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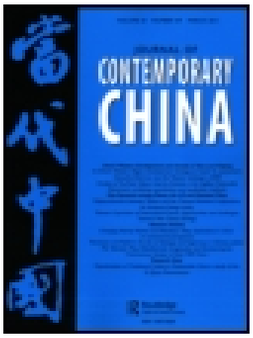

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Debating Ethnic Governance in China

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ABSTRACT
Previous scholarship has identified an emerging consensus for ethnic-policy reform in China, in the direction of strengthening national integration and a 'melting pot.' This article identifies three major contending schools in Chinese debates about the country's ethnic governance: liberal autonomists, integrationists and socialist autonomists. It argues that the socialist autonomists, who oppose the 'melting pot,' have prevailed politically. Contention among the three schools, specifically, revolves around tradeoffs between autonomy and ethnic particularism. That is, compromised autonomy but preferential policies. The liberal autonomists reject the tradeoffs because of the cost to autonomy. The integrationists reject the tradeoffs because of the divisive role of ethnic particularism. The socialist autonomists, however, embrace the tradeoffs because of the developmental and distributional benefits. With the leftward turn of the Xi Jinping regime, they have prevailed ideologically and politically to safeguard the current system from any fundamental change.

Introduction

Previous scholarship identifies an emerging consensus among leading public intellectuals and some party officials in China for ethnic policy reform. These reformers argue that divisive ethnic policies, adopted from the former USSR, must be replaced by new measures that bolster national integration and an ethnic 'melting pot.'[1] This article identifies three contending schools in the Chinese debate: liberal autonomists, integrationists and socialist autonomists. They have given different diagnoses for the problems of China's ethnic governance and vied to influence the direction of reform. The school that opposes fundamental reform, or the socialist autonomists, this artcle argues, has prevailed ideologically and politically under Xi Jinping's regime.

Specifically, contention among the three schools revolves around tradeoffs between autonomy and ethnic particularism that are characteristic of the socialist system of ethnic governance. That is, compromised autonomy but preferential policies. The liberal autonomists attribute the rise of ethnic grievances to a dearth of autonomy rights. The integrationists blame ethnic particularism for politicizing identities and undermining national cohesion. But the socialist autonomists accept the tradeoffs between autonomy and ethnic particularism, and seek more of the latter, especially developmental and distributional benefits. The liberal autonomists challenge the existing system from outside the bounds of official discourse, and are periodically silenced. The integrationists challenge it from within official bounds and are tolerated but politically sidelined for now. The socialist autonomists embody the prevailing ethnic establishment, serving to rebut critics of the current system and safeguard it from any fundamental change. They scored politically at the most

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[1]James Leibold, 'Ethnic Politics in China: Is Reform Inevitable?' *Policy Studies No.68* (Honolulu: East-West Center, 2013).

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recent party conference on ethnic affairs, in September 2014, where Xi Jinping called on those who wanted to discard the current system of ethnic governance to 'rest.'[2] It was not so veiled a rebuke of the integrationists' reform platform.

Scholarly perspectives

Western studies generally have a negative assessment of the Chinese system of ethnic governance. They point to the large discrepancy between the promise of autonomy and the realities, including a lack of checks against state intrusion on autonomy, subordination to state interests, presence of less autonomy than in regular provinces, and a nearly complete lack of independence of action.[3] At the very least, limits on autonomy result from a complex system of formal and informal incentives.[4] Even those who regard China's ethnic policy as overall successful concede that there are various constraints on autonomy.[5]

Studies on Soviet ethno-federalism shed light on the socialist system of ethnic governance more generally. Philip Roeder defines ethno-federalism as a federal political system under which component territorial governance units are intentionally associated with the most important ethnic groups in them. In the Soviet case, each of its 14 ethno-federal republics was a sovereign Soviet socialist state accorded with a full range of corresponding rights. At the Union level, the USSR was a highly centralized party-state, with all republics subordinated to it. A hierarchy of party organizations existed alongside the state administrative ones, allowing the Politburo to exercise control over the republics. The state hierarchy received directions and personnel appointments from the parallel party hierarchy.[6]

Does political centralization render ethno-federalism meaningless? Roeder and other scholars of Soviet ethno-federalism argue otherwise.[7] First, the official recognition accorded to the titular nationalities, reinforced by language and cultural rights, has unintended consequences for ethnic mobilization, by providing tools for entrenching and activating national identities. Secondly, the structures of autonomy provide distinct political marketplaces for developing institutional interests at the ethno-regional level. Finally, ethno-regional units provide territorial bases for the emergence of distinctive regional elites, rooted in the titular nationalities. In China's case, Henry Hale characterizes its autonomous system as possessing 'latent' or 'nascent' ethno-federalism, like other multinational states that were influenced by the Soviet model.[8]

Socialist ethno-federalism, scholars further note, was conducive to particularistic and centrifugal tendencies. First, it had the effect of strengthening ethnic differences and providing resources for

[2]These words appeared in Xi's speech at the 6th CCP Conference on Minority Work in September 2014. See '取消民族区域自治制度这种说法可以休矣'('Remarks about discarding the autonomous system can now rest'), *Zhongguo minzu bao* (5 December 2014), available at: http://www.seac.gov.cn/art/2014/12/5/art_8017_220679.html. (accessed 8 May 2016).

[3]Gardner Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Michael Dillon, *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Far Northwest* (London: Routeledge Curzon, 2004); Frederick S. Starr, *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Armonk; NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2004); Justin J. Stein, 'Taking the Deliberative Turn in China: International Law, Minority Rights and the Case of Xinjiang', *Journal of Public and International Affairs* 14 (2003), pp. 13–14; Thomas Heberer, *China and the National Minorities: Autonomy or Assimilation?* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1989); Xu Mingxu, 'Complete autonomy: The best approach to peaceful resolution of the Tibet problem', *Journal of Contemporary China* 7(8) (1998), pp. 369–378.

[4]Ben Hillman, 'Unrest in Tibet and the Limits of Regional Autonomy', in Hillman, Ben and Gary Tuttle eds. *Ethnic Conflict and Protests in Tibet and Xinjiang*, (New York: Columbia University, 2016).

[5]Colin Mackerras, *China's Minorities: Integration and Modernization in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Barry Sautman, 'Ethnic Law and Minority Rights in China: Progress and Constraints', *Law & Policy* 21(3) (1999), pp. 283–314; Barry Sautman',Scaling back minority rights? The debate about China's ethnic policies', *Stanford Journal of International Law* 46(1) (2010), pp. 51–120.

[6]Philip Roeder, 'Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization', *World Politics* 43(02) (1991), pp. 233–256.

