Han did not expand to the west and to the north. That area was cold, hostile and populated by warlike and aggressive tribes. Those living to the west and to the

²⁶ Lee 22.

²⁷ Ibid., 22.

²⁸ Ibid., 23.

²⁹ Dreyer, “Ethnic Relations in China,” 100-111.

³⁰ Franke and Twitchett, 1994: 4.

north were nomadic people, herdsmen and hunters. They were the ancestors of the present-day Tibetan, Mongolian, Uygur and other Muslim minorities.³¹ Historically the Han Chinese people have feared these Central Asians, regarding them as “barbarians who swooped down periodically to grab the benefits of civilized life.”³²

By Ming times (1368-1644), Chinese officials had reached a consensus that China should not compel neighboring peoples to the north into political integration. Also, the officials agreed that China should not initiate aggressive forays to expand into territory beyond its cultural boundaries, though military expeditions designed to overwhelm the non-Chinese people in the southwest persisted.³³

Qing Dynasty

The Qing dynasty was also known as the Manchu Dynasty, as the Manchu people founded the dynasty. Manchu people were very brave and aggressive. As a result, the last dynasty, the Qing (1644 -1911 A.D.), fought a series of wars against native groups on almost all of the Empire’s frontiers. Through many successful wars, the Qing had annexed the immense areas, which comprised of one-sixth of the total territory of present-day China and was inhabited mostly by Turkic-speaking Muslims.³⁴ The borders of present-day China were established during the Qing Dynasty. The Qing controlled Chinese Turkestan, Mongolia, Tibet and all of southern China from Taiwan to Yunnan. Never before had China been so large. Moreover, the Qing Dynasty became highly integrated with Chinese culture.

³¹ Jagchid and Symons, 1989: 24.

³² Colins MacDougall, “Ethnic Minorities Threaten,” *World Press Review* (May 1990): 16.

³³ Rossabi 45.

³⁴ Rossabi 87.

The Qing, just like the Ming, also pursued the same hard line policy in southwest China where ethnic minority groups were concentrated. The southwest regions, especially Guizhou and Guangxi, continued to resist control from Beijing throughout the Ming and early Qing. As a result, in order to avert anti-Han resistance, the Qing sought to moderate its hard-line policy. Therefore, they instructed its officials not to discriminate economically against the native non-Han peoples, not to impose restrictions on their religious practices, and not to permit Han entrepreneurs and merchants to take advantage of and exploit them.³⁵ The Qing assumed the minority could come to be transformed once they recognized the superiority of the hybrid Chinese-Manchu civilization.

Republic of China

Facing foreign threats and domestic insurgencies, the Qing Dynasty crumpled in 1911. The Republic of China was then formed in 1912, though it only controlled a small portion of China. Thus, the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the absence of the strong central government permitted the non-Han people living along the frontiers to seek independence or at least greater autonomy in the ensuing chaos. At this time, the Mongols of present-day Mongolia broke away from China and with assistance from the USSR, formed the second communist state in the world, the Mongolian People's Republic.

It was in 1928 that China was finally unified under the Nationalist Party and its leader, Chiang Kaishek. The Nationalists' policy toward the minorities was based on two assumptions: "that all nationalities within China should be equal and that the interests of the minorities were best served by the process of assimilation."³⁶ Minority groups were

³⁵Ibid., 88.

³⁶David M. Deal, "The Question of Nationalities in Twentieth Century China," *The Journal of Ethnic Studies* 12 (1984): 23.

denied all forms of autonomy. Their lands were to be incorporated into the regular administrative system. In addition, all minorities were supposed to learn to speak the pure Beijing dialect known in the West as “Mandarin” and in China as “common language” (*Putonghua*). This meant that non-Han minority languages, like Uygur, Kazak, Mongol and Tibetan, had to be abandoned. However, the reality was that this was an impossible demand. The implementation was hampered by various governmental and infrastructural inadequacies, leaving behind a legacy that, according to Dreyer, “might best be described as weak.”³⁷ In other words, the Nationalist approach to minority affairs stressed assimilation. Members of ethnic groups were encouraged to join the broader society and to lose their distinctive characters. This approach was met with intense hostility.³⁸

People’s Republic of China

In 1949 the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under the leadership of Mao Zedong, wrested power from the Nationalist Party and founded the People’s Republic of China. After the Communist Revolution in China, the CCP inherited a country with huge problems of ethnic cleavage. Consequently, the Communists adopted a totally different minority policy than that practiced by the Nationalists, one that was instead based on pluralism. Pluralism means maintaining patterns of ethnicity as a way of dealing with past discrimination.

From that time forward China became known as a unified multinational country; one republic with numerous nationalities. Minorities are now granted a degree of

³⁷ Dreyer, “Ethnic Relations in China,” 100-113.

³⁸ *Zhongguo De Min Zu Zheng Ce Yu Ge Min Zu, Gong Tong Fan Rong Fa Zhan (China’s ethnic minority policy and the development of each nationality* (Beijing: Ren Min Chu Ban She, 2009).

autonomy, but are still forbidden the right of secession. In recognition of the minorities' official status as well as their strategic importance, various levels of nominally autonomous administration were created: five regions, thirty-one prefectures, ninety-six counties and countless villages. Such "autonomous" areas do not have true local political control, although they may have increased local administration of resources, taxes, birth planning, education, legal jurisdiction, and religious expression. These areas have minority government leaders, but the real source of power is still the Han-dominated communist party. Government business there was to be conducted in both Mandarin Chinese and in nationality languages.

The Chinese government has also issued many policies in favor of minorities. For example, in the practice of family planning programs, minority members can have two children per couple while the Han are only allowed to have one. Minority students can receive additional points in examinations (in Inner Mongolia) or enjoy quotas (in Xinjiang) for university admission. Top positions in the local administration of autonomous areas are only offered to minority cadres. Also, minority residents usually receive more financial subsidies in welfare programs. However, these policies have often politicized group identities between Han Chinese and the minority while at the same time created tensions, given that the Han majority often feels discriminated against.

Minority people have not been immune to the political turmoil that has affected all Chinese. For example, shifts in governmental policy during the One Hundred Flowers Movement, the Great Leap Forward, and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution have sown the seeds of chaos and confusion among the minority nationalities. The Cultural Revolution proved to be particularly damaging. The Red Guards, Mao's army of youthful

revolutionaries, set out to destroy minority culture, which they regarded as a vestige of a decadent past.

The Cultural Revolution ended in 1976 with the death of Mao. Shortly thereafter the CCP formally denounced the Cultural Revolution, declaring it an unmitigated disaster.³⁹ Mao was said to have violated the CCP's policy of respecting the cultures of all nationalities. China then began moderating its stance toward minority groups. As Deng came into power in China, Deng envisioned that the role of socialism was to increase the material wealth of society and to improve the people's standard of living. Since then, China has kept an accommodating approach when formulating policies that take into consideration the ethnic characteristics, especially the socioeconomic institutions of the minority people.

The state's continual preferential treatment towards minorities was re-affirmed in Premier Li Peng's Government Report that was delivered at the First Session of the Eighth National People's Congress, in March of 1993: "We should continue the state's preferential policies towards minority nationalities and their regions and increase investment in these regions.... We must abide by the Law of Regional National Autonomy, protecting the autonomy of the minority nationality regions and the equal rights of their inhabitants."⁴⁰

Throughout two thousand years of imperial rule, China's minority nationalities remained relatively autonomous. Dynastic policy usually only required the minority groups to abstain from outright aggression and to declare loyalty to the emperor. Minority

³⁹ Ma 209.

⁴⁰ Iredale 50.

languages and customs usually were not disturbed as long as they did not threaten the Chinese state.⁴¹ In other words, there was not strong integration between ethnic minority groups and the Han Chinese. In Chinese history, only a few Chinese statesmen were pro-assimilation, desiring to transform the barbarians into Chinese by teaching them Confucian mores and the Han language. The prevailing attitude was to allow the barbarians a high degree of autonomy so long as they did not disturb the peace and order of empire.

C. Identification of Minority Nationalities

Shortly after the founding of the PRC in 1949, an earnest effort to investigate and categorize minorities began. The government launched a campaign of “nationality recognition or identification” by sending Chinese central delegations to the minority regions from 1949 to 1951.⁴² About seven hundred scholars, officials and college students fanned out across the countryside. Many had little prior ethnological or linguistic training other than the crash course they were given before being sent into the field.⁴³ The Chinese central delegations consisted of linguists, ethnologists, archaeologists, economists, and experts in literature and the arts, and they were expected to live, work, and relax with the people they were investigating.⁴⁴

Although over four hundred minority groups answered a call to register, studies found that there was a lot of overlapping, and a significant number of groups that claimed to be separate were actually the same with different names. By 1979, the officials had recognized fifty-six nationalities based on Stalin’s definitional criterion that includes

⁴¹ Dreyer, “Ethnic Relations in China,” 100-113.

⁴² Ma 205.

⁴³ Lee 35.

⁴⁴ Iredale 53.

common territory, language, economic mode, and psychology. It manifested into a common culture. Here psychological disposition is understood to mean customs and habits.

Once a minority nationality is officially recognized, delegates can be chosen from the group to sit in representative bodies at all levels of government. In addition, the minority in question is given the chance to set up an autonomous nationality region, prefecture or county. A variety of “autonomous areas” were also established in places where various ‘nationalities’ were concentrated, which together make up sixty-four percent of Chinese territory.⁴⁵

D. Public Display of the Ethnic Minorities in China

Although there are many studies that focus on a broad view of ethnic relations in China, there are only a few studies that focus on the views of the Han Chinese towards the Chinese minority nationalities. The public display of ethnic minorities in China shows how the Han Chinese view the minorities and what the ethnic minority means to them. Moreover, the portrayal of the minority in different time periods of history shows the specific needs of the state during each particular time period. However, there are some predominant themes in the portrayal of the minorities in China.

For example, the minority population has often been represented by females and described as being very colorful, and primitive, yet very happy throughout 1950s to 90s. This is clearly shown in the state-sponsored English-language pictorial, *Chinese Nationalities (1989 Minzu Huabao)*. The pictorial included a collection of photo cards

⁴⁵ Ma 207.

sponsored by the state to introduce the fifty-six nationalities of China.⁴⁶ It is widely distributed to schools in China, to foreigners, and is also carried by officials on trips abroad as gifts to their host institutions. In Chinese nationalities, while only three nationalities are represented by men, fifty-three nationalities are represented by women with beautiful and colorful “native” costumes.⁴⁷

Also, the minorities are often depicted as being rather primitive compared to the Han Chinese. They are often portrayed in natural, romantic settings, surrounded by fauna and plants. For example, in the movie, “Amazing Marriage Customs,” it shows the history of marriage customs throughout China with a heavy dose of minority practices, especially in Yunnan. The film starts with the emergence of primitive mankind, and then discusses how minority marriage customs are closer to those of primitive mankind. The end of the movie discusses how the marriage custom of the Han Chinese is modern in comparison to the primitive customs of the minority. This film clearly depicts the minority as inferior to the Han Chinese.

While there are on-going themes in portraying the minority in China, there are also specific themes that were strongly focused on each time period, and showed the necessities of the Chinese at that time. In the 1950s, it was important to construct strong national identity in China, as they had recently unified the nation. Therefore, they focused on emphasizing the Han nationality by making the minority seem more exotic and far more different than the Han nationality. The minorities were no longer portrayed as

⁴⁶Dru C. Gladney, “Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53 (Feb. 1994): 96.

⁴⁷Nationality Pictorial (Minzu Huabao). *Minzu Fengmao: “Minzu Huabao” Qujingzuopinixuan, 1955-85* (Nationality Special Characteristics: ‘Nationality Pictorial’ Selected Photographs, 1955-85). (Beijing: Nationalities Publishing Society, 1985).

barbarians in China, and many of the disparaging Chinese ideographs that formerly scripted their names with "dog" and "bug" radicals were changed in 1949. Eventually, their portrayal in the media became much more colorful and cultural than the Han, and much more sensual.⁴⁸ The minority women were one of the favorite themes at this time, especially the Thai, Hani, and Li, and were often shown bathing in a river. During this period, the homogenization of the majority was forming at the expense of the objectified minority. In the article "Representing Nationality in China," Dru Gladney suggests that the objectified portrayal of minorities as exotic and even erotic is essential to the construction of the Han Chinese majority, the very foundation of China.⁴⁹ The display of ethnic minority groups with colorful, romantic fashion is not created to proudly show-off the minorities. Clearly, it is intended to construct discourse on the importance of the Han as the majority.

In the 1970s, China implemented the policy of strong assimilation, which forced the minority to assimilate into Han culture. Through the Cultural Revolution that occurred during this time, many cultures of the minority were abandoned and their identities were discarded.⁵⁰ China focused on the construction of the primitive image of the minority and on the image of Han modernity. For example, there is another movie called "Ashima," that features a classic love story in an ethnic minority group. Just like the stereotypical images and public displays of the ethnic minority, the setting is an empty field, with mountains in the backgrounds, and a river below. Throughout the majority of the movie, the minorities are singing and dancing with smiley faces. This

⁴⁸ Gladney, "Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities," 98.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 98.

movie exaggerated minority life and customs, and even objectified minority women, as it portrayed them as being sensual and erotic. Minorities have become a marked category, characterized by sensuality, colorfulness, and exotic custom.

