

## China as a Multiethnic Nation and Its Effort to Preserve National Unity

Historically China was a land of many ethnic groups, and this situation continues into the modern era. China is not alone among modern countries in having multiethnic inhabitants. According to the 2009 Chinese government's White Paper on China's ethnic minority policy, there were about 3,000 ethnic groups living in 200 countries of the world at that time. (The Information Office of the State Council, the White Paper on China's ethnic policy published in 2009, "China's Ethnic Policy and Common Prosperity and Development of All Ethnic Groups." Available at [http://www.gov.cn/english/official/2009-09/j27/content\\_1427989.htm](http://www.gov.cn/english/official/2009-09/j27/content_1427989.htm). Noted as China's white paper below.) These figures suggest that a majority of the world's countries are multiethnic.

### *Definition of Ethnicity*

Before one proceeds any further, a definition for what constitutes an ethnic group seems necessary. The term ethnicity will not be used interchangeably with race here, because ethnicity stresses cultural concerns, while race focuses on the biological aspect of a group. For the sake of simplicity, a definition of an ethnic group would generally include considerations of ancestry, a shared history, a common language and culture, and religion. Some would suggest it should also include a shared consciousness of the group's common identity. This last item introduces a subjective element. At the beginning of the PRC, the leaders of China were deeply influenced by the Soviet Union under Stalin. Those concerned with this subject adopted Stalin's definition of ethnicity or nationality (*minzu*). (Colin Mackerras, "China's Ethnic Minorities and Globalization.", Routledge Curzon, London and New York, 2003, p. 2). According to Stalin a nationality "is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture." (Ibid.)

### *Towards Setting Up Autonomous Areas for China's Ethnic Minority Groups*

Following Stalin's definition, Mao's government was the first in China that proceeded assiduously to identify officially the different ethnic groups, their native areas and the size of their population with the objective of setting up "autonomous" area for most of them. This endeavor began in 1949, before China was united, and by 1979 the PRC had recognized 55 groups of ethnic minority nationalities of various population size. According to the census in 2000, there was a total of 114 million people in China recognized as minorities, the largest group being the Zhuang nationality with 17 million people, and the smallest being the Lhoba ethnic group with 2,965. (White Paper, pp. 19-21. Ethnic Groups – China.org.cn, available at <http://www.china.org.cn/e-groups/shaoshu>. Chinese Journal of International Law, Xiaohui Wu, "From Assimilation to Autonomy: Realizing Ethnic Minority Right in China's National

Autonomous Regions.” Available at <http://chinesejil.oxfordjournals.org/content/13/1/55/full>.) These ethnic groups were scattered in areas that together covered about 60% of China’s territory. (Ethnic Groups – china.org.cn. Available at <http://www.china.org.cn/e-groups/shaoshu>.) During that period, a succession of autonomous regions had been established, starting with Inner Mongolia for the Mongols, followed by Xinjiang for the Uyghurs, and Guangxi for the Zhuangs; then came the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, and lastly the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR).(China white Paper.) In addition to these provincial level autonomous regions, 30 autonomous prefectures, 120 autonomous counties, and 1,200 autonomous townships had also been also set up to provide autonomy to a majority of China’s ethnic minorities who resided in smaller and more widely dispersed communities among the Hans. (Ibid.)

The reader should note that the majority of people in China belong to the Han nationality (*zu*). The Hans are the result of mixing of different tribal and ethnic groups during several millennia in the past. While many Hans reside in ethnic minority areas, the majority live in China’s central and eastern coastal provinces. Although their dialects vary and regional differences still remain, they share a common written language, culture and historical memories.

By contrast, the languages of China’s minorities range widely, covering four of the world’s largest language families - Sino-Tibetan, Indo-European, Turkic-Altaiic, and Austro-Asiatic. (Ibid.) While some developed highly sophisticated cultures, others lack a written language. (Ibid.) The Cultural-social organizations of the Manchus and the Zhuangs are similar to those of the Hans, while those of the Tibetans and the Uyghurs remain distinct. (Ibid.) Their religions range from the world’s major ones (Tibetan Buddhism, Islam, Catholic and Protestant Christianity) to shamanism, and tribal beliefs and practices of various kinds. The level of their political attainments, social relations and stages of economic development also vary a great deal. Some ethnic minorities such as the Mongols and Manchus had once built great empires, others retained systems of slavery or serfdom and continued with a hunter-gatherer economy into the 1950s. (Ibid.) All these different groups were to enjoy ethnic autonomy alike.