[7]Roeder, ibid. Carol Skalnik Leff, 'Democratization and Disintegration in Multinational States', *World Politics*. 51(02) (1999), pp. 205–235; Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and Destruction of Socialism and the State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999). See also fn. 10 and 11.

[8]Henry E. Hale, 'Divided We Stand: Institutional Sources of Ethnofederal State Survival and Collapse', *World Politics* 56(2) (2004), pp. 167.

political entrepreneurs to play the 'nationality card.' The federal structures of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia 'worked to build nations, along with proto-states at the republic level.'[9] Soviet policies led to 'the consolidation of ethnicity rather than to its disappearance,' so that 'rather than a melting pot, the Soviet Union became an incubator of new nations.' Thus the 'making nation' approach, rather than the 'sleeping beauty' frame, explains the breakup of the Soviet Union.[10] It was a revenge of 'ethnic particularism' promoted by the USSR itself.[11]

Secondly, Soviet-type ethno-federalism differed from other federal states in the political recognition of ethno-territorial identities. In a federal state with a homogenous population or a complex mixed society, federal structures afford neither a clear ethnic territorial base nor a concept of ethnic-regional identity.[12] The territorial base is crucial because it provided the 'geographical concentration of the nation as a prime facilitator of the development of group solidarity,' whereas 'in the absence of federalism, geographically concentrated minorities seem to be less prone to either want to leave the state or, if that is desired, to succeed in doing so.'[13] In short, Soviet-type ethno-federalism attempts to achieve ethnic autonomy and equality, *not through mechanisms of political autonomy*, but through institutionalization of ethnic and geographical markers, with politicizing consequences.

The above scholarly perspectives provide theoretical insights to situate the current debates in China. The liberal autonomists echo the western critiques of deficient autonomy in the Chinese system. The integrationists share the critical insights on the ethnicizing dynamics of Soviet-type ethno-federalism. The socialist autonomists embody the particularistic interests pinpointed in the western analyses of Soviet ethno-federalism. The rest of the paper will briefly introduce China's system of ethnic governance, then contrast and assess the contending Chinese debates about it and, conclude by discussing prospects for reform. The paper draws on Chinese media and academic sources, field trips in several minority regions and conversations with some key players in the Chinese debates between 2012 and early 2018.

The system of ethnic governance

China's system of ethnic governance was created from territories with a higher concentration of a particular ethnic group and varying historical relations with the central state. Known as the autonomous region (AR), the first was established in Inner Mongolia in 1947 as a political compromise to dissuade local secessionists, 2 years before the founding of the PRC itself. Xinjiang, a province since 1884, came next in 1955 with Uighurs as the titular ethnic group. Guangxi, a province since the 13th century, became an AR for the Zhuang in 1958. Ningxia, a province from the Republican era where the Huis were concentrated in a number of counties, was named an AR for the Hui in 1958. Finally, the historical Ü-Tsang, not a formal province before, became the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in 1965, 6 years after the flight of the Dalai Lama. During the Mao era, the new system rallied the ethnic masses around the CCP through social class universalism and the redistributive state, though it suffered setbacks during the radical years of the Mao era.

The AR system has been restored and enhanced in the post-Mao era. The Law on Autonomy of Ethnic Regions (LAER), adopted in 1984, has made autonomous status and minority policies a legal requirement. Many communities with little distinction from the Han majority, such as the Manchu and Tujia, secured an autonomous status in the early post-Mao era. 43.3% of the autonomous

[9]Bunce, *Subversive Institutions*, pp.136–139.
[10]Ronald Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism. Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford. CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 87.
[11]Yuri Slezkine, 'The USSR as a Communist Apartment or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism', *Slavic Review* 53(2) (1994), pp. 414–452.
[12]Leff, 'Democratization and Disintegration', p. 210.
[13]Bunce, *Subversive Institutions*, p. 138.

counties that now exist in China, or 52 out of 120, were created in the post-Mao period. Preferential policies also motivated millions of people to change their ethnic status from Han to a minority category.[14] The LAER was updated in 2001 to grant more developmental prerogatives for minority regions.

Statutorily, the ARs are given more rights than their provincial counterparts. Those rights – legislative, administrative, economic and fiscal – also compare well with two of China's three other governance units that are accorded legislative powers: the 18 'major cities' and the Special Economic Zones. This leaves the Special Administrative Region (SAR), or Hong Kong and Macao, as the only territorial unit with greater autonomy than the ARs. The SARs have far more macro-level power in choosing their own political systems and laws. By contrast, the autonomy of the ARs lies largely in local flexibility to interpret, adapt and apply central laws and policies.[15]

In reality, different ethnic groups and members may feel differently about the efficacy of ethnic autonomy. Two broad categories may be differentiated: the historically 'cultivated' (*shufan*) territories in the inner peripheries and the 'uncultivated' (*shengfan*) lands in the outer peripheries. The former encompasses ethnic areas in the southwest, northwest and northeast, better integrated with interior regions geographically, historically and culturally; while the latter includes the TAR, Xinjiang and to some extent Inner Mongolia, which are more distant from interior provinces geographically, historically and culturally. In the Chinese debates, the liberal autonomists usually assess ethnic governance in reference to the outer peripheral regions, while the socialist autonomists usually do so from the viewpoint of inner peripheral regions. The integrationists disparage the particularism of all groups.

Three contending schools

Liberal autonomists

What this paper refers to as 'liberal autonomists' focus on the core institutional issue in the AR system: the distribution of authority between the central state and the local. They reject a tradeoff between autonomy and ethnic particularism, or a compromise of the former, although they do not forsake the latter. Their critique of the autonomous system echoes the scholarly literature on the structural limits of Soviet ethno-federalism, namely, political centralization renders the formal system of ethnic autonomy meaningless. Needless to say, this view is politically untenable in China's political context.

Liberal autonomists are influential in the sense of being the most – or the only – robust critique of the current system outside the bounds of official discourse. For the most outspoken among them, their works may be formally restricted but available through private channels, and their views are well known to ethnic studies circles within China. Occasionally their views were solicited by authorities, as in the case of Ilham Tohti,[16] a Uighur lecturer formerly at the Minzu University of China. Another leading representative is Wang Lixiong, an independent scholar and dissident writer. Considered as security threats by authorities, their views and activities are treated as politically subversive or separatist. Tohti was briefly detained after the Urumqi riots of July 2009. The website he founded in 2006, *Uighurbiz.net*, was blamed for spreading rumors that helped to incite the riots. In 2014, he was sentenced to life in prison on separatism related charges. Wang was imprisoned in 1999 for a violation related to his Xinjiang research and has faced house arrest during times of sensitive events in China. Among moderate liberal autonomists, Zhang Haiyang's

[14]Hao Shiyuan Hao and Wang Xi'en, eds., *中国民族发展报告: 2001–2006* (*Report on Ethnic Development in China*) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2006), pp. 214–216.