In comparison the image of modernity is given to the Han Chinese, who are represented by conservative, middle-aged women in an urban setting, with what is generally thought to resemble “modern” clothing. These images create a stark comparison to the images of minorities in *Chinese Nationalities*. They are dressed in western-style sweaters, modest pants, and long-sleeved outfits. While the Han represent modernity, the ethnic minority represents primitivism. Through this trend, the public media tries to persuade the public into believing that the Han are representative of "higher" levels of civilization, and are clearly more evolved. They are therefore better equipped to lead, whereas the primitive minorities can only follow.

Recently, the CCP strongly focuses on creating an image of a harmonious society. Therefore, they strongly emphasize the equality for everyone in China including the minority. To show that the minority groups are treated equally in China, they are trying to instill the image of very satisfied minority. An example of this effort is seen in the Olympics. There the PRC showcased China's fifty-six ethnic and national groups, wearing beautifully-colored, traditional clothing. In the show, the representatives of each ethnic nationality sang, danced, and whirled, all with big smiles on their faces. Based on this portrayal, it seems that those fifty- five ethnic minority groups are very happy to be one with the nation of China. There are similar showcases for the annual Chinese New Year's program and the minority showcase is the highlight of the show, as their show

takes up half of the program. It reveals the important role that the minority people play in the contemporary construction of the PRC.

In the public display of minority in China, one can see not only how the Han Chinese view the minority, but also what the Han Chinese want the minority to be. Though the minority is often represented by beautiful women with fancy, colorful costumes and smiley, friendly faces, these women are sometimes related with some nudity. Nude images are often shown in many government-sponsored movie shows. For example, there are many movies that show minority women publicly bathing in rivers. Such images of nudity prove that the Han Chinese viewed the minority as less civilized and more primitive until the 1990s. Nevertheless, the images of happy, smiley women show that the Han wish to display them as friendly people, as opposed to being hostile or aggressive in their primitiveness. In order to form a harmonious society, the Han want the minority to be friendly and beautiful, and this is clearly depicted in these colorful, beautiful images.

CHAPTER TWO: ORIGINS AND REASONS OF ETHNIC TENSION IN CHINA

This chapter will explore the origins of the minority problem and the reasons for the existence of ethnic tension in China. Firstly, by analyzing the history of ethnic relations and the structure of the PRC, it will attempt to find the roots of the problem by specifically focusing on the Tibet and Xinjiang regions. These two areas have the most visible and severe ethnic tensions and their populations have historically been ethnically and culturally different from China's Han majority population. There are historical and

structural causes that initiated the ethnic conflicts and international events that have encouraged the tension. These international events such as the collapse of the Soviet Union gave the separatist movement the hope that independence was achievable.

It is also important to examine the policies of the PRC in reaction to the ethnic tension. The PRC's ethnic minority policy from the beginning of the PRC to the current time period has changed over time, and there are many factors that have affected policy over the years. Furthermore, it will explore how the different minority policies have contributed to the ethnic tensions in China, in different times throughout the nation's history. Therefore the purpose of this chapter is to examine what different factors contributed to the ethnic tensions in China over time.

A. Historic and Structural Reasons for the Ethnic Tension

A basic historical and structural reason for the ethnic tension in China is due to China's form of government. Communism, as China practices and modifies it, requires control of the population and restrictions such as free press, free speech, etc. In addition to this there are national security issues inherent in the ethnic differences and tensions. Due to natural resources and other strategic position of border areas inhabited by the minorities, China does not want outside forces to collude with its far-flung territories. The minorities' cooperation with outside forces is feasible because ethnic minorities have more cultural similarities with other countries in the region, to a greater extent than they do with the Han Chinese, China's ethnic majority. It can be said that the Communist government of the Chinese is what keeps the Han Chinese organized and in power over

its ethnic minorities in Tibet and Xinjiang. Tibet has a close relationship and proximity with its neighbor India, as well as the United States and other countries Western countries that support Tibet's quest for democracy and true religious independence. Xinjiang, likewise, can find support in the surrounding Islamic republics, specifically those that emerged from the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

To maintain the tightly controlled environment, CCP must preemptively reign in all miscreants, potential or otherwise. As this paper will show, China has been doing everything that it can to control all of its population. The historical and structural reasons for the ethnic tension are China's desire to stomp out any and all seeds of anti-communist subversive behavior and rebellion.

Orbit: Reigning in the Satellites

Two areas that are representative of how the PRC controls and monitors its ethnic minority populations are Tibet and Xinjiang. The PRC is a country that is strictly controlled and ruled by its Communist Party. Aspects of the Marxist Nationalist Theory outline clearly how a country such as China should proceed to deal with its problems, specifically the problem of Autonomous areas and separatist or Independent minded ethnic minority populations. Both Xinjiang and Tibet fall under these categories. In the case of Xinjiang efforts to annex the territory began in earnest in the 1950s. The Marxist Nationalist Theory advises the Party in its constitution to allow for ethnic minorities to have their own culture, norms, customs, autonomous laws, language and the like, but also to encourage them to be a part of the Communist ideology and party. The PRC has followed this protocol to the letter with varied results. This socialist doctrine, however,

was destined to lure nationalist, separatist, and religious spheres and it had not consistently been successful as autonomy has been more attractive to Tibetans and to the ethnic minority groups of Xinjiang.

The way that the PRC exerted control of their territories has been through military might. The Communist Party dictates through its policies what directions that they desire for their territories to go in and have absolutely no room for dissent for the sake of solidarity. An example of a military maneuver to bring the country together was the October 1950 invasion of Tibet. Prior to this invasion Tibet had been able to successfully resist the overtures of the Chinese.

As far as the PRC is concerned, what Tibet and Xinjiang share in common is that they both fall under the Central Planning in Beijing's Western Development Program (WDP). The WDP lays out the political boundary for Xinjiang's economic development.⁵¹ In order to keep the people content and to reflect well with them and the international community the Chinese feel the need to appear as an asset to these territories that would rather not co-operate with them. The Chinese government promotion of WDP has been very public from the start. Its mandate begins by discussing how development can improve the living conditions of minority nationalities and reduces the economic gap between China and Xinjiang.⁵² As China is becoming increasingly technologically and economically advanced it will not reflect well on them if there is a divide in standards of living between its more homogeneous eastern area and its diverse and sparsely rural western areas.

⁵¹ Anwar Rahman, *Sinicization Beyond the Great Wall: China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region* (Leicester: Matador, 2005), 97.

⁵² Rahman 97.

The Chinese Communist Party: Not a Pretty Sight

On the whole China, or more specifically the CCP, Law regarding autonomy has been biased, both for the Tibetans and the ethnic minorities of Xinjiang. This is because China has a uniform and established policy when it comes to ethnic minorities living outside the immediate reach of Beijing. The consistency by which the People's Republic of China implements this policy depends on the behavior of the regions in question. The Communist Party makes it clear that theirs is no equal or cooperative relationship, but that Beijing is in charge and its regions where ethnic minorities are the majority would do well to acquiesce. Ethnicities, be they minority or majority were under the same expectations. Under the CCP, efficient control would be by ideological indoctrination and by self-sustaining motivations of fear and hope among the people.⁵³ It is only how people and territories contribute to the Party that determines whether they will contribute to the people's revolution or be a counter-revolutionary.

As the CCP wrested control from the nationalists and came under the leadership of Chairman Mao Zedong, the CCP ensured that Han ethnicity remains majority in the party. As a result, the interests of the CCP rested predominately on where the Han majority lived, thrived, and administered their Communist Party. This framework originates from China's communist beginnings and the start of their attempts at hegemony over regions in its orbit.

Even though plans for China and the regions in question, Tibet and Xinjiang, were not always a resounding success, China never wavers or admits fault. One of the policies that Chairman Mao was responsible for was known as the Great Leap Forward. The Great

⁵³ John King Fairbank, and Merle Goldman, *China: a New History* (Boston: PFHC, 2006) 357.

Leap Forward was an effort on behalf of the Chinese to leave its rural past behind and become an industrial power for the sake of communist doctrine. The Great Leap Forward was a central planning exercise that relocated Chinese rural people from their areas to the industrial, urban areas in order to produce steel and other industries. As a result of these relocations between 1949 and 1957, less than 10 years, China's urban population doubled.⁵⁴ Steel was a commodity that Chairman Mao and the CCP felt that if they produced efficiently enough would allow them greater independence and become less of a target of colonial powers.

Mao Zedong: Politicizing and Holding Sway

Mao Zedong had an aversion to city bureaucracy; it was expressed by his faith that the countryside must be the chief beneficiary of China's revolution.⁵⁵ Mao's Great Leap forward was an effort erected on a very large scale. Directly affected by the ramifications for this were Tibet and Xinjiang because their topography was rural. The ramifications in relation to Mao's policies were twofold. If these regions were to be beneficiaries of this policy then the benefits must suffice. It would be humiliating to China to lavish significant attention on these regions and be rewarded with unrest. Secondly, urban areas could conceivable be disgruntled and that would be understandable as a result of planning. As long as the urban areas were dedicated to sacrificing for the benefit of the party the pressures on regions like Xinjiang and Tibet to also do this compounded. Marxist Nationalist Theory was part of the framework for Mao's central planning effort for all of China and it was a disaster. On the most basic level it was an

⁵⁴ Fairbank, and Goldman 357.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 384.

inherent communist error, the misappropriation of resources. Many farms of China lost productivity as the population was forced to split time between farming, steelwork, and mining. The food that the Chinese did produce during this Great Leap Forward was not sufficient to feed the Chinese population and millions of people died of starvation and overwork for the sake of the CCP. Industrial and agricultural production severely declined during this period.⁵⁶ Around this time the population of China were 650 million people.⁵⁷ Living at barely subsistence level, it is likely that millions of people starved. The results of this effort were not satisfactory enough in the least to persuade Tibetans or the people of Xinjiang, let alone any other ethnic minority to come under the control of the Han Majority, that is, the Communist Party. China's western territories are a study in reactionary approaches; any hostilities from Tibet seem only to seethe, while in Xinjiang any discontent can result in an uproar. Any possible dissension within any group of people is bound to be exploited by China in order to take advantage of a territory or a people for conquest. What this means is China has become very experienced at subjugating its ethnic minorities, which are many. It can be assured that the PRC takes advantage of every opportunity to convince its people that the way to prosperity is even deeper alignment with the party.

B. International Environment Reasons

The best starting point for beginning to understand the international environmental reasons for ethnic tensions in China are the national security issues of border protection, resource protection, and the geopolitical effects that took place when Communist Russia fell. The fall of USSR rendered China vulnerable on many levels. It

⁵⁶ Roderick MacFarquhar , and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*_(Boston: PFHC, 2006) 268.

⁵⁷ MacFarquhar , and Schoenhals 271.

had given hope to those who oppose the Communist system. The republics that formed from the fall of the USSR serve as potential blueprints and beacons to regions that may desire to break off from the PRC. In addition to this, ethnic minorities, from an international standpoint, may have the potential to petition the international community to claim their land and the natural resources on it and claim it for their ethnicity and not for China. All of these possibilities serve to explain the proactive stance that China has been aggressively taking in order to assimilate their ethnic minorities fully into the Chinese Communist system. At one point, both China and Russia were Communist, but their systems were not exactly the same. In contrast with the Soviet Union, China's military and public security forces were kept under party control and the secret police were not permitted to become a separate echelon of government as administered under Russia's Stalin.⁵⁸

Attention from the People's Republic of China towards its ethnic minorities has been steadily increasing due to the broader geo-political, socio-economic perspectives. The dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Communist ally of the Chinese, caused the latter to exert its influence over the regions near where Russia and China share borders. This was done to quell any anti-communist dissent and the pro-Islamic slogans that are familiar to that region. China has the added responsibility of protecting the oil reserves within its territory where they are present, including Xinjiang.

The attacks of September 11th caused a paradigm to enter the picture that the Chinese could go along with, exploit, and use for their own gain as they hesitantly heeded President George W. Bush's "With us or against us" pronouncement. Even more recently

⁵⁸ Fairbank, and Goldman 350.

China's support for the War on Terrorism has given it clandestine license to restrict Xinjiang's autonomy.⁵⁹

C. Explain PRC Policy Reasons

From the founding of the PRC in 1949, to the time when Deng Xiaoping came into power in the early 1980s, China's ethnic minority policy was overall suppressive and violent. At this time, China was trying to push the minorities to assimilate into the Han Chinese centered society and institution. However, as Deng Xiaoping came into power with the open-door policy, China started to soften its ethnic minority policy for several reasons. Firstly, the economic development and the increased standard of living for the ethnic minority areas were very important for China's post-Mao economic development, and for the successful completion of four modernization campaigns. Secondly, due to China's military occupation of Tibet, China earned the reputation as the oppressor of minorities and it incited many criticisms from the international community. The economic development of China depends on international relations; thus, China relaxed their policy towards minorities in order to gain international favor. Lastly, by changing the minority policy to be more favorable to the minority population, China wanted to show Taiwan that they could also get those benefits of being an ethnic minority in China, if they joined the nation of China.⁶⁰

Developmental Process of Policies on Minorities in China

This section will examine the development of the ethnic minority policy. The chronological overview of the integration strategies in Mao's China is especially useful because most of the post-Mao strategies are very similar to those used from 1949 to 1956.