### *Unity and Security as Motive, Autonomy and Equality as Means*

Why had the leaders of the PRC been so driven to establish ethnic minority autonomous areas? From the government’s publications on ethnic minorities, the preservation of China’s national unity appears to have been the primary reason. (China’s White Paper. Ethnic Groups – china.org.cn, available at <http://www.China.org.cn/e-groups/shaoshu/>.) This is not surprising, since China had been disunited for decades, during which time the Chinese people had had to endure bloody civil wars, as well as a war of attrition against the Japanese invaders, before the Chinese Communist Party united China. Another consideration must have been security, since minority communities were often concentrated in China’s remote border regions. In order to preserve China’s national unity and to enhance the security of long stretches of its border regions, the PRC leaders saw the need to win the loyalty and cooperation of China’s minority groups. They believed the best way to do so was to pursue a policy of setting up ethnic autonomous areas, in which the minority groups had the right to govern themselves to some extent. (China White Paper.) To show their long-term commitment to this policy, the rights the minorities were to enjoy in their autonomous areas were detailed and enshrined in the PRC’s Constitution. In order to eliminate acts of oppression and discrimination against ethnic minorities, the Chinese government also

emphasized the principle of equality in their treatment. (China's White Paper.) The laws and regulation on ethnic autonomy specified three aspects of full equality. (China White Paper.)

*First*, "every ethnic group has equal political status, regardless of population size, length of history, area of residence, level of economic and social development, differences in spoken or written languages, religious beliefs, folkways and customs."

*Second*, all ethnic groups in China have "economic, social and cultural equality."

*Third*, "citizens of all ethnic groups are equal before the law, and enjoy the same rights and perform the same duties." (Ibid.) Thus, enforcing a system that endeavored to provide equality and a certain amount of autonomy to its minority groups, the CCP-led regime hoped to preempt separatism, and enable China to remain as a unified multiethnic state.

### Historical Roots

Allowing ethnic minorities to govern themselves was not an entirely new situation for China. While the Qing and earlier dynasties made no effort to identify all the ethnic groups in their realm, they had a tradition of appointing indigenous chiefs to rule non-Han peoples in their remote border regions. The establishment of ethnic autonomous areas by the PRC is an institutional innovation that had roots in traditional China.

Not being a democracy or a regime accustomed to consulting the people it governed, what kind of autonomous rights or powers for self-government had the PRC leaders conceded to their ethnic minorities? The kind of independence close to what the Tibetan exiles demanded was never in question, since the central government had retained an overriding power to govern these autonomous areas through policy formulation, selection or appointment of key officials, and enactment of laws. Secession was banned.

The following sections will be brief accounts of the laws and regulations that specified the rights and privileges possessed by the ethnic minorities and their implementation, particularly as relating to the reform era, when modernizing the economy of the autonomous areas and raising the standard of living of the ethnic minorities became a priority of the Chinese government. There will be sections on the impact of this policy on China's minorities. There will also be an assessment of the policy's success towards achieving the goals of keeping China unified and secure through winning the loyalty and supports of its ethnic minorities.

### *Laws on Self-Governing Rights and Their Implementation*

According to China's laws on ethnic autonomy, the people's congresses (the legislative branch of the PRC government), and the executive branch of the government of the autonomous regions are organs of self-government. These organs make and implement laws, and manage internal political, economic, social and cultural affairs to suit the local conditions and requirement of the ethnic groups. (China's White Paper.) However, all these have to be done under the guidance of the central government. On the matter of economic management, the local governments of the ethnic autonomous areas have the authority to supervise state enterprises, to protect and manage the use of local resources, and to initiate local infrastructure projects. In addition, the state is committed to provide financial and other assistance to all its autonomous areas.

Endeavoring to protect the political rights of the ethnic minorities, China's 1982 Constitution stipulates that the administrative head of an autonomous region shall be a member of the ethnic nationality, or a member of one of the ethnic groups exercising regional autonomy. (Xiaohui Wu, "From Assimilation to Autonomy: Realizing Ethnic Minority Rights in China's National Autonomous Regions," in *Chinese Journal of International Law*, 2014, Volume 13, Issue 1, pp. 55-90. Available at <http://chinesejil.oxfordjournals.org/content/13/1/55.full>.) The Constitution also requires the chairmanship and vice-chairmanships of the standing committee of the people's congress of an autonomous area to be a member of the ethnic group. (The White Paper) Currently, the heads of all the autonomous regions and the chairmen and vice-chairmen of the standing committees of the people's congresses of the 155 autonomous areas in China are all members of the ethnic minority groups of the regions and areas concerned. (Ibid.) At the lower levels, the minority representation on the governing bodies of an autonomous region is required to be proportional to the percentage of population of the ethnic groups in that region. (Xiaohui Wu, "Form Assimilation to Autonomy: Realizing Ethnic Minority Rights in China's National Autonomous Regions.) All adult members of minority groups are entitled to vote for deputies to various levels of the people's congresses, and to stand for elections. (The White Paper.) They also have the right to establish organs of self-government in their own areas. (Ibid.) The legislators of ethnic minority regions and areas have the right to enact regulations to suit the local conditions and the ethnic groups. (Ibid.) This provision is not just window dressing: 50% of the autonomous areas have passed special statutory provisions on natural resources, environmental protection, on foreign trade and investment, on marriage and family and so on.