[15]Huang Wei, '民族自治地方政府与其他地方政府行政权力的比较研究' ('A comparative analysis of the administrative powers of autonomous and regular local governments'), *Minzu yanjiu* 3 (2008), pp. 1–10.

[16]Ilham Tohti wrote this internal report for authorities, dated 2011:'新疆目前种族问题及建议' ('Ethnic problems in Xinjiang at present and some suggestions'), available at: http://weibo.com/daxianggonghui. (accessed 4 March 2014).

critical views on autonomy appeared on *www.21ccom.net*, a popular liberal website that was closed down since late 2016, while He Fang's have appeared on *www.hybsl.cn*, a website devoted to Hu Yaobang's legacy. Zhang is a professor at Minzu University of China and He Fang is a rehabilitated official who headed the Japan Institute at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in the 1980s.

Liberal autonomists see three major institutional barriers to ethnic autonomy. First, the centralized leadership of the communist party leaves little parity for autonomous units. Since this political structure has not fundamentally changed in the post-Mao era, it remains an inherent hinderance. In He Fang's analysis, the party secretary of the AR is appointed by and responsible to the central party hierarchy, rather than the minority residents below; he must follow all commands of the central party, and his commands must be followed in turn by the party hierarchy below him.[17] Zhang Haiyang fiercely supports this assessment, while blasting the integrationists for placing political centralization above autonomy.[18] Citing the party's leadership as well, Wang Lixiong dismisses the autonomous system in the TAR and Xinjiang as 'pseudo-autonomy.'[19]

Secondly, the primacy of the party's official ideology constrains alternative belief systems, especially for minority communities with core religious traditions. The key barrier is blamed on the codification of Marxism into the Chinese Constitution, which contradicts the idea of freedom of religion in the same constitution.[20] Official atheism, Tohti argues, has dealt 'major blows' to the Uighur culture and religion.[21] In defense of Hu Yaobang's rehabilitation of former religious elites in the early post-Mao era, He Fang criticizes the party's earlier rush to rid off the vestiges of the old society and to treat lamas and imams – revered by their co-ethnic disciples as divine – as 'parasites' to be reformed.[22] He Fang is a strong critic of the Mao era because of his personal experience: he regards his betrayal of his superior, Zhang Wentian, during the Cultural Revolution as coerced and one of the two biggest mistakes in his life.[23]

Thirdly, the party's monopoly of official appointment is a major constraint on autonomy, especially in the appointment of Han cadre to the top official post. That is, the party secretary at various levels of the party-state hierarchy. A problem particularly in the TAR and Xinjiang, this arrangement contributes to a 'double jeopardy' in Tohti's words.[24] That is, the party secretary is not only the most powerful official but also an individual of Han descent. Because the party prevails over the state, this individual's power can constrain the ethnic member who serves in the top state office at the parallel level. The latter always comes from the titular minority group, as required by the LAER.

The sources of this double jeopardy are in much contention. A key target of blame is a lack of trust in minority officials, mainly of the outer peripheral regions. Liberal autonomists complain that just two titular minority members had served as the provincial-level party secretary in ARs, namely Ulanfu in Inner Mongolia (1954–1966) and Säypidin Äzizi in Xinjiang (1972–1978).[25] However, if we include inner peripheral regions, Yang Jingren (a Hui) served in that position in Ningxia and Wei Guoqing (a Zhuang) did so in Guangxi. Wei also served in the top party post in Guangdong in the 1970s. Significantly, these appointments were all in the Mao era.

[17]He Fang, '胡耀邦与民族区域自治' ('Hu Yaobang and Autonomous Regions'), *Aisixiang*, 24 August 2009, available at: http://www.aisixiang.com/data/29752.html. (accessed 16 July 2016).

[18]Hao Shiyuan, Zhang Haiyang, and Ma Rong, '建立新型的族群关系' ('Building a new type of ethnic relations') *Lingdaozhe* 53 (2013), pp.79–100; Zhang, Haiyang, '民族问题的根子在哪里？' ("What is the root of the ethnic problem?") *Gongshi wang* (16 August 2014), available at: http://www.21ccom.net/articles/china/ggzl/20140816111352_2.html. (accessed 11 June 2014).

[19]Wang Lixiong, *天葬 (Celestial Burial)* (Hong Kong: Mingjing chubanshe, 1998).

[20]He, '胡耀邦' ('Hu Yaobang').

[21]Ilham Tohti, '中国的民族政策不需要反思吗?' ('Should we not reassess China's ethnic policy?'), *Uighurbiz* (12 November 2009), www.uighurbiz.net. (accessed 2 May 2012).

[22]He, '胡耀邦' (Hu Yaobang).

[23]He Fang, '秘书何方：揭发张闻天，我至今无法解脱' ('I cannot forgive myself for exposing Zhang Wentian'), *Renmin wang* (14 April 2012), available at: http://dangshi.people.com.cn/GB/17694051.html. (accessed 15 June 2015).

[24]Tohti, '中国的民族政策' ('China's ethnic policy?').

[25]Conversations at Minzu University of China, Fall 2013.

In the post-Mao era, just two minority members had served briefly at the helm in ARs. They were Wu Jinghua in the TAR (1985–1988) and Tömür Dawamät in Xinjiang (1984–1985). Wu, a Yi ethnic, was not a titular member or a native of the TAR. Two other minority members have served in the top party post at the provincial level in the post-Mao era, but in regular provinces. Other liberal-minded critics, however, blame the rise of identity politics for the dearth of titular minority officials at the helm in the post-Mao era. The bond of social class alliance, the argument goes, contributed to the CCP's faith in minority officials at the helm during the Mao era. Yao Xinyong, a Han scholar born and raised in Xinjiang, attributes that faith to Mao's confidence in the loyalty of minority officials and regions.[26] That confidence, older minority scholars concur, came from trust built during the revolutionary years.[27] By contrast, the identity politics promoted in post-Mao China weakens social class universalism and elevates ethnic markers, and along with that, likely the regime's trust in minority officials in sensitive regions.

Indeed, the 'trust' issue seems more acutely felt in Xinjiang and to some extent the TAR. In an internal report written for higher authorities in 2011, Tohti complains that within Xinjiang, few Uighur officials hold high-level offices in the more powerful state agencies or in state enterprises. At the national level, he laments the size of Uighur presence relative to other ethnic groups in the top political institutions.[28] Even a moderate scholar, Turgunjun Tursun, formerly of the Xinjiang academy of social sciences and now a professor in Zhejiang, sees the 'trust' issue as the greater hurdle. This is despite of his acknowledgement that major progress has been in minority appointment, including the dominance of titular ethnic members in the top positions of executive, legislative, judicial and prosecutorial branches in all autonomous prefectures and counties in Xinjiang.[29] These complaints seem to have been confirmed by Zhang Chunxian's campaign to promote Uighur party secretaries. Zhang, who became Xinjiang's party secretary after the Urumqi riots of 2009, was reportedly surprised to see the small number of Uighurs present at the meetings he held with ranking officials when he first assumed office there.[30] Nevertheless, local Han residents tend to blame gaps in skills, citing that Uighurs' officials have difficulty writing 'good reports in Chinese' and need to rely on their Han staff.