⁵⁹ Starr 110.

⁶⁰ Parris H. Chang, *Power and Policy in China* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1975) 5.

First Period (1921-1949)

This period of Chinese history witnessed the formation of the CCP and the securing of political power in China. In 1922, the CCP declared that they would use federalism to unify China and integrate different ethnic groups into a Chinese nation.⁶¹ The policies on minorities of this period are based on a united front strategy for infringing upon the so-called Nationalist Government. When the party announced the party platform, declaration, and resolution on various issues of minorities, it was clear that their policies ultimately induced isolation of the Nationalist Government and were standing on the principle of “self-determination of minorities”. According to the CCP Constitution, Article Fourteen, the party “recognizes the right of self-determination of the national minorities in China, their right to complete separation from China, and to the formation of an independent state for each minority.”⁶²

Their policies concerning minorities were consistently stressed until the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference was held in 1949. This is regarded as a part of the revolutionary strategies created to tempt minorities to join with the party.⁶³ During the revolutionary years, the CCP leaders depended heavily on the cooperation and support of the minorities. The CCP wanted and needed to secure the country's borders, to recover from wartime devastation, to progress towards economic development, and to establish its own legitimacy. However all of these goals could only be accomplished by winning the loyalties of the minority peoples, and in persuading them of the merits of the socialist

⁶¹ Robyn Iredale, Naran Bilik, and Wang Su. *Contemporary Minority Migration, Education and Ethnicity in China*. (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2001) 8.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶³ Jungnam Cho, *China's Ethnic Problem* (Seoul: Gyoyang, 1987).

system.⁶⁴ To the CCP, it meant life or death during its power struggle with the Kuomintang (KMT). Therefore, in seeking to make the minority groups allies with the CCP during this period of instability, the minority policy was not only moderate but also guaranteed the autonomy of the minority group.

Second Period (1949-1959)

This period marks the beginning of the Anti-Communism Protest in Tibet, as well as of the ethnic autonomous policy. In the 1950s, the new government directly encouraged pride in minority status and equality of all ethnic groups. The first constitution stated that all nationalities were equal, and regional autonomy applied in areas where a minority nationality lived in a compact community.⁶⁵ The two principles emphasized were equality and autonomy, but autonomy did not include the right to secession. The changed relationship from comrade-in-arms to a subordinate position to the CCP was an important contributing factor to the change of integration strategies. In other words, as the CCP beat the KMT and took control, the CCP did not need to appease the minority as much as they did before. As a result, the CCP changed its attitude toward the minority groups. Moreover, the sensitive strategic locations and fabulous resources are two important reasons why the communist leadership wanted a “better” integration, or tighter control of the minorities.⁶⁶

As spelled out in 1954, the policy was basically one of ‘integration’, somewhere between “assimilation” and “pluralism.”⁶⁷ Minorities’ rights to maintain their own

⁶⁴ Dreyer, “Ethnic Relations in China,” 106.

⁶⁵ Iredale, Bilik, and Su, 57.

⁶⁶ Chang 45.

⁶⁷ Mackerras 80.

culture, language and religion were the basis of this policy.⁶⁸ During this period, the PRC implemented a policy that can embrace all ethnicity to actively unify the China.

Third Period (1959-1966)

This period saw the 1959 Tibetan uprising, and the Great Culture Revolution. It was in this point of history that the CCP encouraged the promotion of race integration in their socialist policies. The Great Leap Forward, from 1958 to 1962, was a period when Mao was on a path of radical 'leftist' programs and reforms, such as the formation of communes. The Great Leap Forward (1958-60, hereafter, the Leap) increased the intensity and momentum of coercive integration. There was a movement to learn the Han culture and language. The public media propagandized that the national minorities needed to learn how to express the correct attitude, the Han Chinese manner.⁶⁹ For example, Tibetan women in Gansu were said to have discarded their traditional hairdressers after realizing that the weight of the latter slowed down their work in the fields.

The basic line of ethnic policies at this time was a principle called "the substance of ethnic problems is a hierarchy problem", and is a period that tried to solve the existing hierarchy problem through logic of a class struggle.⁷⁰ Therefore, the relations between races were promoted in this period by suppressing a minority race with military power, and expanding & maintaining a national administrative unit to an individual race unit. The suppression of the minority groups usually took place in Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet. Also, it can be said that the ethnic integration and unity were claimed through

⁶⁸ Rossabi 125.

⁶⁹ June Teufel Dreyer, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976) 45.

⁷⁰ MacDougall 16.

expansion of socialism education, and the ethnic unification of overall China was planned during this period. Consequently, this was a very radical period of assimilation, instead of integration.

Fourth Period (1966-1976)

This period occurs from the start of the Great Culture Revolution to the overthrowing of the Gang of Four, and it can be said to be a period in which the long-standing ethnic autonomy system was fully denied. The period of the Cultural Revolution became the most assimilative in the history of China. The Great Culture Revolution made amendments to the assimilation policy on minority races that had been previously promoted by Mao. The policy on a minority race of the Great Culture Revolution period forced unilateral assimilation to socialism and to becoming the Han race. It denied the characteristics and necessities of the minority races. Most importantly, it forced a national policy of dogmatic socialism that was based on the great Han racism. The socialism and racism infamous for destroying local nationalism, sectarianism and subjectivism, that encouraged the study of superior culture, favored the experience of Han culture and believed that all should and would unite once centered upon the Han race.⁷¹

Therefore, the “self-government policy of ethnic districts” which was carried out by targeting minority race's regions since 1947, was criticized. Around the same time, the leader in charge of race policy at the Central Party was removed, and the party agency was abolished. Also, the Great Culture Revolution of more than ten years can be called a big disaster period for minority people and local nationalism. It brought oppression on the

⁷¹ *Zhongguo De Min Zu Zheng Ce Yu Ge Min Zu Gong Tong Fan Rong Fa Zhan (China's ethnic minority policy and the development of each nationality)* (Beijing: Ren Min Chu Ban She, 2009).

culture, language, religion and customs of minority races with the reason of hampering ethnic fusion and class-based unity. The rationale behind these radical policies was aptly summarized in Jiang Qing's (Mao Zedong's wife) saying: "Why do we need national minorities anyway? National identity should be done away with!"⁷²

Fifth Period (1976-Present)

This period occurs from the collapse of the Big Four responsible for much of the ultra-leftist practice during the Great Culture Revolution, to the present. The nationalism that tried to deny all cultures, languages and customs, etc. of minority races, and sought to unify the minority races through forced absorption and integration during the Great Culture Revolution, was abolished. This led to a softening of policies. The pragmatic line of Deng Xiaoping reappeared after the death of Mao and discarded the construction policies of Mao's socialism. It took a moderately open approach that placed the national goal at modernization, and reform as well as on political, economic development and social stability. This new practical and gradual socialism construction line recognized diversity and the specialty of each race and formed a change of direction to a gradual national fusion policy under the national pluralism. Deng's leadership placed renewed emphasis on nationality and autonomy, as long as there were no moves to secession. Moreover, the emphasis on equality and autonomy coincided with a push for economic, social and political development at that time.

In the process of ethnic minority policy development, the integration strategies of the PRC have alternated between left (a pro-assimilation approach) and right (an

⁷² Dru Gladney, "On the Border of Visibility: Western Media and the Uyghur Minority." *Media Studies Journal*, Winter 1999: 137.

accommodative approach) depending on which political line was dominant at any particular time within the top leadership.

For example, the Bai nationality has changed their identity in the course of some 50 years – from denying their minority status and assimilating to the Han to reclaiming their minority status.⁷³ Throughout the PRC history, though the integration strategies have oscillated between left and right, there has been no concession on the fundamental issue of China's unity. The unyielding attitude of the government towards secessionist demands has been consistent over all these years.

This period saw a return to the policy of integration and to the distribution of resources for the minority cultures. Today, minority races face few limitations in seeking social and economic development, that is, as long as they don't challenge the authority of the Central Government or make a movement towards succession from the PRC. However, the results of post-Mao strategies are mixed. For those ethnic minorities whose immediate concern is economic betterment, the current strategies have been successful in securing compliance and apparently in promoting loyalty. However, for others, whose concern is by nature secessionist, the prevailing strategies have not been successful in ensuring the acquiescence, not to mention compliance, of the minorities in certain areas.

⁷³ David Wu, "Chinese Minority Policy and the Meaning of Minority Culture: The Example of Bai in Yunnan, China," *Human Organization* 1990: 49.

CHAPTER THREE: THE STRATEGIES AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE PRC'S RESPONSES TO ETHNIC TENSION

This chapter explores the different PRC responses to the ethnic tensions in the country, and the effects and limitations of each response. It will first explain the PRC's reasons for wanting to keep the minority regions within China. These reasons are based on the location of each minority area, and the chapter will thus focus on the importance of Tibet and Xinjiang to China, and China's sensitivity about territorial integrity. In reaction to the ethnic tensions, the Chinese have been using three strategies; the use of economic power, coercive public power, and diplomatic power. The two strategies most often used by the Chinese government are the use of economic power, that involves heavy financial investment in the minority areas, and the use of coercive public power, that uses violent military power. China only recently started to use diplomatic power due to their commercial success and military expansion. This chapter will provide detailed evidence of the results of each strategy, in order to discuss how the minority populations have been treated throughout China's history.

A. Geographic Location of the Minority Area

One of the reasons why the ethnic minority issue is of such importance to China is the location of the minorities' geographic regions. Minority nationalities have traditionally resided mainly in the north, west and southern parts of China. These are areas that border other neighborhood nations. Living on China's borderlands means that many are ethnically identical or closely related to groups living under the jurisdiction of other states. Tibet and Xinjiang are two areas where different ethnic minorities are concentrated and are designated as "Autonomous Regions." Both areas are strategically

significant to China because of their geographical location on China's northwestern frontiers. The Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region that adjoins India, Pakistan, Turkestan and Kazakhstan, is the largest administrative region in China. The Muslim Uighur population of Xinjiang shares much in common with Muslim groups across these borders, leading both China and these bordering nations to worry about potential separatist movements that could attempt to divide the area along cultural lines. There are both Kazakhs and Uighur in Turkestan, Kazakhstan and China. Another large autonomous region is Tibet. Tibet is located just to the south of Xinjiang on China's border with Nepal and India. Chinese Tibetans are closely related to groups in Nepal, Bhutan and Northern India in terms of ethnicity.

If these groups were prosperous and content under Chinese rule, they could help to secure the nation's borders and provide an endorsement of the viability of the Chinese model of socialism for non-Han people. On the other hand, if discontent, they provide a source through which hostile powers can infiltrate China, carry out subversive movements, and disrupt communications and economic developments. This explains why properly handling the ethnic tension is very important, as improper handling can result in severe separatist movements with the help from neighborhoods nations.

B. China's Sensitivity about Territorial Integrity

As many as 1.8 million square kilometers were also taken away from Chinese territory. This was a period of humiliation that the Chinese people can never forget...This is why the people of China show such strong emotions... Concerning our national independence, unity, integrity of territory, and sovereignty.⁷⁴

-General Li Jijun, 1997

⁷⁴ David Scott, *China and the International System, 1840-1949: Power, Presence, and Perceptions in a Century of Humiliation*. (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2008) 49.

Taiwan's independence is a threat to Chinese territorial integrity and this threat has to be prevented at all costs, according to the Chinese government. As the Taiwan issue shows, China is very sensitive about territorial integrity and this is one of the reasons that China is trying to prevent the minorities' separatist movement at all costs. The reason that the Chinese is very sensitive about territorial integrity is very closely related with the "Century of Humiliation."

In 1839, China stumbled into war with Britain and with it the start of China's "Century of Humiliation."⁷⁵ That invasion and those that followed took lives, carved out territorial concessions, opened the country to traders and missionaries, and exempted them and other foreigners within China from Chinese law. There are textbooks, novels, museums, songs, and parks devoted to commemorating the national humiliation in China.⁷⁶ Chinese textbooks characteristically mention the century of national humiliation to define modern Chinese history and to celebrate the foundation of the PRC in 1949. The discourse recounts how at the hands of foreign invaders and corrupt Chinese regimes, sovereignty was lost, territory was dismembered, and the Chinese people were thus humiliated.

Humiliation has played an important part of the construction of Chinese nationalism.⁷⁷ In other words, Chinese nationalism is about celebrating the glories of Chinese civilization but it is also about commemorating China's weakness in the past. Moreover, the humiliation provided the context for the founding moment of the PRC,

⁷⁵ Scott 53.

⁷⁶ William A Callahan, "National Insecurities: Humiliation, Salvation, and Chinese Nationalism." *Alternatives* 29 (2004): 199-218.

⁷⁷ Callahan 199-218.

when Mao Zedong told the world in 1949 that the Chinese people had finally stood up, “Ours will no longer be a nation subject to insult and humiliation. We have stood up.”⁷⁸

Since 1949, China’s government has taken the restoration of China’s national dignity as one of its most important tasks. Bringing Hong Kong and Macau back under Chinese sovereignty were significant milestones in this effort. China experienced a “Century of Humiliation” from the Opium Wars to the invasion of Japan, which has since shaped its national identity and the memory of which is now carved into the Chinese consciousness through education. Therefore, China became very sensitive about territorial integrity and that is why they would not allow the separatist movement. As a result, China tries many different methods to handle the ethnic tensions in China.