The authorities of the self-governing autonomous regions have the right to administer independently the educational, scientific, cultural and public health affairs of their areas. (Xiaohui Wu, *From Assimilation to Autonomy: "Realizing Ethnic Minority Rights in China's National Autonomous Regions," Chinese Journal of International Law* (2014) 13(1): 55-90. Available at <http://chinesejil.oxfordjournals.org/content/13/1/55.full>.) In performing their functions they are required to use the common languages of the local ethnic groups. (Ibid.) During important meetings of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the state normally provides translation from Han Chinese to a number of major ethnic minority languages, such as Tibetan, Uyghur, Korean, Zhuang, Kazak, Yi, and so on. (The White Paper.) Documents from these meetings are also issued in these ethnic languages in addition to Chinese. (Ibid.) The people of the minority areas are free to use and develop their own languages, and to practice their folkways in

lifestyle, clothing, food and drinks, weddings, funerals, and festivals. (Ibid.) They are entitled to preserve their own customs and to protect their cultural heritage. (Ibid.)

In legal proceedings, citizens of all ethnic groups have the right to use their native spoken and written language. (White Paper.) In an area where a number of ethnic groups live together, the courts shall conduct hearings and issue legal documents in the spoken and written languages commonly used by the local ethnic groups. (Ibid.) Translation shall be provided for participants, who are not familiar with the relevant languages used in the court hearings. (Ibid.)

The Chinese Constitution promises freedom of religious belief to all ethnic groups on an equal footing. (White Paper.) It protects an individual from being compelled to believe, or not believe in a religion by a state organ, or a public organization, or another person. (Ibid.) Discrimination against anyone on the ground of a religious belief or lack of one is prohibited by law. (Ibid.) Normal religious practices, including those of ethnic minorities, are protected by law. (Ibid.)

However, one should not forget that during the Cultural Revolution, China's Constitution and laws were set aside by the Red Guards, who persecuted religious people and destroyed countless religious buildings and sacred objects all over China. Rather than simply allowing the policy of coercive assimilation of the ethnic groups that characterized the period of the Cultural Revolution to continue, Chinese leaders of the reform era adopted the revised 1982 Constitution and the improved 1984 Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law that committed them even more strongly to the autonomous policy that upheld the pluralism and diversity in the Chinese polity. These progressive regulations were not meant to be mere window-dressing. They represent serious efforts to implement China's Constitution and ethnic autonomy laws to make the promised rights and benefits to its millions of ethnic minorities a reality.

On the political front, the regime's drive to increase the presence of national minorities in the various levels of the National People's Congress, the people's government, and the CCP were slow to begin with, because it took a long time to educate and train minorities for jobs as government officials. As time went on, reasonable results were achieved. Between 1949 and 1990, the ethnic minority membership of the CCP increased from 700,000 to 2.8 million. (Colin Mackerras, *China's Ethnic Minority and Globalization*, p. 27.) In 1980, less than 3% of cadres (1.03 million in 1982) were ethnic minorities, but by 1990 the proportion had doubled to over 6% (2.06 million). (Ibid.) Since the regime considers the fostering of minority talents as a key to promoting the development and prosperity of the autonomous areas, it made unremitting efforts to set up institutions of higher education, and to preferentially recruit and train minority cadres to become civil servants. (White Paper.) On the matter of positions of leadership in a given autonomous area, within a system of open selection and competition, a certain ratio or percentage of these are reserved for minority cadres. (Ibid.) As regards minority representation in the NPCs, the proportions of deputies of ethnic minorities have been growing over time so as to

eventually overtake the proportions of their population in the nation's total. (Xiaohui WU, From Assimilation to Autonomy.) For example, 25 of the 161 members of the 11th NPC Standing Committee held in March 2009, were ethnic minorities (Ibid.) This represented 15.53% of the total deputies, while in 2010 total population of the ethnic minority was 8.40% of total population in China. (Wikipedia, Demographics of China. Available in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_China](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_China).) In 1990, more than half of the police and judges and most unit leaders throughout the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture were ethnic Koreans. (Colin Mackerras, p. 27.) Comparing Xinjiang during the late 1940s with that region in the 1980s, Doak Barnett, a veteran observer of China's far western region, was impressed by the much greater role played by Xinjiang's minorities in the bureaucratic leadership and as intellectual scientific elites than had been the case in the past (Ibid.) He had been reliably informed that Uyghurs in high positions were not mere figureheads; they had real influence. (Ibid.)