This 'technical' explanation finds some support in the TAR's case, the other culturally distinct AR. Here Beijing can draw on a good supply of Mandarin speaking and educated Tibetans from Tibetan regions outside the TAR to serve in the top posts. Out of nearly 80 administrative units at the county, municipal and prefectural levels in the TAR, a Tibetan holds the top post of the party secretary in over a quarter of them, including Lhasa. As of July 2013, a Tibetan served in the top party post in five of the seven prefecture-level administrations.[31] Below the county level, the Tibetan presence at the helm is even more common, thanks to a lack of longtime Han residents and a lack of unrest beyond monasteries. There are few if any Han officials in the township and village levels. A few civil servants with mixed Han-Tibetan parentage may be present, but they are usually eager to leave when opportunities arise.

In other ARs, ethnic imbalance in top political appointments is not a distinct problem. This is even true of Inner Mongolia and the Yanbian Korean Prefecture, two regions that face highly nationalistic co-ethnics across the borders.[32] In Inner Mongolia, individual credentials matter more

[26]Yao Xinyong, "似是而非的'民族干部一把手缺失论' ('The dubious idea of a shortage of minorities in top offices'), *Yao Xinyong weibo* (18 January 2012), available at: http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_60f25ed70102dw9y.html. (accessed 13 August 2013).

[27]Hao Shiyuan, Q and A session at Conference on Tibetan Studies, Renmin University, Beijing, July 2010.

[28]Tohti, '中国的民族政策?' ('China's ethnic policy?') .

[29]Turgunjun Tursun, '少数民族为何难以担任一把手'('Why is it difficult for minorities to become the top office holder?'), *Yao Xinyong weibo* (18 January 2012), available at: http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_60f25ed70102dw9y.html. (accessed 13 August 2013).

[30]Conversations with three staff members of a prefectural government in southern Xinjiang.

[31]'西藏各地市书记、市长(行署专员)名单+ 简历'('Names and resumes of party secretaries and chief executives at prefectural and municipal levels in the TAR'), *Zhongguo jingji wang*. Last modified (21 July 2017), available at: http://district.ce.cn/zt/rwk/sf/xz/ds/201206/15/t20120615_23410337.shtml.

[32]Conversations with two scholars of Mongol descent, Beijing and field observations and conversations in Yanbian, Fall 2013.

in political and bureaucratic promotions while ethnicity does not usually arise an issue. In Yanbian, party and state agencies are dominated by ethnic Koreans and most of the prefecture's party secretaries have been ethnic Koreans. In encounters at Yanbian University, it was the Han faculty members who complained about discrimination. Needless to say, in these two regions, physical and religious differences between the Han and local minorities are negligible, in contrast to the situation in Xinjiang or the TAR.

Liberal-minded Han scholars, however, question the preference for ethnic quotas implicit in the arguments of Tohti and Tursun. They suggest that criticisms of ethnic imbalance miss the real issue. What many Uighurs object to is not so much the undemocratic and arbitrary nature of the current system of power wielding. Rather, they simply ask for a quota-based distribution of power in the existing political structure. Even if Uighurs were to hold the top party offices at all levels, the Uighur people will not necessarily be better served.[33] The implication here is that bureaucratic corruption and indifference afflict Han as well as minority ranks in the officialdom. This point is valid but perhaps unfair, since Uighur scholars may feel more constrained to criticize the deeper problems of China's political system.

The liberal autonomists contribute to the Chinese debate by highlighting the structural barriers to autonomy and linking these to the Chinese political system. They articulate what critically minded minority members feel, especially those from outer peripheral regions. Their voices serve as a powerful reminder that all things are not harmonious. However, the liberal autonomists avoid discussing the other end of the tradeoff in China's ethnic governance, ethnic particularism. Thus they are not entirely impartial or realistic.

The integrationists

The integrationists are primarily concerned with the ethnicizing effects of the autonomous system, echoing the key insights from scholarly analyses of Soviet ethno-federalism. Those effects are such, they argue, that they make up the reality of ethnic autonomy in China. That is, an institutionalization of ethnic and ethno-territorial identities through preferential policies. The integrationists present a critique that resonates with the general public. Its national orientation has put both authorities and the minority establishment on the defensive. Xi Jinping's public rebuke in 2014 attested to the potency of its perspective. Its nationalistic stance makes the integrationists politically safe, if sidelined for now.

The integrationists sub-divide into two groups. The liberal variant, represented by the Hui scholar Ma Rong of Beijing University, emphasizes equal citizen rights and a civic rather than ethnic identity. Ma's educational background in America leads him to advocate the American model of multiculturalism and the melting pot. The statist variant, represented by Hu Angang and Zhu Weiqun, emphasizes state rights and interests. Hu is a public intellectual and a professor at Qinghua University, while Zhu is a former deputy head of the CCP's Department of United Front and now director of the Committee on Ethnic and Religious Affairs in the CPPCC. Integrationist views are also common among scholars of frontier studies and Han residents in both minority and interior regions.

The liberal integrationists question the legitimacy and suitability of the autonomous system for China by attributing it to the Soviet theory and practice of ethno-federalism. Ma Rong started a national debate with this argument in an article in 2004. It argues that Stalin's ill conception of ethnic groups as 'nations with national rights' remains dominant in China, serving as the basis of an entire academic discipline as well as official theory and policy.[34] Guan Kai, a Manchu scholar at the Minzu University of China and a former student of Ma, agrees. Confined by Stalin's theory, he

[33]Yao, '似是而非' ('The dubious idea').
[34]Ma Rong, "理解族群关系的新思路" ('New thinking in understanding ethnic relations'), *Beijing daxue xuebao* 6 (2004), pp. 122–123.

argues, ethnicity is essentialized in China's public and policy discourse, with ethnicity taken as primordial, unchanging and an object of separate public policy. It is thus ironic that a system designed to achieve national integration has now become a centrifugal force.[35] Guan cites the re-politicization of his own Manchu group as the latest example of ethnic movements driven by the desire to qualify for preferential policies.