C. Different PRC Responses

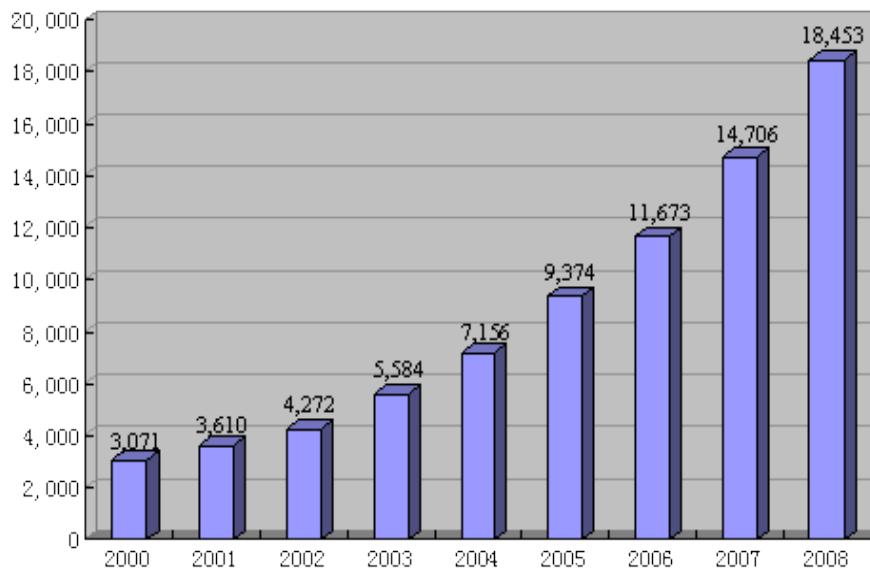
The Use of Economic Power

The Chinese government has been trying to address the minorities’ complaints such as unequal treatments, autonomy issues and economic gaps. China has been seeking to ease these complaints by achieving revitalization and development of the minority areas’ economies since the 1990s. This strategy has become plausible as China gained more economic power after implementing the Open Door policy. Through such economic motivation, the authorities are developing a response strategy in effort to create integrated development within the central and regional governments, in order to close the gap of separation between minority and majority populations. The Chinese leaders are recognizing that one of the major factors of disturbance occurring in the minority regions are complaints concerning the expansion of the economic developmental gap. The

⁷⁸ Scott 51.

leaders try to ease complaints using two methods. One method is to provide various opportunities of economic development in the minority regions. Another method is to develop economic integration between regions. The chart below shows that the state has dramatically increased its investment since 2002. Obviously the state strongly believes that economic power is a very effective strategy to ease ethnic tensions.

Chart 1: Fixed Assets Investment in the Minority Areas Since 1999



Source: China Daily Sept. 27, 2009

<http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/images/attachement/gif/site1/20090927/001ec95974af0c2967d306.gif>

For example, since the year 2000 when China introduced the strategy of large-scale development of its western regions, the state has made it a top priority to accelerate

the development of the ethnic minorities and minority areas.⁷⁹ To ensure that the minority get actual benefits from this campaign, the state has adopted many preferential measures, such as giving priority to these areas when arranging resources development and processing projects, giving compensation to minority places that export natural resources, guiding and encouraging enterprises from economically advanced areas to invest in these places, and increasing financial input and support to them, so as to enhance their economic strength.

By 2008 the accumulated fixed assets investment in these areas amounted to 7,789.9 billion yuan. Of that, 1,845.3 billion yuan was invested in 2008, which was approximately five times that in 2000.⁸⁰ In order to create economic support in Tibet, China extended the Qinghai Tibet Railway to Lhasa, which creates a rail connection to Tibet for the first time in its history. It provides a rapid transportation between Tibet and the outside world. In addition to the construction of the Cheongjang railway connecting the Qinghai province to Lhasa city in 2007, it is supposed to provide additional support of about thirty-three (33.2) billion yuan for one hundred and thirty-seven projects for Tibet.⁸¹

In the case of Xinjiang, the Chinese government is planning an investment of around one hundred and twenty billion yuan in the “Develop the West” campaign, which is designed for the development of natural gas and for the construction of a pipeline in the Talimu basin.⁸² Another large-scale investment is being carried out for the development

⁷⁹ *Zhongguo De Min Zu Zheng Ce Yu Ge Min Zu Gong Tong Fan Rong Fa Zhan*, (Beijing: Ren Min Chu Ban She, 2009) 24.

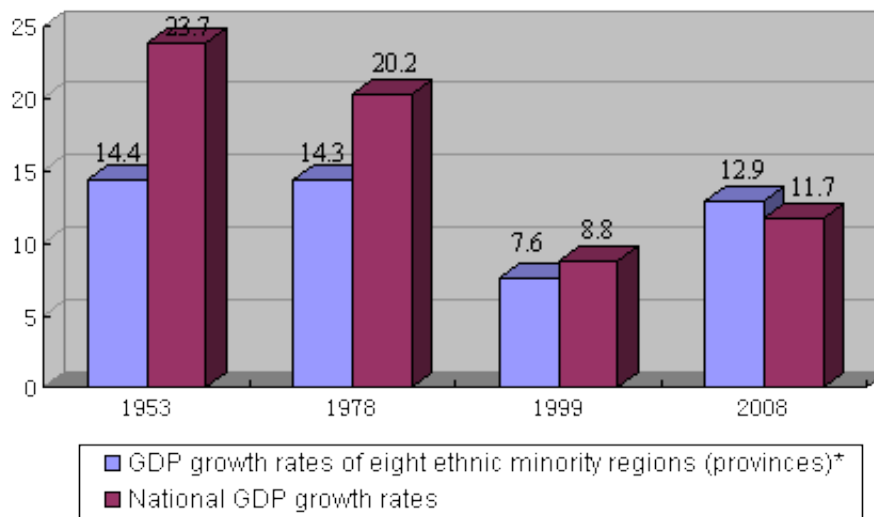
⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 26.

of petroleum and natural gas. In short, it can be said that this development strategy is basically an indirect and long-term integration strategy, and it is intended to kill two birds with one stone by creating economic development and stability. Every year the Chinese government provides approximately eight billion U.S. dollars for financial subsidy to the ethnic minority areas. Out of this large annual amount, approximately one billion dollars is sent to Tibet. This strategy then has become the basis for maintaining the current system supported by the present leaders in China. As a result, the economy of the minority areas has improved dramatically and has started to grow faster than the national economy, as Chart 2 proves. It is all due to China's increasing financial support to these areas. The rapid economic and social development in the minority areas has built a solid foundation for the prosperity of all ethnic groups.

Chart 2: GDP and Fiscal Revenue of the Minority Areas



Source: China Daily Sept. 27, 2009

<http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/images/attachement/gif/site1/20090927/001ec95974af0c2967d306.gif>

Notes: The eight autonomous regions and provinces where ethnic minorities live in compact communities are: Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Guangxi, Ningxia and Tibet autonomous regions, and Guizhou, Yunnan and Qinghai provinces.

The Use of Coercive Public Power

Economic development was used as a strategy to stop the separation of Tibet and Xinjiang. This strategy functions as a “Carrot.” However, the “Carrot” system did not always work well. Some minority groups such as Tibetans were not asking for economic prosperity but they were asking for religious freedom and independence. As a result, the use of an economic strategy did not work well with those groups. In realization of the limitations of this approach, China is also carrying out a “Whip” policy. For example, since the Tibet revolt of 1989, the Chinese government has been vigilant and forcefully suppressed the spread of tensions by securing major temples. Though the Dalai Lama and his followers are practicing nonviolent principles in effort to dispel the Chinese from Tibet, Chinese militarization is recently appearing in some areas of Tibet. The Chinese government does not respect these practices of nonviolence, and it is not loosening its grip on Tibet. It continues to strengthen public power, while constantly keeping watch on the separatist movement of radicalization.

Also, the Chinese central government is making efforts to soothe uneasiness within Xinjiang, caused by the invasion of the Central Asian Republic. It is strengthening the control on the Uighur people by carrying out a forced control method, utilizing semi-public power like “Xinjiang production and construction corps.”⁸³ Through this method, the Chinese central government is mainly utilizing a moderate and structural response called “economic integration and diplomatic response.” Meanwhile, it is also unleashing

⁸³ Dreyer, “Ethnic Relations in China,” 100-11.

a harsh response on radical separatist activities, through diverse public power such as deploying more soldiers and police.

For example, some of the anti-government riots have led to the imposition of martial law. In September of 1987, the monks from Drepung demonstrated against the execution of two Tibetans. Other riots occurred in Lhasa during the annual Monlam festival in March of 1988 and in March of 1989. These riots forced the Chinese government to impose martial law between March of 1989 and April of 1990. The strong reaction of the central government towards the 1989 Lhasa riot was reflected in the official announcement over Lhasa Radio: "The small numbers of separatists are the cause of this earthquake and a cancer cell in society. If we appease and indulge them in a weak fashion, this will leave a serious hidden danger."⁸⁴ Furthermore, one Chinese police officer said that they would adopt decisive measures in accordance with the law to deal with separatists, particularly groups backing them."⁸⁵

The Use of Diplomatic Power

Many ethnic tensions in China are often greatly supported by external groups, such as NGOs and other foreign nations. Therefore, China started to utilize its diplomatic power to cut the support of ethnic groups from external organizations to relieve ethnic tensions. The Chinese central government fears that Western countries will try to utilize the separation issue as a reason for blockading system transition in China. The government has been primarily focused on preventing international criticism by strongly insisting that the issue of separatism is a domestic problem, claiming that the real

⁸⁴ John Bray, "China and Tibet: an End to Empire?" *The World Today* 1990: 222.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 224.

problem is created by the intervention of foreign countries in China's domestic affairs. To combat international accusations, China is gradually moving its policy of response towards using diplomatic means, taking advantage of the recently enhanced international diplomatic discussions. The diplomatic leadership of China is being strengthened by the expansion of comprehensive national power and by the promotion of active superpower diplomacy. When China opened its doors to the world and started trading with other nations, China rapidly became an important economic player in the world and earned influence over other nations through economic relations. Moreover, as China's economy booms, China has rapidly increased its spending in military. Its commercial success and its military expansion have led China to practice its diplomatic power over other nations and have increased China's diplomatic status by far.

As China develops a stronger economy and a stronger military, it is also strengthening its international reputation and enhancing its diplomatic power on the world stage. In recent years, China is becoming a sustainable major power. While China strengthens its diplomatic power, it seeks to relieve ethnic tensions by persuading external groups to stop encouraging minorities to resist assimilation and Chinese occupation.

The improvement of Sino-U.S. relations and the reduction of the visibility of the Tibet issue in international affairs is a case in point. In 2009, when the Dalai Lama came to the US, the US President Barack Obama canceled a meeting with him, in fear of angering China.⁶ The decision came after China stepped up a campaign urging nations to shun the Tibetan spiritual leader. Mr. Obama's decision dismayed Tibetan support groups.

D. Effects and Limits of Response Strategy

Effects and Limits of Using Economic Power

The Chinese central government is actively developing a response strategy called “economic integration.” This strategy uses China’s economic power and influence to ease ethnic tensions. In spite of the continuous support, developmental aid, and active PR, the minority races are still complaining, worrying and even resisting the development strategy. Thus, detailed policies for integration, such as “designated support,” are not being effectively promoted among the minorities.

For example, In Tibet, the Chinese government has acted as a principal agent of economic modernization. However, most Tibetans have viewed large-scale economic programs with mixed feelings.⁸⁶ They are afraid that economic development will lead to increased immigration of Han Chinese, thus threatening traditional Tibetan culture. Also, many Tibetans think that they are not the main beneficiary of this economic modernization but the Han Chinese who live in that area. Tibet remains largely poor, despite Chinese investment, which includes a train that traverses the highest altitudes in the world to link the region with China.

Furthermore some of the minorities’ complaints cannot be satisfied with economic prosperity, as their request is different from other minority groups. For example, Tibetans are asking for religious freedom and independence, and they therefore are not satisfied with simply receiving economic help. Therefore, the use of economic power has limits, which results in further complaints from the minority groups. It often only worsens the problem of ethnic tensions.

⁸⁶ Rossabi 174.

Effect and Limits of Using Coercive Public Power

The method to best produce direct visible effects in the least amount of time to deter separatism is to suppress by utilizing diverse and powerful public power. This effective inhibition mechanism is acting through various powerful public powers and organizations such as the People's Liberation Army, armed police, corps, security police, party organization, etc.

The government must be sure that their responses are not misused or misdirected, as it could cause an eruption of international criticism, thus significantly adding to the deterioration of the national image. China has been diligently working to make attractive national images so that it can peacefully rise as the respectful world leader. As a result, in order to make attractive national image, China tries to refrain from using too coercive public power.

For example, the fragile détente erupted violently again in March 2008 when anti-Chinese protestors rioted, burning over 1000 Chinese-owned businesses and killing Chinese citizens in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa. Chinese authorities responded with an aggressive crackdown on rioters, and other Tibetan citizens even outside the capital; reports showed many were beaten, imprisoned, or killed. After this event, China was subject to intense criticism internationally for the way the crisis in Tibet was handled, and the journey of the Olympic Torch has been thwarted in many cities with pro-Tibetan protestors.