On matters of religion, the leaders of the reform era were ushering in a post-Communist regime, even though they still paid lip service to the Communist ideology. Repenting the damage done to religious establishments and followers of religions during the Cultural Revolution, they adopted a relatively liberal attitude towards most religions. China's traditional religions revived and expanded with a great force, including those of the ethnic minorities, filling China's spiritual vacuum from the 1980s onwards. Recognizing the important part religion played in the lives of the Buddhist Tibetans, Islamic Uyghurs, and some other ethnic minorities, the Chinese government has supported their "normal" religious activities. It subsidizes the repair of some religious buildings in minority areas, and helps minority religious groups to build seminaries to train their clergy. The government has also provided social security, medical insurance, and subsistence allowances for their clerics. In Xinjiang, there are 24,300 mosques, and 28,000 Muslim clergymen. (White Paper.) There are 1,700 temples and monasteries for Tibetan Buddhists, and 46,000 monks and nuns. (Ibid.) Prayer flags, Mani piles and Tibetan Buddhist believers are common sights in Tibetan autonomous areas (Ibid.); this author saw people actively engaged in practicing their religion in Tibet autonomous areas in Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan in 2007 and 2011. Buddhist temples and monasteries together with monks and lamas are readily found in Inner Mongolia, and in ethnic autonomous areas in Yunnan. There are regulations in many areas of China to ensure the supply of halal foodstuffs to Muslims. (Ibid.) Some ethnic minority groups practice certain popular folk religions, which the Chinese regime also tolerates. (Colin Mackerras, p. 125.)

The Chinese Communist regime, even though only nominally Communist now, still identifies itself with atheism. For this reason, the CCP members are not allowed to believe or practice a religion. Although this rule also applies to CCP members of the minorities, sometimes it has not been strictly observed. (Colin Mackerras, p. 117.) One should point out here that the concept of freedom of religion and separation of church and state are ideas developed in the West from Western historical experiences. Traditionally, the Chinese state had always taken for granted its right to exercise power to regulate and control religion beliefs and practices. Despite the forward-looking provisions in China's modern Constitution, some PRC leaders would not be constrained by them. Finding themselves challenged by the Dalai Lama, who had presided over Tibet as a previously theocratic state, and by Uyghur religious extremists, they introduced restrictive regulations. These restrictions were resented by the religious people among these minorities and criticized by the U.S. and other Westerners. Examples include the

banning of the Dalai Lama’s photographs in Tibet in 1996, and the outlawing of face veils, long beards and star-and-crescent clothing in certain cities in Xinjiang in 2015. (Timothy Grose, James Leibold, February 4, 2015, “Why China Is Banning Islamic Veils”, Reporting & Opinion, Viewpoint. Available at <http://www.chinafile.com/reporting-opinion/viewpoint/why-china-banning-islamic-veils>.) Apart from Tibetans and Uyghurs, religion was not an issue between other groups of religious minorities and the Chinese government during the reform era. (Colin Mackerras, pp. 117-124.) Some Buddhist lamas in Inner Mongolia went so far as to claim that “Deng Xiaoping’s reform policies were immensely beneficial to religion”. (Ibid., p. 123.)

In the area of education, the 10 years of Cultural Revolution had severely disrupted the normal provision of education in the entire country. The reform era enabled the leaders of China to build a less ideological system of education and set new goals for the country as a whole, including the autonomous areas. The following table shows the increasing student enrollment among the minority nationalities during the half century after the establishment of the PRC. (Colin Mackerras, p. 127.)

Table: Minority student enrolment (in thousands)

	1952	1965	1978	1994	1999
Primary education	1,474.0	5,219.0	7,686.0	11,492.01	12,142.0
Secondary education	73.0	371.8	2468.0	3,242.0	4,632.9
Tertiary education	2.7	21.9	36.03	177.9	247.7

Despite these achievements, the regime had not achieved its goal of nine years of compulsory universal education and the elimination of illiteracy among young and middle-age adults by end of the 20th century in the ethnic minority areas. (Colin Mackerras, p. 127.) During the last decade of the 20th century the Chinese government launched a number of programs, such as Project Hope, and Project Spring Buds, to encourage ordinary Chinese, especially those in the economically and educationally more advanced provinces, to help poverty-stricken children, particularly the minorities, to get basic education. (Ibid.) With further improvement in education during the 21st century, by 2008 China claims that 96.6% of counties in autonomous areas have achieved this goal. (White Paper.)