Integrationists are particularly critical of preferential policies for enhancing ethnic identities. They question why ethnicity itself should be a unit of special government treatment and why this service should be supplied to all minority members regardless of socio-economic conditions. They argue that preferential policies have simply become social capital, instrumentally used in intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic competition for scarce public goods.[36] The argument resonates with the general public, as a frequent Han complaint across the country is that minority students in urban areas benefit unfairly from preferential policies in college admissions, since they go to the same schools as everyone else but receive extra points for their ethnic status.

Integrationists, liberal or statist, endorse the official discourse of national unity and economic development. Ma Rong is explicit about defending what he sees as the larger public interest. Ma's extensive field research and solid scholarship make him well respected and often difficult to refute. In a three-way debate organized by the independent magazine *Lingdao Zhe*, he faced the Mongol scholar Hao Shiyuan from the left and the liberal Han scholar Zhang Haiyang from the right. Ma handily overwhelmed both.[37] An entire book has been devoted to debating his views, with Ma taking on a host of established Chinese ethnologists.[38] Ma is also singled out for criticism by Tohti for negating the autonomous system. Ma's views make him a lightning rod in academic and policy debates, shunned by some conference organizers and college campuses as a speaker, for fear of alienating some minority members. He cites just two scholars who openly endorse his views, though many may share his views in private. Debates between Ma and defenders of the autonomous system can get so intense that they are said to bang on the conference table sometimes.

Rather than ideal autonomy, integrationists assess autonomy rights on the basis of what happens on the ground. In mundane issues that impact people's lives directly, Ma argues, those rights are real and politicizing: preferential policies in school admissions, family planning, personnel matters, language and education, law enforcement and social policies.[39] Here local governments have decision power over important practical issues. The following case is illustrative. The local government in the Yanbian Korean prefecture allocates 50% more funding per student to local Korean ethnic schools than to Han schools. The rationale is that because the student body is shrinking in many Korean schools, due to emigration to South Korea and urban centers in China, their overall funding has shrunk. Hence ethnic Korean schools need a higher allocation of state funds in per capita terms. One Korean school has fewer students than the 40 plus faculty and staff members that remain on the payroll. Integrationists see such policy as a substantive exercise of autonomy rights.[40]

As for the appointment of Han officials to the top official posts in ARs, integrationists blame precisely the ethnicized appointment process. No legal statute mandates that Han officials serve as the party secretary at any level of an AR, Ma argue. Rather, because the LAER requires that

[35]Guan Kai, "满族民族性:帝国时代的政治化结构与后帝国时代的去政治化结构" ("The Manchus' ethnicity: politicization under the imperial system and de-politicization after its demise"), *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 8 (2011), pp. 179–188; Guan Kai, '中国民族政策:不变的话语与变化的实践' (China's ethnic policy: unchanging discourse and changing realities'), *Wenhua zongheng* 6 (2013), pp. 26–33.

[36]Guan, '中国民族政策' ('China's ethnic policy').

[37]Hao et al., '建设新型' ('Building a new type').

[38]Xie Lizhong, ed., *理解民族关系新思路: 少数民族问题的去政治化(New thinking for understanding ethnic relations*: de-*politicization of ethnic issues*) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2010).

[39]Ma Rong has written extensively on these issues. Discussion of his views in this paper largely uses the author's conversations and electronic communications with him during the past few years. His representative articles are collected at http://www.aisixiang.com/data/69296-2.html (accessed 12 June 2017).

[40]Author field observation and conversations, Fall 2013.

members of the titular ethnic group serve in the top executive positions at all levels of the local government, a member of a different ethnicity is usually appointed to the top party post for political and ethnic balance. But the placement of Han officials to the top party posts, Ma argues, does not automatically curtail autonomy. On the contrary, Han officials often defer to ethnic interests so as to avoid perceived Han chauvinism. Yao Xinyong, usually more liberal-minded than Ma, concurs on this point. Mindful of the rise of identity politics in the reform era, he points to legitimate concerns about ethnic particularism, arguing that it is preferable to have at the top someone who is above particularistic interests and accepted by all ethnic groups.[41]

Integrationists also blame the appointment of Han officials at the top on the autonomous system itself. Such appointment is called for, they argue, because non-titular minority groups often resent the titular group for its numeric dominance in the local political process. That is, the titular group has more weight in making ethnically based allotment of public resources, which affects the daily life of other minority groups and fuels conflict over who gets what. For example, membership in Xinjiang's legislature is allocated according to the size of the 13 local ethnic groups, allowing the titular group to prevail usually in the design and implementation of local policies. In language policy, Uighur is dictated as the language of instruction in most ethnic schools. However, Kazakh, Tajik, Kyrgyz and other small minorities prefer the nationally used Mandarin, but they have little power to overrule the titular majority. The appointment of Han officials at the top is said to help maintain a balance of power among the disparate groups. This argument, of course, can be easily turned around: as the largest ethnic group in China, the Han majority gets to decide the hegemony of Mandarin.

Another practice that irks the integrationists is the quota system in appointment and promotion decisions in the public sectors of ARs. This system can disadvantage qualified individuals from small and non-titular groups whose quotas are few and easily used up. A case from a college in Urumqi is frequently cited as a good example. Here a well-qualified minority scholar was a candidate for the college's vice presidency, but the position required a member of the titular group, Uighur. Although of Kazakh and Uighur parentage, the candidate was listed as a Kazakh in the official registry and thus disqualified for the position. He attempted to change his ethnic status to Uighur, but this upset his allies on the Kazakh side. His appointment was eventually derailed. After a long delay, an individual with lesser credentials but the titular status was appointed to the position.

Rather than seeing such compromises as politically necessary, integrationists view them as undermining meritocracy and fairness. Their point is not that minority members are less qualified, but that the minority track – in schooling, hiring and promotion – cocoons and confines them. Thus Ma Rong is a strong advocate for admitting minority students to China's top colleges, where they can be better challenged and integrated. The current system of minority colleges and the minority track, he argues, limit their personal and professional growth. However, integrationists do not question if Han appointees always meet the standard of meritocracy or fairness.

Another integrationist argument is that autonomy rights are often used or abused to serve the interests of the already privileged. In Xinjiang, Ma Rong's call for replacing the ethnic criterion with regional or economic criteria in college admissions has met with resistance from top Uighur officials. Ma argues that regional criteria would not affect the size of Uighur admissions, since Xinjiang's poor regions are populated by rural Uighurs and should thus benefit from his proposal. By contrast, the ethnic criterion favors urban Uighur children in northern Xinjiang, who go to better schools and often come from professionals' families. Preferential policies thus serve the interests of ethnic elites. Nevertheless, while the economic criterion is sensible in principle, it is likely to affect the overall number of minority students who get into top colleges.