Also, a forced response can possibly cause more harm than good in the long run, and countermeasures must be prepared to restore stability afterwards, if needed. For

example, after the crackdown in ethnic minority areas, the protest or anti-government activities could settle for the time being. Ethnic tension will nonetheless deepen and it would be more difficult to win the hearts of minority people in the future. Furthermore, after the coercive public power by the Chinese government, some people or groups might try to seek revenge by means of terror and assassinations.

Effects and Limits of Using Diplomatic Power

The diplomatic response shows the significant affects of China's recent growth in national power. It also shows China's active promotion of engaging in diplomacy with the world's superpowers. However, many countries since the 1990s have sided with Tibet and have urged China to grant them more freedom. For example, several countries in the 58th UN Commission on Human Rights, which began in Geneva on March 18, 2002, urged China to grant self-determination and satisfactory autonomy to the Tibetan people and to find a solution through dialogue.⁸⁷ Among the countries that supported Tibet at the Commission were Germany, Guatemala, The Netherlands and Switzerland. Furthermore, many international non-governmental organizations and many celebrities support Tibet by participating in various charities and benefits. It is thus clear that this diplomatic response can be sensitive to the influence of international authorities. Although the relations between the United States and China are currently more stable than any other time in history, there is a possibility that it can be destroyed again as a result of the separatism issue of minority races, and the Taiwan issue.

⁸⁷ "Countries Support Self-Determination for Tibet at 58th UN Commission on Human Rights | International Campaign for Tibet." *ICT Promotes Human Rights and Democratic Freedoms for the People of Tibet*. 28 Mar. 2002. Web. 02 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.savetibet.org/media-center/ict-news-reports/countries-support-self-determination-tibet-58th-un-commission-human-ri>>.

In conclusion, the strategic location and valuable resources of the minority lands, along with China's sensitivity about territorial integrity, makes the minority areas very important to China. Therefore China tries her best to solve the ethnic tension. It is especially crucial that China prevent the secession of Tibet and Xinjiang at all costs.

There are three main methods that the Chinese government has been using to deal with the ethnic tensions. In the early stages of the PRC, China mostly used the coercive public power strategy towards the minority, and this can be seen in the Great Cultural Revolution. When China started the Open Door policy and gained economic power in the 1990s, China heavily used its economic power to invest in the minority areas. China started to practice diplomatic power as well, using their economic and military power. All three methods have some limits and negative feedback. Therefore, China is now combing all of these methods to deal with the ethnic tension.

If the minorities do not challenge the integrity of the state, China is willing to employ strategies that involve tolerance and accommodation. When used, the results of these strategies have been mixed. For those ethnic minorities whose immediate concern is economic betterment, the use of economic power strategies have been successful in securing compliance and in promoting loyalty. However, the prevailing accommodative approach has not been successful in ensuring the acquiescence, let alone compliance, of the minorities in certain areas like Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia. In addition to these accommodative strategies, the Chinese government has found it necessary to employ coercive power to maintain order in these regions.

CHAPTER FOUR: CASE STUDIES IN XINJIANG AND TIBET

The case studies of Xinjiang and Tibet address the recent empowerment of its ethnic minorities against the strength of the PRC and its Han majority. The source of this empowerment is the fact that these minorities feel secure in their age-old cultural identities. It is because of this that the PRC and their Communist Party feel threatened. The socialist model, after all, was designed to be the final solution of empowerment for the people. This analysis will show that all of the parties involved have had a long, storied, sometimes cooperative, and often intertwined history.

These ethnic tensions have arisen because dynamics have changed. In this paper these dynamics will be expounded upon. The complaints that the people of Xinjiang and the Tibetans have against the PRC have been fueled by foreign influence. By picking apart the source of ethnic tensions that are present in the relationship between Xinjiang, Tibet and the PRC, these case studies aim to shed light on how the minority ethnicities and the Han majority has survived and thrived centuries past. These studies also show how they aim to remain intact in the future despite their quests for autonomy and hegemony, respectively. Also the strategic and aesthetic assets that these ethnicities have will be covered. Finally, light will be shed on the supporting players in these escalating dramas in hopes of predicting some sort of resolution.

A. Xinjiang

Ethnic Tension in Xinjiang: An Introduction

Xinjiang: A Primer

In order to understand the Northwest Chinese province of Xinjiang and why it is of so much importance to the PRC, despite occasional disruptions and uprisings due to ethnic tensions, it is probably best to begin with one word, “Muslim.” The label of Muslim is not an entirely religious one; it also serves as an acknowledgment that this region of China and its surroundings has been steadily bathed with Islamic influence. Despite the Islamic-tinged nationalism emanating from ethnic minorities in the Western regions of China, Islam stands more on an ideological footing rather than a religious one.⁸⁸ What this means is that within the region, there is a diverse level of devoutness. Islam is centered more on culture and social traditions, rather than worship. The region of Xinjiang is centered culturally on Islam, and the same is true for its neighbors Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan; those former soviet satellites that became independent.

The 19th century view recognizes the advantage that the Chinese dynasties saw in conquering that territory; holding Xinjiang meant that any aggressor(s) would have to traverse great areas of unproductive territory where reinforcement would be difficult.⁸⁹ Now, the modern view expresses awareness that Xinjiang is inherently different from Chinese culture. Even in the 20th century, Xinjiang had been referred to in the government documents as *Huijiang* or “Muslim land” for nearly one hundred years.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ James A. Millard, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: a Critical Assessment* (Honolulu: EWCPS, 2004) 1.

⁸⁹ Christian Tyler, *Wild West China: the Taming of Xinjiang* (New Brunswick: RU Press, 2004) 60.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

The name “Xinjiang” literally means “new frontier,” but it is more officially known as the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous region. To the people of Xinjiang, the land is known as the Eastern Turkestan Republic (ETR).⁹¹ The ethnic people who dominate this area are known as the Uighers or Uyghers. Xinjiang, whose capitol is Urumchi, makes up one-sixth of the total land area of China but only one-sixtieth of the Chinese population, including the ethnic minorities, reside there. The small population in Inner Asia makes the life of the Steppe nomads vastly different from the crowded life of the Han Chinese.⁹² The leftward lurch of the Great Leap Forward undermined even the limited influence the Uyghurs and other non-Han groups had enjoyed in Xinjiang’s governance under the autonomy system.⁹³ The rift has been slowly simmering between the Communist doctrine within the Chinese territory and the Uyghurs quest for autonomy. The doctrine that created this rift is the Marxist-Leninist Doctrine that disparages traditional religions by placing their significance below the significance of the State’s political party.

*Xinjiang: Culture and Religion- A source of Ethnic Tension
(1944 to Contemporary Times)*

As China’s policy wavered and implementation faltered, Xinjiang enjoyed a brief independence from China in 1944 to 1949. Independence, in this sense, is referring to the fact that there were no outside authorities overseeing or dictating Xinjiang’s affairs. Prior to the 20th century, the colonization of Xinjiang was not as strategic as it is now, and there were no national security threats or economic opportunities at that time. The anti-Chinese

⁹¹ Ibid., 3.

⁹² Fairbank, and Goldman 23.

⁹³ Starr 97.

atmosphere of this period is still remembered by Uyghurs and others in Xinjiang. In Xinjiang there are the Hui, Uigur (Uyghur), Kazak, and six more ethnic groups including Tadjik, and Uzbek, and all are considered Muslim minorities in China.⁹⁴ The flag of the Eastern Turkestan Republic is represented by a star and a crescent on a turquoise background, and it remains the symbol of Turkic and Muslim nationalism. It is also an anathema to Chinese authorities as a symbol of separation.⁹⁵ The star and crescent also happens to be heavily synonymous with Islam. The annexation of Xinjiang on the part of the Han Chinese began productively enough. During the 1950's and 1960's the employees in the economic sector were largely represented by Uighurs. Their language enjoyed equal stature with Chinese. Even though there are many ethnicities in Xinjiang, the language of the Uyghurs was a common communication tool used by the Uyghurs and other nationalities.⁹⁶

Respecting language and culture showed the soft approach that the PRC took to appease its Western territories, at least in the beginning. It was spelled out that language and religious freedoms were guaranteed by the State Constitution and the Law on Regional Autonomy.⁹⁷ What the law of regional autonomy states is that people are welcome to keep their culture and language, but the Chinese Communist Party will do everything it can to make Communist culture and Chinese language more efficient and beneficial. Getting people to join the innately atheist Communist Party and to partake in the fruits of all China offers, requires that indigenous people lay aside past customs and

⁹⁴ Gladney 20.

⁹⁵ Michael Dillon, *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Far Northwest* (NY: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004) 32.

⁹⁶ Anwar Rahman, *Sinicization Beyond the Great Wall: China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region* (Leicester: Matador, 2005) 107.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

ideas and immerse themselves in the Party culture and language. Currently, thanks to Chinese policy, students in Xinjiang are allowed to choose between learning Chinese or learning the language of their indigenous culture. Assimilation pressures are all around as there are scarce opportunities to work, communicate, and to find success, if one chooses to use non-Chinese languages. However, since market economy arrived in Xinjiang, private companies and enterprises no longer have to endure restrictions on the hiring of non-Chinese minorities, thanks to relevant stipulations of the State Constitution and of Regional Autonomy Law.⁹⁸

Xinjiang to China: An International Asset or a Liability

China has the added responsibility of protecting the oil reserves within its territory where they are present, including in Xinjiang. Although Xinjiang is likely to be an economic beneficiary of Chinese energy policies, it will be more firmly supervised and controlled by the center.⁹⁹ In addition to its strategic importance and its peculiar ecology, Xinjiang has other attractive attributes. Xinjiang is also China's largest cotton producer.¹⁰⁰ This has caused this territory to become more valuable.

There are many other ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang region. The Uyghurs only stand out because they are the group that exercises the greatest monopoly within the Xinjiang population. Despite religious, cultural, ideological, and geographical ties within the region, Uyghur's solidarity does not compare with the cohesiveness that the Communist party brings to the ethnic majority, the Han Chinese. Among the Uyghurs there is a contested understanding of their own society, culture, politics, and history and

⁹⁸ Ibid., 107.

⁹⁹ Rossabi 161.

¹⁰⁰ Dillon 38.

this continues to influence Uyghur debate over Chinese claims to Xinjiang.¹⁰¹ It is due to this inner strife that the unity among the indigenous people of Xinjiang is not as strong as it could be.

Islam and ethnic minorities were the buzzwords that drew the attention of mostly Middle Eastern countries, principally those of the Islamic faith, and caused them to want to help facilitate the reconciliation of Chinese territory. During the 1980's a variety of Middle Eastern institutes and other academic and professional organizations began work in China to facilitate greater understanding of the region that Beijing considers a major catalyst in international and internal Chinese affairs.¹⁰² It was very dynamic that these events took shape in the 1980's, before the proliferation of Muslim-based terrorism and before the rise in efforts to secure commodity resources. Middle Eastern countries are familiar with attempts by outsiders to exploit their fossil fuel (oil) natural resources. It is ironic that these countries encouraged China to mediate and facilitate discussions between Xinjiang and the Chinese, because Xinjiang is the physical location of natural resources, specifically oil reserves. To China, Islam represents a potential threat. They consider it as one of the principal threats to the Communist Party ideology in its organized disunity. Organized disunity and the call for independence only grew louder in the regions around Xinjiang when the Soviet Union dissolved in the early 1990's.

¹⁰¹ Starr 110.

¹⁰² Lillian Craig Harris, *Xinjiang, Central Asia, and the Implications for China's Policy in the Islamic World* (Beijing: China Quarterly, 1993) 111.

The Way that PRC Handles the Ethnic Tension in Xinjiang

Central Planning: the Basis of Communism

The Chinese and their Party fervor have made it relatively easy for them to pull off complex endeavors of central planning. Party fervor is the enthusiasm that sprang out of the Communist Revolution. Communist fervor is the dedication to give the state what it requires, and in the case of the Chinese, it needed mind, body, and spirit. One of the favored, most prolific methods used in Chinese central planning within Xinjiang was population relocation. Since Imperial times, the Chinese government has tried to settle the Han on the outskirts of China to integrate the Chinese philosophy. However the Communist party denies this, saying that its policies in Xinjiang are designed to promote economic development, not demographic change. The Chinese recognized that they needed ambassadors to allow the Communists to flaunt their brilliant bureaucratic planning which they were sure would be successful on any terrain within any geographic distance of the Central government. The Chinese felt that no other ambassador was more appropriate and more capable than the ethnic majority, the Han Chinese, who were already predisposed for power or leadership in the party. This was a respectable effort for such a forbidding terrain in a desolate region of China. It was important for the Communist Party to make the populations of their semi-autonomous regions more heterogeneous and favorable to their views. The Chinese Han majority was officially encouraged to migrate into the Xinjiang region and between 1940 and 1982, the percentage of Han Chinese in the region climbed 2,500%.¹⁰³ The expectations that these

¹⁰³ Starr 112.

methods would help unify the ethnic minorities with the majority have fallen short because of competition between the two groups for jobs and natural resources.¹⁰⁴

A 21st Century Ethnic Tension: Tolerance vs. Terrorism

Between the break-up of the Soviet Union, and China's development and emergence on the world stage, there was another optimally timed event that allowed China to put the finishing touches on its final plan to completely subjugate their autonomous regions under Communist control. When considering geo-political purposes, only China had plenty of reasons to keep the pressure on its Uyghur minorities in Xinjiang. The term "Geo-political" is defined as how different countries interact with each other and the message that they give their people about the countries that surround or affect them. In the case of Xinjiang the population is hesitant to assimilate with Chinese language, culture, and party ideology. The broad policy of nonviolent elimination of theistic beliefs, so long as this does not obstruct operation of communist power, is clearly stated by the communist leadership.¹⁰⁵ What this means is that the Communist Party is open to eliminating theistic belief nonviolently, but if this measure obstructs communist power then they will resort to violence. Post-9/11 Chinese attempts to link Uyghur separatism to international jihadist groups represent the immediate uneasiness that lingered between China and its region of Xinjiang.¹⁰⁶ The Chinese and their communist doctrine are limited when it comes to ideological frameworks, but they are not limited in the method that they use to secure population control and dominance.