Barry Sautman, a Western scholar on China’s minorities, asserts that the policy of preferential admission of minorities to higher education “has proven to be a success in creating minority elites”, as well as “in enlarging and diversifying the minority middle class”. (Colin Mackerras., p. 128, based on Sautman 1999: 196.) His research on Xinjiang concludes that this policy had, by 1990, reduced inequality in employment in Xinjiang. (Ibid.) In addition to the privileged access to higher middle school and university education, affirmative actions to ethnic minorities also included remedial programs, reduction or exemption of school fees and other subsidies, which were not available to Han students in similar circumstances. (Ibid., p. 128.)

The Chinese government has actively supported special institutions for vocational training and development of practical occupational skills leading to special degrees in the five autonomous regions. (White Paper.) These schools and institutions are highly successful in attracting enrollment. (Ibid.)

The survival of an ethnic minority culture and identity depend crucially on the preservation of the language of the group. For this reason, a number of ethnic groups (Uyghurs, Koreans, Tibetans, and Yis) have made strong demands for regular use of their specific languages as a medium of instruction in schools. (Colin Mackerras, p. 130-131.) Living in a country with a majority group, it is also important for ethnic minorities to know the language of the majority for their professional and social advancement. Thus the Chinese state has made significant efforts to provide bilingual education to those groups interested in keeping their own language and culture besides learning Chinese. From 1965 to 1999, ethnic minority primary school teachers have grown from 133,200 (3.5% of total) to over 545,100 (9.3% of total). (Ibid., p.130.) During the same period ethnic minority secondary school teachers have grown from 14,635 (3.2% of total) to 271,400 (7.1% of total) (Ibid.) Many Western scholars have confirmed bilingual language instruction in China's autonomous regions. (Ibid., pp. 128-133.) The Mongolians are a particularly important ethnic group because of their history and culture, but many Mongolian parents, in the interest of their children's economic advancement, have chosen to send their children to Chinese schools. (Ibid., pp. 131-132.) The Mongolians are probably not alone in this respect.

### *Protection and Development of Ethnic Culture*

Rather than attempting to homogenize its diverse ethnic cultures, the Chinese regime has committed to support, protect, promote and develop the cultures of its ethnic minorities. Its efforts to train large numbers of ethnic minority teachers and to offer bilingual education to the ethnic minority children are indications of its willingness to do so. At the beginning of setting up the system for ethnic autonomy, the Chinese government discovered that, even though all ethnic minorities have a spoken language of their own, not all possess writing. (White Paper.) With a view towards helping such ethnic groups, the Chinese government established research institutions in the 1950s to create or improve their written languages. (Ibid.) As a result of this initiative, 12 ethnic groups, including the Zhuang, Bouye and Miao, used the scripts which had been created or improved for their spoken languages. (Ibid.) Now 60 million minorities (or 60% of the total) in China use their own spoken languages regularly, and 30 million regularly use their own written languages. (Ibid.) There are 154 radio and television broadcasting stations using the languages of the ethnic minorities in the ethnic autonomous areas. (Ibid.) The Central People's Broadcasting Station and local stations broadcast daily in 21 ethnic minority languages. (Ibid.) Publishing houses specializing in publications in the ethnic minority languages have more than doubled the 17 that existed in 1978, and the number of languages they use have also increased from 5 to 26. (Ibid.) To enable ethnic minority language users to enter the information age, the Chinese state has developed national standards for coded character sets, keyboards and fonts of Mongolian, Tibetan, Uyghur, Kazak, Kirgiz, Korean, Yi, Dai, and others. These have been submitted for inclusion in the international standards. (Ibid.) The "Long Cultural Corridor Construction Project in the Border Areas" during recent years aims to provide libraries, cultural centers, and radio and television coverage to



villages in the border areas. The literature, art, traditional crafts and sports, and festivals and performances of all kinds are flourishing in the autonomous regions, and are appreciated also by people in other parts of China.