In another example, the system of minority colleges, integrationists blame the minority establishment for misuse of autonomy rights for its vested interests. Minority colleges ill serve minority and majority students, the argument goes, by segregating ethnic studies from regular colleges and

[41]Yao, '似是而非' ('The dubious idea').

segregating the educational experiences of their student bodies. The system continues to exist and in fact expand – from 10 colleges in the Mao era to 18 at present, not because it is good for minority students, critics argue. The SEAC, apart from administrative power over minority colleges, retains a portion of the state funding allocated for the colleges. For example, the central government funds the Minzu University of China at a rate of 130% above regular colleges. The SEAC gets to keep the extra 30% for itself.[42]

The funding mechanism for the Tibetan and Xinjiang boarding classes is another example. The program recruits the best Tibetan and Uighur students to attend high schools in interior provinces for a better education. However, rather than placing them in regular classes in their new schools, ethnic students are grouped together in separate classes. This arrangement is blamed on the politics of funding. In the case of Tibet, its provincial educational bureau receives no funding from the central government if Tibetan students are placed in a regular class in a boarding school, but would receive ¥10,000 per student if they are placed in a minority only class. The bureaucratic incentives are similar for Xinjiang. Integrationists worry about the psychological impact of the separate classes, arguing that social isolation will enhance ethnic identity among the insulated students rather than integrating them.

The integrationists' critique of identity politics is most vividly illustrated by the fate of a tiny ethnic group, the Bonans. When first designated a 'nationality' in 1952, the Bonans had about 4000 people and loosely identified with the Hui Muslims. With a population of about 8000 in 1981, they earned a titular status in a newly created autonomous county, the *Bonan, Dongxiang and Salar Autonomous County*. That titular order has entitled the Bonans to more preferential policies than the other two titular groups in the county. All three groups, in turn, qualify for more state benefits than the Huis with whom they used to be associated, since the Huis are not a titular minority in this county. All four groups are Muslims and use the Chinese language. Two decades later, the titular status has transformed the Bonans' identities, personal choices and life chances, according to Jian Zhixiang, a Hui scholar at the Minzu University of China and a northwestern native herself.[43] Her field interviews reveal strategic choices by individuals to select the ethnicity of their marriage partners and children so as to maximize chances of qualifying for preferential policies, from college admissions to public sector jobs and public offices.

Ultimately, integrationists worry about the politicizing effects of the autonomous system because of what happened to the Soviet Union. Pondering China's vulnerabilities to separatism, Ma argues that this system has nurtured similar institutional conditions in China for separatism: ethno-national identities, ethno-territorial units and ethnic elites as representatives of particularistic group interests. These factors provide ideological and political foundations for politicizing socio-economic and cultural issues, he argues, with potential for ethnic mobilization and violence. Politicized ethnic discontent, in turn, causes over-vigilance and over-reaction on the part of the state, delaying proper solutions to everyday problems and feeding a vicious cycle that breeds separatism.[44] The autonomous system, in this argument, is inherently destabilizing.

The integrationists contribute to the Chinese debate by putting official policy on the defensive and challenging the minority establishment to rise above particularistic interests. They articulate what many ordinary Han Chinese feel about preferential policies, but also what older minority members like Ma himself worry about the divisive role of identity politics in post-Mao China. Nevertheless, the integrationists are no less partial than the liberal autonomists. Much as the

[42]Conversations with Ma Rong, a Tibetan official of the CCP United Front Department and a minority official of the SEAC, Beijing, Fall 2013.

[43]Jian Zhixiang, *族群归属 的自我认定与社会定义* ("*Zuqun guishu* de *ziwo rending yu shehui dingyi*) (Beijing: Minzhu chubanshe, 2006).

[44]Ma Rong, '21世纪中国是否存在国家分裂的风险 (上)' ('Is China vulnerable to separatism in the 21st century?' [Part 1]) *Lingdaozhe*, 38 (Febrary 2011), pp. 88–108 and Ma Rong, '21世纪中国是否存在国家分裂的风险 (下)' ('Is China vulnerable to separatism in the 21st century?' [Part 2]) *Lingdaozhe* 39 (April 2011), pp.72–85.

liberals avoid discussing the problems of ethnic particularism while blasting limited autonomy, the integrationists evade the problem of limited autonomy while attacking ethnic prerogatives.

The socialist autonomists

Between the two groups above are the 'socialist autonomists,' who accept the grand bargain of compromised autonomy and ethnic prerogatives. Representing the mainstream minority voices, their spokesmen occupy the three pillars of ethnic policy thinking in China, which form the institutional base of their influence: the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology (IEA) at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Research Center at the State Ethnic Affairs Commissions (SEAC) and the Minzu University of China. Representatives of this group include Hao Shiyuan, a Mongol ethnologist at IEA; Ming Hao, a researcher and official of Korean descent at the SEAC; and Jin Binghao, a professor of Marxist ethnic theory at the Minzu University who is of Korean descent. They publish in prominent official venues and write internal policy reports, exerting the most influence on official thinking. The socialist autonomists approximate the vested elites noted in the scholarly literature on Soviet ethno-federalism.

Unconcerned about issues of an 'ethno-national' nature, socialist autonomists emphasize distributional and developmental rights, much in line with the official discourse. In conversations with minority officials and scholars about problems in ethnic regions, the most frequent words to emerge are 'economic backwardness' and 'need for development.' There seems to be little collective will to seek the type of political autonomy espoused by Tohti. Minority legislators of the NPC, China's nominal legislature, seem to genuinely embrace the bargain that autonomy entails not more political rights but more economic benefits for their homelands. This is especially true of minority officials from inner peripheral regions where issues of religious and language rights do not loom large. Such minority groups, moreover, comprise the majority of China's 55 ethnic groups, hence the bulk of minority representation in the political echelons. One legislative case is illustrative. Between three sessions of the NPC from 1988 to 1998, minority legislators put forth 32 proposals to amend the LAER. 31 amendments of them were passed in 1999. These 31 amendments fall into just three areas and all are economically related, according to the NPC's director of legislative proposals.[45] The first area, involving 75% of the 31 amendments, mandate more policy benefits for minority regions, including subsidy and investment, infrastructure and development, resource exploration and trade promotion, finance and tax relief, higher education, anti-poverty measures, environmental protection, and compensation for resource extraction and environmental damage. The second area consists of new amendments that mandate 'state responsibilities to minority regions.' This replaces the softer language of 'state guidance and assistance' in the 1984 version of the LAER. The third area contains new mandates that require regular provinces to provide partner assistance to minority regions. In other words, the 31 amendments simply ask for more carrots from the state.