¹⁰⁴ Preeti Bhattacharji, *Uighurs and China's Xinjiang Region* (Council of Foreign Relations, 2009) 1.

¹⁰⁵ C.K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961) 393.

¹⁰⁶ Millard 1.

The Han population is situated in Xinjiang's urban zone. They are mostly engaged in economic development and their area is better developed than the rural zone where Uyghurs live.¹⁰⁷

China and Xinjiang: Recouping the Investment

Today China has maintained a more respectable balance and a wide mandate that has allowed them to exert control over a people to whom they hold no ethnic ties. The spectacular economic growth of China has been far-reaching, but not all encompassing. For instance, the Chinese Communist Party has taken initiatives to send financial aid to regions, but a disproportionate amount of governmental benefits has gone towards its restive provinces. Despite economic success in its high productivity, profit, and reserves, some believe that China has failed to meet the needs of the people. Today the Chinese government considers the exploitation of oil and cotton in Xinjiang as two of the most important industrial pillars of WDP in Xinjiang.¹⁰⁸

The PRC and their Communist Party appear very peaceful and favorable when they allocate resources to some of the most desolate lands. Three times the size of France, Xinjiang is an arid region in the far Northwest corner of Chinese territory.¹⁰⁹ None of the ethnic groups in this region feel compelled to significantly raise their standards of living, especially not at the expense of becoming more assimilated with the ethnic Han majority. Becoming assimilated would require leaving their distinct culture, history, and customs behind to become faceless and subjugated comrades. Within Xinjiang there are nearly

¹⁰⁷ Rahman 97.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 102.

¹⁰⁹ Millard 1.

nine million people out of sixteen million who regard themselves as Uyghur.¹¹⁰ Xinjiang has always been a threat and a hotbed for organization against the Communist Party. They also have ties to the land and are thus so firmly situated that anyone outside looking in would be compelled to believe that the region belongs to the Uyghurs. 99.8 percent of the Uyghur population lives in Xinjiang.¹¹¹ This is an important statistic because there are numerous other ethnic minorities in the region. Though they are somewhat similar to the Uyghurs, it is the Uyghurs' dominance that causes any culpability in organizing counter-revolutionary measures against the Chinese to gravitate towards the Uyghurs.

Impact of Xinjiang's Ethnic Tension in China

The Communist Party was successful in preventing its ethnic minorities from getting a foothold in any administration of the Xinjiang. The purpose of this was to establish the precedent of keeping the people subservient to the party and to create uneasiness towards any other system. Many uprisings have been documented, but the ways in which they were brutally quelled have not been recorded. It is reported, however, that both the frequency and severity of violent incidents in Xinjiang have declined since 1997-1998.¹¹² Outsiders who seek to report on the plight of the subjugated ethnic minority people report more on what the ethnic minority does wrong, rather than what a tightly-controlled, far-reaching communist society does right. Observers such as Millward, have not been satisfied with the origin, organization, and outlook of recent Xinjiang demonstrations for the reason that these demonstrations mostly highlight what causes the ruling Communist Party to respond with the stick rather than the carrot.

¹¹⁰ Starr 104.

¹¹¹ Dru C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic* (Boston: HCEAS, 1996) 20.

¹¹² Millard 2.

Apparently, heavy-handed police tactics are all that it takes for the indigenous population to produce riots, and anti-Chinese, Islamic slogans.¹¹³ The relationship between the Chinese and its ethnic minorities depends on whether the people are working towards the good of the CCP. If they are working for the degradation of the Party, then the CCP must come down in a show of force as representative of the entire region. When this happens, the minorities begin to act in ways that only serve to further incite dangerous counter-revolutionary behavior that threatens the Party authority, thus calling for absolute and relentless measures.

Xinjiang and China: A Continuous Tug of War

It must be understood that in an authoritarian communist country, the goal is not to keep the good of the party in the forefront of the peoples' minds, and to rid the peoples' minds of potential and potent dissent. The geo-political sphere that surrounds the Xinjiang region demonstrates that the most potent dissent is along religious lines. This is why the Communist Party takes care in Xinjiang to grudgingly support the religious freedom of the people. Observing China's relationship with Hong Kong from an economic standpoint, "Two systems, one China" helps to underscore the compromise that is taking place in Xinjiang, as the innately atheist Communist Party supports the practice of religion in regions where chaos would break out if such practice is prohibited.

As Xinjiang is granted concessions by PRC it still finds itself polarized against communist ideology. The PRC can focus on other ways of leading the people towards the ultimate goal of the Party, which is that they will one day give up their culture and live for the people and the state. Incentives for giving up indigenous culture and language

¹¹³ Ibid., 2.

have been evident since the 1940's, as Xinjiang became more and more incorporated into China. This has manifested itself in diverse areas such as communications, education, and occupational shifts.¹¹⁴ The ethnic minorities of Xinjiang are beginning to embrace the Chinese language incrementally. The courses of studies that Xinjiang can promote are evolving to what may benefit the PRC as a whole. As for occupational shifts, industrial and other skills sets are undergoing changes in importance, as not to become redundant. All of these changes are a result of broadening perspectives from being strictly Xinjiang to become the Xinjiang that supports PRC views. These shifts are also a result of the proactive measures that were taken by the PRC, through its communist central planning.

As a result of acknowledging the complexities of ethnic minorities being recognized and conditioned to be a part of the PRC, Chinese law prevents unrecognized groups from organizing along ethnic lines. The PRC regards any new organization as illegal, seditious, and a threat to national unity.¹¹⁵ Simply by enforcing this ordinance, China sets the precedence that prevents the Party's greatest fear: mass organization against the ruling party.

Communism and the Religious Conflict in Xinjiang

It must be understood that the CCP tries to follow the Marxist Nationalist Theory as best they can. The Marxist Nationality Theory does not respect the traditions and cultures of their ethnic minorities. It may be possible to withstand stating that the Communist/Socialist goals are for the benefit of all the people. It cannot be left out, however, that the ideal socialist utopia is devoid of religion. The communists also do not

¹¹⁴ Starr 112.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 111.

believe in separation of church and state.¹¹⁶ In other words, if one's religion must be separate from the state or must be considered above the state, it will not be allowed to exist in a communist state. The Han majority and their communist party were able to rouse themselves up and shake off religious dogma in order to focus on being pragmatic and being mobile as a party. This means that those loyal to the party accept the responsibility of relocating within the territory for the benefit of the People's Republic. The ethnic minorities, specifically those to the west, had not been willing to let go of what they had been exposed to for nearly a thousand years, authoritarian religious isolation. This refers to the monopoly that Islam has on the region of Xinjiang and its surrounding areas mostly because these areas are isolated. It is fair to consider the Muslim ideology in Xinjiang as being authoritarian. The people of Xinjiang and the surrounding areas have not been open to alternative forms of religion and traditions outside of Islam. The Uyghurs and the other ethnic minorities of Xinjiang prefer that the rule of Islam dictate the tenets of daily life and serve as the order of their society. This belief has been the chagrin of the Chinese Communist Party. The ethnic minorities have a strong desire to protect their interests specifically their Islamic culture and traditions. This desire is equal as strong as China's desire to assimilate Xinjiang into China.

International Round Table Talks: An Alliance of Non-Interference in Domestic Affairs

One of the wider- ranging aspects of ethnic tension is that Xinjiang, due to its Islamic culture and region, has the ability to summon international contacts that may rile the Chinese. The ramifications of the network are that if it is left unmonitored, these contacts can easily cross national borders and can disrupt China's goals for Xinjiang. This

¹¹⁶ Yang 393.

is why China has been very proactive in dealing with the independent nations on its Western frontier, making sure that they will find it unfavorable to give any relief to groups that are hostile to the CCP. In 1999 the PRC joined groups of other countries in signing protocols. This group included China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan and these protocols stipulated mutual respect of border security. Also they simultaneously pledged to suppress terrorism, drug smuggling, and separatism.¹¹⁷ By doing this, China's central government can engage in more effective central planning because they have cut off opportunities and resources that could feed into a movement aimed at destroying Party leadership. China's actions in this regard are not recent, but have been ongoing. China knows that harsh measures are necessary but that the international community, including the United States, may take offense to its measures. China has successfully played off international conflicts involving the United States particularly those against Korea and Vietnam, in order to guard against any interference in China's domestic affairs.

B. Case Study: Tibet

Ethnic Tension in Tibet: An Introduction

Communist China's Emergence and Clampdown

Relations between China and Tibet are not recent and they were not always at odds. A suitable starting point to understand the ethnic relationships between China and Tibet would be the time when they were friendly allies; the relationship between the Tubo Kingdom of Tibet and the Tang Dynasty (618-907). In 701, Princess Jin Cheng of the Tang Dynasty married into Tibetan Tubo royalty. The Tang Court believed that the

¹¹⁷ Starr 109.

relationship between the Tang Dynasty and Tubo should be regarded as the one of maternal uncle and nephew and that they should be allied as one.¹¹⁸

The ethnic tension between Tibet and China rests in the fact that Tibetans are adamant that they are not Chinese, and that Tibet is not a part of China because of its long independent history and culture. Tibet officially came under the rule of the Communist Government in 1949.¹¹⁹ The ethnic tension and discord also rests in the reality that Tibet's political and religious system under the Dalai Lama is preferable to them over communism. Tibetans feel that their next best alternative is democracy.¹²⁰ That belief splits them further apart, rather than causing them to be closer to a compromise with the PRC.

Tibetans do not appreciate the tactics that the Chinese have used to divide them as a people. Tibetans would rather speak Tibetan language and embrace Tibetan culture, rather than learn Chinese and accept Chinese customs. Tibetans do not welcome the clampdown on information and the stifling of free press. In Tibet there are no foreign publications outside of tourist areas, and official newspapers have been instructed to use caution with sensitive topics, such as Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan independence.¹²¹

The Long Good-bye: China and Tibet since 1900

¹¹⁸ Yuxin Zhang, *Testimony of History* (Zurich: China Intercontinental Press, 2002) 1.

¹¹⁹ Rahman 95.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹²¹ Scott Morton, William Morton, and Charlton M Lewis. *China: its History and Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005) 245.

The Chinese have also taken advantage of Tibetan isolation. Much of the region lies on a remote plateau above fifteen thousand feet that is ringed by mountains.¹²² This makes it difficult to form relationships with other countries to serve as allies. By the thirteenth century, when Buddhism in India began to decline, Tibet was ready to preserve Buddhism and to transmit it to other lands.¹²³ Tibet had once before had a strong relationship with India. The rift between India and Tibet occurred as Hinduism overtook Buddhism in India and isolated Tibet, which became the headquarters for Buddhism.¹²⁴

Knowing that the Chinese have considered Tibet to be a backwards country, the Tibetans themselves have discussed implementing preemptive measures to make interference from China unnecessary. Gyalo Thondrop, the Dalai Lama's older brother returned to Tibet in early 1952. He pushed land reform to the government cabinet, and he also backed up his own words by telling the cabinet that he intended to tear up any debts owed to his own estates and redistribute the land to its farmers.¹²⁵ Some of these measures include communist friendly statutes, such as abolishing inherited debt and limiting land ownership. Ethnic tension was also fueled by China's desire that Buddhism did not spread into China and disrupt the communist ideology. China desired for its citizens, including Tibetans, to be passive in politics and obedient to authority. As a result, China also wanted to make sure that the people did not have strong sense of human rights, because once the minority has strong sense of human rights, it would be

¹²² Edward Wong. "A Long History of People Trying to Control Tibet." *International Herald Tribune* <<http://hnn.us/roundup/entries/68437.html>>.

¹²³ "Buddhist World: Buddhism Arcross the Himalayas: Tibet, Mongolia, *BuddhaNet - Worldwide Buddhist Information and Education Network* Web. 02 Mar. 2010. <<http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhistworld/to-himalayas.htm>>.

¹²⁴ Charles Boulger and Mayo W. Hazeltine, *China* (NY: Peter Fenelon Collier & Son, 1901) 115.

¹²⁵ Patricia Cronin Marcello, *The Dalai Lama: a Biography* (Westport, Ct: Greenwood Press, 2003) 72.

difficult for China to make the minority obedient to the authority.¹²⁶ Tibetans yearn for human rights because their religion and culture is about peace and harmony, not fierce dedication to a state.