The Chinese state has also devoted significant financial and personnel resources to renovate and preserve key historical sites and cultural relics, such as the Potala Palace and the Drepung Monasteries in Tibet, the Kizil Thousand Buddha Cave in Xinjiang, the Old Town of Lijiang, and the Kumbum Monastery in Qinghai. (White Paper.) An organization has been set up to collect, catalogue and preserve ancient books of China's ethnic minorities. By the end of 2008, several million titles had been collected, of which 377 ancient titles have been included in the National Catalogue of Precious Ancient Books. (Ibid.) Ethnic minority medical traditions have been considered an "important part of the treasure-house of Chinese medicine and pharmacology." Ethnic minority medicines have been developed and licensed for wider use. The state has strongly supported the establishment of medical institutions basing their treatment on using ethnic minority medicines. The regime asserts that "the cultures of China's ethnic minorities are a vital part of Chinese civilization" in the broader sense, and "are intellectual assets owned by the entire Chinese nation". (Ibid.) Its actions prove that these are not empty words.

### *Implementation of the Ethnic Minority Autonomous Policy*

In addition to giving China's minorities political autonomy, the assurance of equal treatment, and the privileges attached to certain affirmative actions, the leaders of China have made accelerated economic development of the autonomous area a priority. They have apparently come to the consensus that raising the standard of living of their ethnic minorities and providing them with tangible benefits is the key to winning their loyalty and support. (Ibid.) To stress the importance of implementing this policy, the Law of Regional Ethnic Autonomy made it a "legal obligation of the higher-level state organs to help the minority areas to accelerate their development." (Ibid.)

Because the ethnic minorities groups have mostly been settled in severely under-developed poor provinces and poverty-stricken frontier regions, they have needed an extraordinary amount of financial help and unremitting efforts to achieve rapid economic growth and significant improvements to their standard of living. To begin with, there was a desperate need for the construction of infrastructure for transportation, such as roads, railways and airports, as well as the building of postal, telegraphic and telephone communication systems in their areas, the total size of which covered over 60% of China's total territory. (Ibid.) The financial, material, and human resources for developing the minority areas were largely provided by the central government. (Ibid.) In the 1960s, a host of large industrial enterprises were moved from the coastal and other regions to the minority areas to lay the foundation of modern industry in these areas. (Ibid.) Since 1979, the state also arranged to pair up economically advanced areas to help the less developed minority areas. Examples were: Beijing to aid Inner Mongolia, Shanghai to assist Yunnan and Ningxia, and Jiangsu to support Guangxi and Xinjiang. (Ibid.) In ethnic minority areas rich in natural resources, the state made sure that these resources were processed locally to provide jobs and financial benefits for the locals. (Ibid.) The Baotou Iron based in Inner Mongolia, the

Karamay Oilfield in Xinjiang, the aluminum plant in Pingguo, and the potash fertilizer plant in Qinghai were some examples. (Ibid.) The preferential policies in connection with “Develop the West” from 2000 have brought in huge investments in fixed assets that profited the minority areas. (Ibid.) The authorities also provided compensation for the local inhabitants if resources from their area were exported for the use of other regions. (Ibid.) The prevalence of low tax rates or tax exemptions for the farmers and herders in the ethnic minorities areas resulted in the local governments being unable to cover their expenditures. The central government was therefore obliged to subsidize many local organizations in many fields, including education and poverty relief. (Ibid.)

### *Tourism*

The opening of China to foreign trade and investment in infrastructure, including its ethnic minority areas, has encouraged the development of tourism, a new service industry that has expanded in China enormously since the 1900s. In 1991, Shenzhen (a Han city in south China) set up the China Folk Culture Villages (*Zhongguo minzu wenhua cun*). This was a theme park showing people dressed in various ethnic minorities costumes, in typical ethnic villages, and doing cultural performances. (Colin Mackerras, p. 70.) Since then, many ethnic areas which were previously inaccessible to tourists have opened up to tourism. (Ibid.) Attracted by the income tourism brings, many ethnic minorities have embraced it, welcoming both Han Chinese and foreign tourists. (Ibid.) Some even turned their villages into theme parks. (Ibid., p. 71.) Over the years, millions of people from other parts of China, and a considerable number of foreigners have visited Yunnan, Guizhou, Tibet and Xinjiang, and other ethnic minority areas, bringing with them money as well as other influences to the people of these areas.