Rather than challenging the autonomous system, socialist autonomists focus on practical barriers in implementing autonomy, or protection of local interests. They argue that the SEAC, the agency designed to protect minority rights and interests, has few policy or enforcement powers. For example, the NPC has its own research groups that assess legislative proposals, including those drafted by the SEAC. Their reluctance is blamed for the NPC's failure to adopt more detailed statutes on autonomy rights. At local levels, the SEAC's authority pales in comparison with regular party and state agencies. When local economic decisions are being made or developmental projects being decided, local SEAC offices are seldom if ever consulted.[46]

[45]Ao Junde, '民族区域自治法是怎么修改的' ('How was the law on ethnic autonomous regions amended?') *Zhongguo minzu* 4 (2001), pp. 4–7.
[46]Conversations with SEAC researchers, Fall 2013 and summers 2015 and 2016.

Another key barrier is attributed to competing agendas and interests at various levels of the state, especially between the central and local states. Central ministries have jurisdiction over major and strategic resources, including those in ARs. In the resource battle with the state, the LAER compromises by urging the priority of national interests (Art. 1: section 7). Taking advantage of this clause, state agencies and state corporations frequently disregard local interests in the extraction of key resources, such as petroleum, critical minerals and hydraulic power. Compensation to local regions may be low and not always delivered.[47] The prioritization of national interests does conflict with the LAER's provision that ARs may change or reject central decrees ill-suited to local conditions. But it is difficult to do so in reality. The autonomy law dictates that after a central agency receives a local request to adjust or abandon a central decree, it must reply in 60 days. But there is no provision for situations where a central agency does not approve, reply or reply in 60 days. Moreover, 60 days may be too long to stop projects opposed by local communities.

At the local level, bureaucratic incentives often create barriers for autonomy over local resources. For 'major and strategic resources,' the autonomy law allows local authorities to negotiate tax rates with companies contracted to extract them. For non-strategic resources, local authorities are given power to choose contractors and the terms of extraction. In both cases, local authorities may be motivated to accept profit-sharing arrangements that benefit the local officialdom but not local communities. For example, they often prefer tax revenues to resource sharing, because tax income helps to defray local administrative costs or deficits. Good governance funded by such income, in turn, helps to enhance local officials' political careers. These officials may also be reluctant to negotiate aggressively on behalf of local communities, for fear of alienating state agencies or deterring outside investors.[48] In their drive to attract outside investment, it is not uncommon for local officials to approve projects that have long-term adverse socioeconomic and environmental consequences. In the cases of non-strategic resources, where local officials have decision powers, an additional incentive can be at work: bribery by private developers. When these developers are from Han regions, as is often the case, local resentment over economic exploitation and environmental damage is then directed at the Han businesses, thus relieving local officials of blame.

A lack of financial independence can also curtail local agendas. The SEAC has proposed more specified statutes (*zizhi fagui*) to govern the implementation of the LAER at local levels. But these have gone nowhere. Local resources would be necessary to back up political demands for more independent actions, such as funding local industries, police forces, educational needs and so on. Party documents reveal that officials from the TAR constantly ask the central state for more financial support and more developmental projects. While giving in to the TAR, central leaders caution other ethnic regions not to emulate.[49] Such dependence on the central state makes it hard for local authorities to resist central agendas. This argument, nevertheless, does not apply well to resource rich regions such as Xinjiang or Inner Mongolia.

Apprehension about centrifugal tendencies is cited as another source of curtailed autonomy, due to over-vigilance in sensitive ethnic regions. There is far less space for religious freedom in the TAR or Xinjiang than in other ethnic regions or regular provinces. Xinjiang's campuses strictly ban any sign of the Muslim faith, which is unheard of in regular provinces. Performers can wear the hijab on stage and on TV programs in provinces outside Xinjiang, where it would be inconceivable. Academic institutions in regular provinces face few restrictions in hosting or participating in international exchanges, but those in Xinjiang or the TAR need local official approval, which is difficult to secure. Islamic schools in interior China may operate under the guise of 'language

[47]Hu Lingming,'关于修改完善民族区域自治法]的几点思考' ('Some reflections on amending "Law on Autonomy of Ethnic Regions."'), *Minzu luntan*. 22 (2011), p. 17.

[48]Gong, Zhixiang, *民族政策过程及实证分析 (Ethnic Policy Process and Its Empirical Analysis)* (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2010), p. 179.

[49]CCP Document Research Center, *西藏工作文献选编 (Selected Documents on Work on Tibet)* (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2005), pp. 470, 473.

schools,' even recruiting students from Xinjiang. But in Xinjiang, Islamic education and worship are strictly banned for those under 18 years of age.

Yet another barrier to autonomy is attributed to the Han people's patronizing attitude. From bilingual education to developmental projects to community resettlement, decisions are made for local minorities for their own good. Ming Hao of the SEAC even complains about 'Darwinism' in such official developmental drives.[50] The patronizing attitude is seen as common in the TAR and Xinjiang, the two largest recipients of state aid and investment. After the Lhasa riots of 2008 and the Urumqi riots of 2009, local officials promoted 'gratitude' campaigns to counter a seeming lack of local appreciation for state developmental efforts. This bafflement at 'ingratitude' indicates a dearth of official concern for a deeper problem. That is, when grass-roots input and participation are scarce, the massive pouring of state benefits may not earn gratitude. In fact it has left the recipient regions accustomed to state largeness. With the guarantee of state aid and preferential policies, local officials and villagers are incentivized to 'wait for, rely on and request' aid from the state and partner provinces assigned to help them. The result is a cycle of 'dependency,' in the words of Jin Wei, a scholar at the Central Party School.[51] Herein lies the dilemma for socialist autonomists: tradeoffs between autonomy and preferential policies do not come without costs.

The socialist autonomists contribute to the Chinese debate by defending the left, countering the right and the center, and upholding established policies. With their main challenge, the integrationists, publicly rebuked by Xi Jinping, they prevail politically and ideologically and safeguard the autonomous system from any fundamental change, at least for now.

Prospects for reform

The three contending schools reveal a basic agreement about China's system of ethnic governance. That is, autonomy remains defined in terms of what the state wants: substantive rights in development and distribution, rather than procedural rights in political choices and decision-making powers. The nominally procedural rights granted at local levels – by way of local legislative power – are still designed to protect the type of substantive rights defined by the state. These rights – largely developmental and distributional – are intended to serve rather than challenge the central imperatives of interethnic parity and national integration.

The three schools, meanwhile, disagree on the conception and delivery of this autonomy as well as its consequences. The liberal autonomists castigate it for lacking political rights, yet without repudiating the ethnic prerogatives in the official version of autonomy. The integrationists criticize it for politicizing ethnic identity, yet without rejecting the institutional limits on political autonomy. The prevailing minority opinion tolerates the tradeoffs between political autonomy and ethnic prerogatives, though less than fully content with the current implementation of socialist autonomy. Reform proposals, thus, have been at odds with one another as to what should be done. The liberal autonomists seek more rights in policy making and cultural spheres. The integrationists want to replace the autonomous system with the regular provincial system. The socialist autonomists prefer to preserve and improve the current system.