The Way that PRC Handles the Ethnic Tension in Tibet

In the eyes of the Communist Party, Tibet has always been a part of China even though the two people are not ethnically the same. The Qing dynasty governed the Chinese people for two hundred and fifty-six years, ending in 1912. This was the same dynasty that was responsible for the conquest of Mongolia, Central Asia, and Tibet.¹²⁷ The relationship between China and Tibet, throughout history, has changed dynamics as often as China has changed Dynasties and political systems. Most Chinese tended to think of Tibetan territory as practically empty, the number of Tibetans as negligible and Tibetan land and resources as unused.¹²⁸ Part of the reason for the success, sovereignty, and the eventual autonomy of the Tibetans are because of their rugged and forbidding terrain. When the Chinese, as the People's Republic, finally reached and was able to control Tibet in 1950, they sought to appease the Tibetans with money. This is strange that a communist country would use such ideals as property and wealth to try to persuade another region to join them. Also the Communist Party felt it was for the benefit of the party to establish a Tibet Military Area Headquarters to absorb the Tibetan Army.¹²⁹ One of the first actions that the PRC took concerning Tibet was stationing its People's

¹²⁶ Fairbank, and Goldman , *China: a New History* (Boston: PFHC, 2006) 383.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 384.

¹²⁸ Warren W. Smith, *China's Tibet: Autonomy or Assimilation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman-Littlefield, 2008) 20.

¹²⁹ Rossabi 193.

Liberation Army in Tibet to defend its border, their border. The minimal goal was to liberate Tibet, whether or not Tibet's leaders agreed to become a part of China.¹³⁰

China's communist policy has never been unwavering, or unchanging, especially when it comes to Tibet. Chairman Mao understood that Tibet was very different from other minority areas because it had been operating independently for four decades, since 1910, and did not have any Chinese living there.¹³¹ Mao's strategy was to win over the Tibetans during the early years of the occupation. This was to be done through lavish spending, in renting houses owned by Tibetan aristocrats for the army's Tibetan supplies, and in Tibetan bazaars.¹³² The second stage of the communist conversion of Tibet was for individuals to give up ownership of land and animals and give it to a commune or a collective.¹³³ China successfully persuaded the Dalai Lama to participate in negotiations, by sending a negotiating team to Beijing to hammer out a Seventeen-Point agreement that formally recognized Chinese sovereignty over Tibet for the first time. The Seventeen-Point agreement promised a continuation of the traditional Tibetan social and political system, including the monastic and estate systems, and even the unique systems of religious-political rule by the Dalai Lama's government.¹³⁴ Policy changes in China, including those that deal with autonomous regions evolve through the same process. This process involves the changes in center-provincial relations and they are usually marginal

¹³⁰ Melvyn C. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, Vo. 2* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) 542.

¹³¹ Rossabi 193.

¹³² John B. Roberts II, and Elizabeth A. Roberts, *Freeing Tibet: 50 Years of Struggle, Resilience, and Hope* (NY:NY: AMACOM, 2009) 13.

¹³³ Thomas Laird, *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama* (New York: Grove, 2006) 365.

¹³⁴ Smith 20.

adjustments that typically affect the overall balance less dramatically than the publicity announcements that the changes suggest.¹³⁵

Will They or Won't They: Getting Tibet to Play Along

The Chinese have always utilized varying degrees of control as they see fit and as the geopolitical events shift on the horizon. The relationship between the center (Beijing) and provinces is the object of continual reform, as the leaders of China seek an appropriate blend of national uniformity and provincial autonomy.¹³⁶ The actions taken by the Tibetans demonstrate their inability to mesh with the changes that the Chinese were forcing on them. The changes that the Chinese brought to Tibet were Marxist to the letter. Land was equally redistributed from the wealthy to the poor. This proved to be an excitable measure that made Tibetans curious of what was to come.

The methodology of the Chinese had been cautious in order to achieve a sure annexation of Tibetan lands. This methodology was based on central planning designed to cause the Tibetans to gravitate to true authentic Chinese assimilation, this includes culture, language, ideology, etc. Following the traditional Tibetan perspective, it was expected that religion would play an inherent role in politics.¹³⁷

An area where Tibet has set itself apart from its Chinese masters is their fervent desire and belief in democracy. Tibetans on every level from peasants to the Dalai Lama believe that only through democratization can Tibet be ruled in harmony. Democracy appears more favorable to Tibetans especially as China rolls back its central planning and

¹³⁵ Kenneth Leiberthal and Michael Oksenberg, *Policy Making in China: Leaders, Structures, and Processes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988) 139.

¹³⁶ Leiberthal, and Oksenberg 138.

¹³⁷ Jane Ardley, *The Tibetan Independence Movement: Political, Religious, and Gandhian Perspectives* (NY: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002) 4.

adopts more market-based economic practices. China also aspires to democracy, but their interpretation of democracy is different from Tibet's. Tibet is open to a western-style democracy that gives its entire people a say. The type of democracy that China aspires to is considered the basic way to ensure that the government officials maintain their spirit of serving the people, and to prevent officials from seeking privileges, in particular the trend towards bureaucracy.¹³⁸ In other words, the version of Chinese democracy is a check and balances tool that only the party elite exercises, in order to keep the party elite in check.

In the annexation of Tibet, the PRC underestimated the strength of Tibetan national identity and overestimated the effectiveness of the Marxist Nationalist theory and policy, specifically its ability to diffuse Tibetan resistance.¹³⁹ The Chinese have made mistakes that have stalled their reconciliation with Tibet. These mistakes have failed to compound because of the inherent nature of Tibetans, to be of peaceful and agreeable nature. Tibetans do focus on controlling their territory but do not wish to suppress the Chinese in any way.¹⁴⁰ During the Deng reform era of the 1980's, the PRC eased central control, allocated more funds to Tibet and gave more government posts to Tibetans loyal to Tibet, to cause ordinary Tibetans to question their resistance. While China was administering many changes in Tibet they also began to roll back some policies, relocating thousands of ethnic majority Han Chinese into Tibet to work important government posts. Strenuous efforts up until 1990 caused the Han Chinese population in Tibet to be 3.68 percent.¹⁴¹ Following the established framework and

¹³⁸ Andrew J. Nathan, *Chinese Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) 83.

¹³⁹ Smith 21.

¹⁴⁰ Jane Ardley, *The Tibetan Independence Movement: Political, Religious, and Gandhian Perspectives* (NY: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002) 3.

¹⁴¹ Iredale 139.

providing for its administrations to effectively serve the people, has allowed the Chinese to achieve control of Tibet. The singular focus of the Chinese originates from their belief that Tibet is one of the many areas that are inherently Chinese, unworthy of being controlled by any other ethnicity.

The current general secretary of the Communist Party as well as the President of China, and the Chairman of its military, Hu Jintao once served as the regional party secretary of Tibet from 1988 to 1992. He was the same person who imposed martial law in Tibet, for the first time ever in the history of the PRC.¹⁴² It was his precedent of making a declaration against demonstrators that laid the groundwork for the merciless crushing of protest that took place in China's Tiananmen Square.

Impact of Tibet's Ethnic Tension in China

The Center of it All: The Dalai Lama

It was issues surrounding the Dalai Lama that sparked the Lhasa Uprising in 1959. The Uprising was triggered by an invitation for the Dalai Lama to attend a theatrical performance at the Chinese Military headquarters in Lhasa on March 10, 1959. China insisted on the Tibetans to forgo their Tibetan formalities and ceremonies, and also tried to interfere with the Dalai Lama's security detail. This fueled rumors of a kidnapping attempt and caused the uprising.¹⁴³ The Dalai Lama, through his work in exile, has done a lot to publicize the plight of the Tibetans under the Chinese. He has, without a doubt, drawn more attention to the plight of his people in exile from Tibet than could have ever been possible inside Tibet under the Chinese. The plight of Tibet has

¹⁴² Morton, Morton, and Lewis 243.

¹⁴³ Ardley 35.

become a religious plight, a democratic plight, and a historical one as well. Tibet has become synonymous with Buddhism and with peaceful resistance. The Dalai Lama, as a representative of the Tibetan people, has aligned his region with the western world because of his quest for democracy. Whether it is an accurate portrayal or not, the Chinese have been painted as callous, dictatorial, and oppressive invaders. President Hu Jintao was quoted addressing his Tibetan deputies regarding “development and stability in Tibet being the top tasks that demand unremitting efforts”.¹⁴⁴

Even though China has been growing and continues to grow in economic influence, China’s quest to discredit the Dalai Lama and critics of its policies in Tibet are backfiring and not holding sway. Some of the actions that they have implemented and maintained within Tibet are its one thousand and seven hundred religious venues and forty-six thousand monks and nuns protected by law. China considers it an insult in the highest order for Heads of State throughout the world to entertain the Dalai Lama and his lobbying for interdiction on behalf of Tibet. Despite this, the Dalai Lama has maintained his creditability throughout the years even though he is in exile, and nations are recognizing the peaceful efforts that he is exercising on behalf of Tibet. The Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.¹⁴⁵ China’s growing influence and military might is becoming increasingly irrelevant because of the efforts being made for Tibet’s resistance, even though it is inconceivable that Tibet will achieve its independence or

¹⁴⁴ Claude Arpi, *Carrot and Stick: China’s formula in Tibet and Xinjiang* (Calcutta: The Statesman, 2010) 1.

¹⁴⁵ "Profile: The Dalai Lama." *BBC NEWS*. 25 Feb. 2009. Web. 22 Feb. 2010
<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1347735.stm>>.

other concessions. The active resistance of Tibet on the part of the Dalai Lama will mean that China's mission in Tibet will never be complete.

Xinjiang and Tibet: A Conclusion

The relationship between Xinjiang, Tibet and the Chinese has many similarities and a number of differences as well. The main similarity is that there is ethnic tension between the minority and the majority ethnic groups in China and the tension originates from the process of assimilation that the Han Chinese, the pillar of the People's Republic of China, is forcing them to undergo. Both the Tibetans and the people of Xinjiang have very rich cultures, histories, and traditions that the PRC feel, in the name of Communism; they are not bound to respect. This grants them an additional similarity, and their inherent differences from communist China in terms of religion and culture, if they can preserve them, makes them objects of defiance.

The main difference between Tibet and Xinjiang, in terms of their struggles with China, is the strategic advantage that they represent to the PRC. Xinjiang has natural resources, while Tibet serves as a buffer from foreign lands with its mountainous region. There are also differences in the tools and strategies that they are using to try to break free from the control of the PRC. Tibetans are utilizing the publicity generated from the Dalai Lama and the solidarity that they seem to share with the Western world. Xinjiang, on the other hand, has their Islamic brethren in the nearby Soviet break-off republics that give their struggle legitimacy. Xinjiang can also depend on the friendship with Middle Eastern countries, with whom they share a long relationship of Islamic tradition, culture, and religion. Even the differences between Xinjiang and Tibet give them an additional similarity; it renders them both incapable of struggling in obscurity and in silence.

CONCLUSION

China is the world's fourth largest country, with a population of one billion people. Out of this enormous population, only a small percentage of people are of ethnic, non-Han origin. For their strategic location and their occupation of some of China's most valuable lands, the ethnic minorities in China have received a great amount of attention from the central government to a far greater degree than would be expected from their relatively insignificant 9 percent of the China's total population. As a result, the government knows they must respond to the complaints of the minorities, for if the ethnic tension was to continue, it would perhaps mean secession, and loss of valuable land and resources.

The Chinese government also responds to the pleas of the ethnic minority in order to create a harmonious society. Since the founding of the first empire, Chinese imperial courts and modern governments had been in constant pursuit to build a united China: "One China." It seems that they are on their way to being successful in this goal, by effectively implementing firm yet moderate policies towards the ethnic minority in recent years. One great example of these policies is the creation of the autonomy system. The

autonomy system recognizes each minority groups' unique characteristics and culture. China's active recruitment of the minority leaders in the government has also won the favor of many of the minority people. Furthermore, wartime has long been a unifier among the Chinese, and the Japanese war along with the revolutionary years, created a partnership between the Han and the minorities.

However, the history of these efforts to create positive policies towards the ethnic community is relatively short. The majority of Chinese ethnic history is centered on tyranny and tragedy as they were often only considered as "barbarian" until the Qing dynasty came in. The ethnic communities have also suffered economically and culturally, especially since the implementation of the Open Door policy. Furthermore, the minorities center their lives on religion and nationalism, which clashes with the Han Chinese' ideology of socialism and unity. The Han fail to respect the beliefs of the minorities, and as a result, there are demands for separations from the CCP. Despite the government's great efforts to appease the people, there are ceaseless and numerous protests throughout the country. China faces a great challenge to unity, that being the separatism movement of the ethnic people away from the majority population. The real challenge is that the ethnic minorities are trying to move away from the main ethnic group. As each group develops a stronger sense of identity, their calls for independence grow louder, and conflict with the Chinese government is inevitable.