### *Economic Improvements in the Autonomous Areas*

During the last 50 years, economic and other modernizing developments have transformed China's autonomous areas. From 1952 to 2008, the collective economic production grew from 5.79 billion yuan to 3,062 billion yuan, a 92.5-fold increase calculated at comparative prices. (PRC State Council White Paper, “China's Ethnic Policy and Common Prosperity and Development of Ethnic Groups September 27, 2009”.) The urban disposable income had increased to 13,170 per capital in 2008 from 307 yuan in 1978. (Ibid.) The income of the rural farmers and herdsmen grew to 3,389 in 2008 from 138 in 1978. (Ibid.) Large government investments and World Bank aid reduced impoverished people in poverty-stricken ethnic minority areas from 45 million in 1994 to 14 million in 1999. (Colin Mackerras, p. 66.) Because there were larger proportions of ethnic minorities suffering from poverty at the beginning of the developmental drive, together with the many intrinsic disadvantages attached to their areas, they continued to suffer poverty at a higher rate in proportion to the Han population. (Colin Mackerras. pp. 66-68.) Because poverty remained a more serious problem among the ethnic minorities, a 2001 amendment to the Law of the PRC on Regional National Autonomy contained an article that required the state to provide greater support to poverty-stricken ethnic areas in the ‘financial monetary, material, technological and trained personnel fields’ with the aim of helping poor people there to ‘shake off poverty as soon as possible.’ (Colin Mackerras, p. 66.)

Having examined numerous indicators of the standard of living in China's minority areas, including measures on rural income, urban wages, healthcare provision, infrastructure and industrial development, Colin Mackerras, a well-known specialist on China's ethnic minorities, concludes that since 1990, there have been radical improvements on the standard of living of China's minorities. (Colin Mackerras 2003, pp 56-76). Notwithstanding problems, he notices the "impressive economic growth" and he states that some areas have experienced "prosperity of a kind probably never before in their history." (Colin Mackerras, p. 75.) Although poverty has not been completely eradicated, he concludes that "absolute poverty is much less widespread than it used to be." (Ibid.)

### *Environmental Protection*

Industrialization and rapid economic development have inflicted similar damages to the environment in the ethnic areas as in other parts of China. However, large parts of the TAR and XUAR with their mountains and deserts and uninhabited areas have remained unspoiled. During recent years, authorities appear to be paying more attention to the ecology in the minority areas. Since the "Development West" campaign, a series of measures such as prohibition of tree felling on the upper reaches of major rivers, returning farmland to forest and grassland, and closing hillsides for afforestation, have helped to protect the local environment. (Ibid.) As compensation for it, the state has provided grains and subsidies to farmers, herdsman and others for the loss of revenue from these measures. (Ibid.) Rewards were given to localities that have striven towards conservation and eco-balanced development. (Ibid.)

### *Income Gaps Between Minorities and the Han Majority*

Since China's ethnic minorities have largely been residing in much poorer and less developed areas, the question arises as to whether the regime's efforts to accelerate the economic development of the ethnic minority areas has been successful in reducing the income inequality between the ethnic minorities and the Han majority? We know that China transformed itself from a rigid socialist planned economy with fairly equal (but low) income distribution into a more market-oriented capitalist one with huge income and wealth disparity as reflected by its high Gini index. Besides the growing regional inequality between China's coastal provinces and its interior where most of its ethnic minorities have been living, there has also been a large urban-rural income disparity, which has been growing larger as China becomes more marketized and globalized. The per capita urban-rural ratio of income in China increased from 2.5 in 1990 to 3.1 in 2000 and then to 3.2 in 2005. (Xiaogang Wu and Gloria He, "Changing Ethnic Stratification in Contemporary China," PSC Research Reports, 14-819, May 2014, Population Studies Center, University of Michigan, Institute of Social Research. Available at <http://www.psc.isr.umich.edu/pubs/pdf/rr14-819.pdf>.) Forty-three percent of the overall income inequality in China is attributed to the urban-rural income inequality. (Ibid.) The above inequalities and the fact that there are large differences in income within the Han Chinese population as well as among the diverse ethnic minority groups themselves makes it very difficult to pin down ethnicity as the cause

for the income disparity found between the non-Han minority and the Han majority. Other factors, such as education, gender and employment sector also contribute to income inequality.

A number of scholars in the West found a significant and growing income inequality between China's minority groups and its Han majority in favor of the Han. (Margaret Maurer-Fazio, James W. Huges, and Dandan Zhang, April 2009, IZA Discussion Paper No. 4148, April 2009, available at <http://ftp.iza.org/dp4148.pdf>. Christopher Sullivan, "Ethnicity & Inequality in China", available at [http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p\\_mla\\_apa\\_research\\_citation/0/2/3/3/6/papers23364.p23364-1.php](http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/0/2/3/3/6/papers23364.p23364-1.php).) Analysis of this survey data prompts many of them to explain the inequality more in terms of regional differences rather than ethnicity, as they find that China's ethnic minorities reside disproportionately in poorer rural regions of the country. (Ibid.)