The debates have been meaningful as competing analyses of the sources of and solutions to the rise of ethnic unrest in the reform era. In the first few years after the Lhasa riots of 2008 and the Urumqi riots of 2009, a heightened political climate allowed the integrationist discourse to dominate in popular, media and policy forums. Ma Rong was a frequent presence at major pundit forums and his calls for enhancing bilingual education in Xinjiang helped contribute to an intense acceleration of bilingual programs in local schools during 2010 and 2011. Between 2010 and early 2014, Hu Angang and Zhu Weiqun, two leading integrationists of the statist variant, published

[50]Ming Hao,'民族"视角"呼唤与时俱进–谈当前民族研究中的热点话题' ('Enhancing and updating the 'ethnic' perspective' in contemporary ethnic studies'), *Yunnan minzu daxue xuebao*, 29(5) (2012), pp. 5–21.
[51]Jin Wei, '西藏的受援与可持续发' ('Aid to Tibet and Sustainable development'), *Xibei minzu yanjiu*, 2 (2016), pp. 5–14.

widely noted articles promoting a new generation of ethnic policy.[52] Writing in 2013, James Leibold senses an emerging consensus for reform in the direction of strengthening national integration and promoting ethnic assimilation, although he does not see radical policy change as likely.[53]

However, the momentum of the integrationists caused a major backlash among the socialist autonomists. Strongly opposed to the integrationists, the socialist autonomists launched robust counter-offensives during 2012–2014, organizing symposiums and publishing high-profile articles to rebut them.[54] In response to the nationalistic high ground of the integrationists, socialist autonomists appeal to the party's ideological platform, 'socialism with Chinese characteristics.' Socialist norms should continue to define redistributive policy on ethnic grounds, they argue, and more importantly, to justify state protection of minority members from the onslaught of the market economy. They also attack the 'melting' consequences of integrationist policies and criticize convergence as Darwinist. At the same time, even while they continue to emphasize the developmental needs of ethnic groups, socialist autonomists say nothing about greater autonomy in terms of self-governance. For the layers of the state apparatus in charge of ethnic affairs or study the subject, it is bureaucratically rational to remain socialist autonomists and politically expedient to toe the ideologically correct line. Granted, some are genuinely devoted to the idea of ethnic equality through socialist autonomy, while others are privately sympathetic to the liberal autonomists.

The ideological platform of the Xi Jinping regime since late 2012, with a commitment to the 'core value system of socialism,' has helped the socialist autonomists to triumph politically. The CCP's 6th Conference on Minority Work, held in September 2014, responded to the debate on ethnic policy by incorporating the 'socialist ethnic theory' advanced by the socialist autonomists. Xi Jinping's speech at the conference affirmed the autonomous system as the source of China's ethnic policy and pledged more developmental policies for minority regions. It pointedly refuted the assertions that the Chinese system was based on the Soviet model and that ethnic policy must be de-politicized. The conference did answer the integrationists with calls to strengthen a common national identity, but left little opening for reform in the direction of reducing ethnic particularism. With Ilham Tohti put away for life two months before the 2014 CCP minority conference and the integrationists rebuked at the conference, the socialist autonomists have prevailed ideologically and politically. Public discussion of ending the autonomous system is now off the table, if not outright banned.

A new tradeoff appears to emerge. That is, more developmental and distributional benefits but also more national integration. For the first part of the new bargain, the state has added a new grand project to its earlier Western Development initiative for minority regions: the 13th Five-Year Plan for Frontier Development and Enrichment (兴边富民). At the same time, a host of existing state developmental and assistance programs continues to intensify for these regions. For the second part of the new bargain, the state promotes identification with the 'community of the Chinese nation' (中华民族共同体). This new identity, unlike the ideas of civic nationalism and

[52]Hu Anang and Hu Lianhe,'与时俱进推动民族交融一体是国家长治久安的治本之策，'（'Changing with the times and promoting ethnic integration is the fundamental policy to ensure China's long-term stability'） *Tansuo* 5 (2011), pp. 151–155; Hu Angang and Hu Lianhe,'第二代民族政策:促进民族交融一体和繁荣一体''The second generation of ethnic policy: Promoting ethnic integration and common prosperity'), *Xinjiang daxue shifan xuebao* 32(5) (2011), pp. 1–12. Zhu Weiqun，'对当前民族领域问题的几点思考' （'Some reflections on ethnic issues in at present'）, *Xuexi shibao*, 13 February 2011 and Zhu, '民族工作中要更多强调中华民族的共同性和一致' ('More emphasis on the commonalities of the Chinese nation'), *Renmin wang*, 11 March 2015, ,available at: http://theory.people.com.cn/n/2015/0311/c40531-26674807.html. (accessed 12 March 2015)

[53]Leibold, 'Ethnic Policy in China.'

[54]E.g. Hao Shiyuan published a series of four articles in *Zhonguo Minzu Bao* in February and March of 2012 to refute proposals for a second generation of ethnic policy. See also Pei Shengyu, '坚持中国特色民族理论政策 批驳'第二代民族政策'说 – 民族理论研究热点问题学术研讨会综述' ('Uphold Chinese ethnic theory and policy and criticize proposals for a "second generation of ethnic policy:" summary of symposiums on hot topics in ethnic theory research') *Yunnan minzu daxue xuebao*, 29(3) (2012), pp. 2, 163.

equal citizenship advocated by the liberal integrationists, is based on the common 'Chinese dream' or the 'rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,' through 'shared development and prosperity.'[55] These ideas, along with another new slogan, 'interethnic unity like a family' (民族团结一家亲), harken back to the Mao era when collective interests and socialist brotherhood were emphasized.

Specific policy measures remain in flux. Locally, some changes are taking place in the direction of the integrationists' platform. Beginning in 2017, several regular provinces began to reduce or eliminate preferential policies in college admissions for minority students who live in Han areas. On 28 July 2017, Xinjiang's local legislature voted to end preferential policies in family planning for local minority members. At the national level, socialist autonomy will likely remain dominant in the foreseeable future, due both to the regime's concern with stability and to the ideological high ground and politically entrenched base of the socialist autonomists.

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[55]Song Quan, "切实铸牢中华民族共同体意识" ('Solidifying the sense of the community of the Chinese nation'), *Zhonghua minzu wang* (8 February 2018), available at: http://www.56-china.com.cn/show-case-1334.html. (accessed 2 March 2018). The author is the head of the Department of Policy and Regulations, the SEAC.

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