To the Chinese government, the ethnic tensions are one of China's biggest weaknesses, and a challenge that they need to overcome, in order to become a legitimate hegemony in this world. Past failure to properly handle the ethnic tension has strongly contributed to social unrest and protest, and will continue to do so until China can come

up with a better solution. The affects of such mishandling of this social crisis would be disastrous to China's national and international image. It would also damage the power and influence of the CCP, as PRC citizens would begin to question the legitimacy of the CCP. Domestic chaos would ensue. Furthermore, some scholars predict that if even one minority nationality declares independence from China, it would lead to the breakdown of China, much like the breakdown of the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁶ There is evidence of this theory in China's over-reaction to protests in Xinjiang and Tibet, where they unleashed military forces to control the situation. The government is obviously aware and afraid of the possible breakdown of the nation. The breakdown would be caused by a number of events including internal strife, inflation, uneven economic growth and struggles for secession, and these issues would divide the country along cultural and linguistic lines. The Han nationality could even revolt against the government due to civil unrest and failure to solve economic woes. Along with these contributing factors, one can be sure that the separatist movement will be the trigger that destroys the current social and governmental system of China. Clearly, as long as there are ethnic tensions in China, it will prevent China from becoming one of the hegemonies in this world.

In November of 2000, an ambassador from one of the Muslim states in China said that, "by the end of the next decade, China would be divided into nine republics."¹⁴⁷ Also, some scholars predict that change in China is inevitable as other similar countries are experiencing great change. United States Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan also predicted

¹⁴⁶ David M. Deal "The Question of Nationalities in Twentieth Century China." *The Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 12: 23 (1984).

¹⁴⁷ Bray 223.

that there will be fifty new countries in fifty years.¹⁴⁸ Also, he said that, “The trend began with the Soviet Union in 1991 and has continued throughout much of Africa and Asia, particularly Indonesia. Why should China be immune from such global fragmentation? Ethnic strife did not dismantle the former Soviet Union; but it did come apart along boundaries defined largely by ethnic and national differences. Therefore, it is highly possible that China could suffer the same fate, due to ethnic tensions.”¹⁴⁹

The Chinese government is working to control all of these factors that could lead to the degradation of the country. Although the ethnic separatism movements are developing faster since the adoption of the Open-Door policy, the Chinese government is using deterrent force and control over the separatist movement to deal with the ethnic tensions. One idea held by the Chinese government, is that localization of the market and world economy will lead China to unification, not division. In other words, the Chinese government believes that a success in economy will help China to stay as a harmonious society. Therefore, China will continue to rely on socialist ideology, but it will accelerate the development of the market economy as well.

The Chinese government has also developed strategies aimed to address the clashes with ethnic populations. These strategies use the economy, physical force and diplomacy to influence the ethnic community, and they have displayed substantial result. However these strategies also have many limitations and problems. Thus, the current responses have not produced adequate solutions to the problem of ethnic unrest. Perhaps these strategies need years to work before there are significant and positive effects.

¹⁴⁸ Dreyer, “Ethnic Relations in China,” 111.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 111.

Whatever the case, it is clear that if the fundamental problem of ethnic unrest is not solved, the ethnic tension will pose a threat to the stability of the political and social system in China, for years to come.

China is aware that it is difficult to uphold its unique model of socialism without support from the minority groups, and the government knows that it is important to solve the fundamental ethnic minority problem. To solve the ethnic minority problem, it is inevitable that they will need to modify the current system as the previous years have proved that their policies did not help to decrease the ethnic tension but rather increased it.¹⁵⁰

Based on this evidence, I believe that China should modify its minority policy. Firstly, though China provides a great amount of financial subsidy in the minority areas, many minority groups are still very poor simply because that money often goes to the “Han nationality” in the minority area. Furthermore, many corrupted government officials often take away the money that was given to the minority from the central government. The below testimony of a Uighur schoolteacher in Xinjiang clearly shows the reality of the situation in the minority areas. The Uighur schoolteacher says, "Our schools need to improve, and we need government support. But bribery skims off the top of any money devoted to minorities. Let's say Hu Jintao says that 10 million renminbi should be given to us. Then, at every layer, the leader takes some, and then the next leader takes some. So in the end we get only 1 million. No one watches the money or makes sure we get our due."¹⁵¹ For those reasons, many minority groups simply do not

¹⁵⁰ Christina Larson,. "China's Minority Problem -- And Ours | Foreign Policy," *Foreign Policy - the Global Magazine of Economics, Politics, and Ideas* 30 Sept. 2009.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

get any of the benefits from the government aid. Therefore, the Chinese government should pay special attention to the distribution of the financial subsidy and should try to reach every minority area in China so that no one is left behind.

Secondly, China should try to recruit more ethnic minority leaders and should give them a real control over the minority regions. While China promotes the minority leaders in the minority areas, China created a system that insures that the minority leaders in the minority areas do not have a true control over the region. Instead, Han Chinese officials are sent by the central government to possess real authority in that region. Furthermore the system is training a small class of minority elites to be loyal to the party, and is not cultivating voices who express a new point of view. This incensed many people in the diverse ethnic minority areas, and only succeeded in encouraging ethnic tensions. Therefore, China should recruit more ethnic minority leaders, and give them real control over their region. They should also be given true freedom to express their own views in the minority's perspective.

Lastly, though the Constitution in China guarantees the freedom of religion to the minorities, China still has a strong control over religious issues and is still closely monitoring their religious activities. It is for this reason, that China views the minority's religion as merely a tool that they can use to unify the nationalities. Since China is keeping its atheistic views, they cannot understand what religion means to the minority. For example, religion is very important to the Tibetans, as everything in their society is centered on the religion. Education as well as anything cultural or intellectual, was based on religious beliefs, with the leaders in the government being Buddhist monks. The Chinese government still has a strong hold on religious practices, and can even place a

limit on the number of religious buildings. Tibetans are resentful of the control the government has imposed on religion and the numerous restrictions that are in place. As long as China views religion as a simple tool to unify the nationalities, the ethnic tensions in regards to the religion issue will never be solved and religion issue is the biggest issue in Tibet and Xinjiang. Therefore, China should at least try to understand and respect what the religion means to the minority from the minority perspective.

In short, China should actively improve the minorities' standards of living, and should recruit more minority leaders in the government. China should also allow the minority to actively participate in politics. The government should provide better and more education opportunities, invest more in the minority areas, and guarantee equality and autonomy within the ethnic population of China. However, to accomplish all of these points, they have to be institutionalized in China.

In the meantime, the policies that work in favor of minorities should continue. When there is true respect and understanding between all of its citizens, China will be able to become a true unified nation. The formation of the Chinese nation that includes true integration will help China to realize its two goals: economic development and a stable system. Then, this true integration of the multiethnic nation will be a strong base for China to become the true hegemony in this world.

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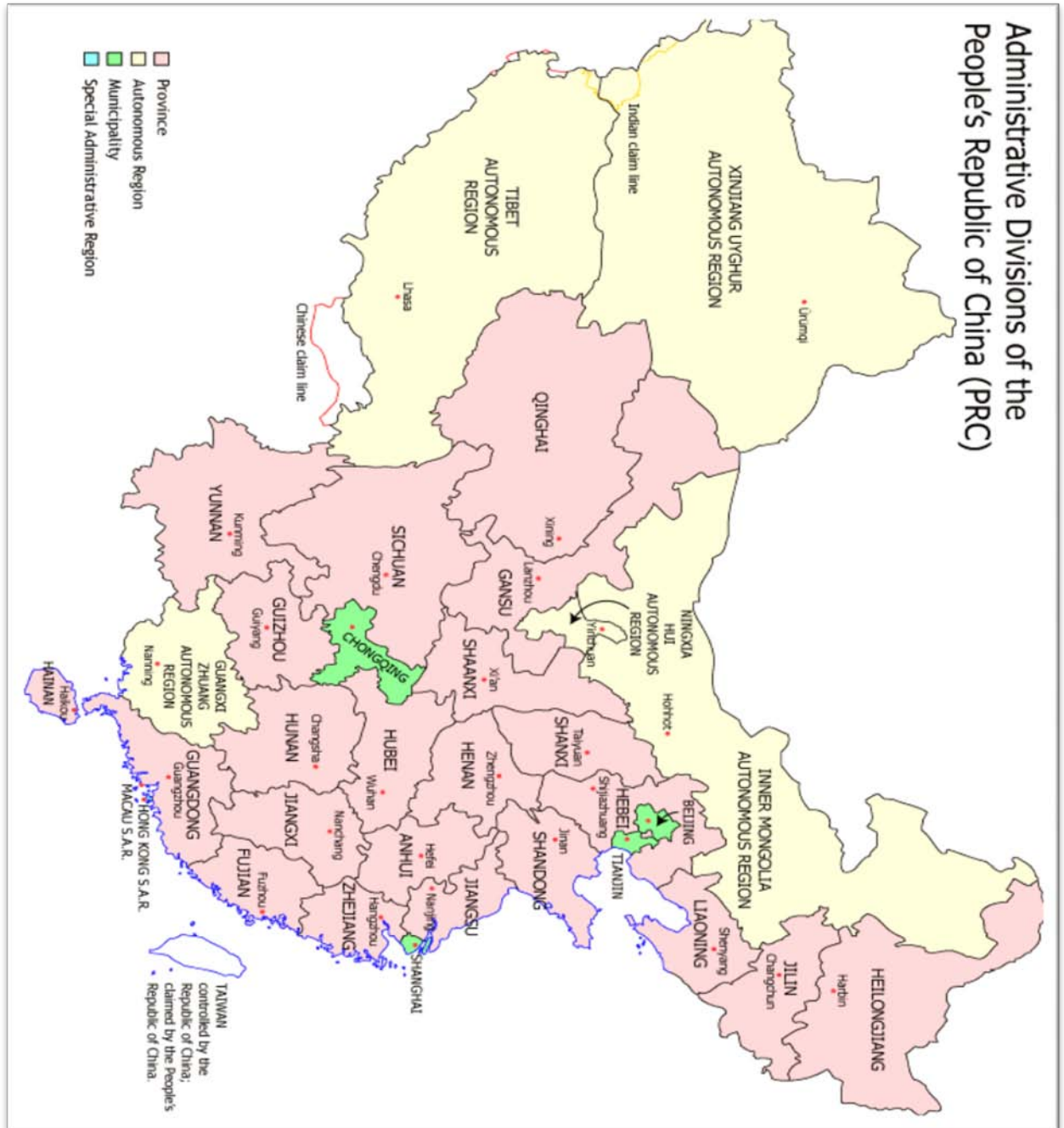
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APPENDIX

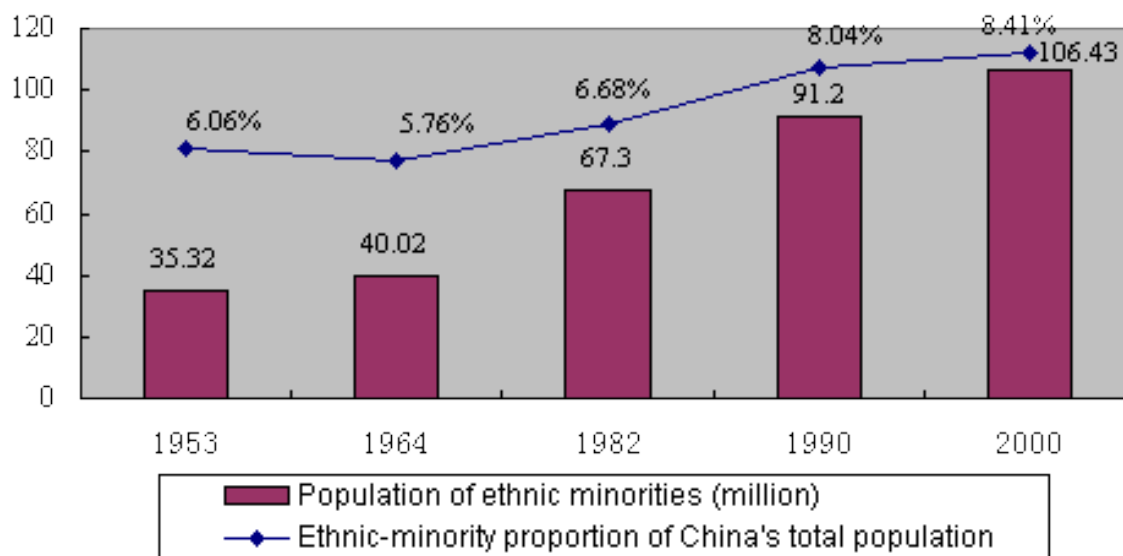
Appendix 1: Administrative division of China



Source:

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/9/99/China_administrative.gif/735px-China_administrative.gif

Appendix 2: Proportions of Ethnic Minorities in China's Total Population (Statistics from the Five National Censuses)



Source: China Daily 2009-09-27

<http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/images/attachement/gif/site1/20090927/001ec95974af0c2967d306.gif>

Notes: The eight autonomous regions and provinces where ethnic minorities live in compact communities are: Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Guangxi, Ningxia and Tibet autonomous regions, and Guizhou, Yunnan and Qinghai provinces.

Appendix 3: Major Natural Resources of China's Minority Areas

Item	Unit	1990	% to total
Total surface area	10,000 sq.m.	91.19	64.5 %
Pastoral area	10,000 hectares	30,000.00	94.0 %
Forest area	10,000 hectares	4,787.00	38.4 %
Forest growing stock	100 million cu.m.	52.4	57.3 %

Hydropower resources	10,000 kw .	35,000.00	51.8 %
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Source: People's Republic of China Yearbook 1991/92 (1991):89.