A 2014 study endeavors to find out how the ethnic minorities, as a whole and as individual groups, have fared relative to the Han majority during a quarter century of phenomenal economic growth, increasing marketization, uneven regional development, and rapid social change. In order to base their findings on the analysis of a large sample of non-Han and Han population with relevant socioeconomic data over this longish period for such studies, the researchers used the detailed information provided by the Chinese censuses from 1982 to 2000 and the mini census of 2005. (Xiaogang Wu and Gloria He, "Changing Ethnic Stratification in Contemporary China, PSC Research Report, 4-819, May 2014, available at <http://www.psc.isr.umich.edu/pubs/pdf/rr14-819.pdf>.) Their study leads them to conclude that China's ethnic minorities have an earnings disadvantage relative to the Han majority. How do they explain this situation? They note that China's ethnic groups tend to have less education and to be concentrated more in the sectors of agriculture and self-employment than the Han. During the reform era, while farmers and herders among the ethnic minorities largely remained rooted in their own areas, hordes of Han farmers migrated to the coastal provinces to take advantage of the new employment opportunities in the manufacturing industries which were transforming China's economy. (Ibid.) The more mobile Hans have improved their income, because after moving to a more developed region, they have also changed their occupation and become urbanized. By contrast, the situation of the stay-put and earth-bound ethnic minorities has remained unchanged. This is an explanation of why China's uneven development during the reform era has increased the income inequality between the non-Hans and the Hans.

Since there are large differences among the different ethnic minority groups, there have been important exceptions to the above-mentioned situation of Hans earning more than ethnic minorities, (Ibid.) The Koreans of the Yanban Korean Autonomous Prefecture have a significant earnings advantage over the Han (26.5%), and the Manchu ethnic group also enjoy a slightly higher earnings attainment over that of Han Chinese. (Ibid.) The Mongol, Bai, Hui, and Dai ethnic groups do not differ much from the Han majority in earnings. (Ibid.) The remaining 12 minority groups (Tibetan, Uyghur, Miao, Yi, Zhuang, Bouyei, Dong, Yao, Tujia, Hani, Kazak, and Li) of the total of 18 studied have much lower earnings than their Han counterparts. (Ibid.) Within the sector of government and public institutions, two of the eighteen minority groups (the Korean and Tibetan) have earned significantly more than the Han; nine

(Mongol, Manchu, Hui, Uyghur, Kazak, Dai, Bai, Dong, and Bouyi) have attained a similar earnings level as the Han, and the remaining seven have earned slightly less than the Han. (Ibid.) The state-owned enterprises have also shown a similar pattern of earnings between the different ethnic groups and the Han. (Ibid.) The minority-Han earning disparity has been larger in the private and self-employed sectors than in the public sector. The Chinese state has demonstrably played a direct role in promoting ethnic equality. (Ibid.) The weakening of government intervention in the labor market has tended to increase income inequality between the ethnic minorities and the Hans. (Ibid.) As the Chinese state retreats from the economic sphere to give more weight to the private sector and competitive labor market, the ethnic minorities are likely to face more disadvantages. (Ibid.) Aware of the existence of socioeconomic inequality between some non-Hans and the Hans, the Chinese government admits that “to achieve its goal of common prosperity of all ethnic groups, there is still a long way to go and an arduous effort is still needed.” (White Paper.)

### *Higher Rate of Minority Population Growth*

Hoping to win the hearts and minds of their minorities, the leaders of China have made them more than equal in their demographic policy. Exempting the ethnic minorities from the one-child or family policy, when the Chinese government enforced draconian measures to slow down the rate of population growth in China, was no mere tokenism. Not only were the minorities spared the suffering from the coercive methods of birth control imposed on Han women, particularly in the rural areas; their population grew at rates significantly higher than that of the Han Chinese. The following table shows how the ethnic minority population has grown as a proportion of the total population during the last five decades of the 20th century. (Colin Mackerras, *China’s Ethnic Minority and Globalization*, p. 135. His source: Economic and Development Department, 2000, p. 431

The Growth of the Ethnic Minority Population in the Five Censuses of the PRC Census

	Ethnic Minority Population	Proportion of the Total (%)
1953	34,013,782	5.89
1964	39,883,909	5.77
1982	66,434,341	6.62
1990	90,567,245	8.01
2000	106,456,300	8.41

Between the 1982 and the 1990 census, the Han population grew by 10% as against a 35% growth of the ethnic nationalities. (Xiaoxhui Wu, *From Assimilation to Autonomy: Realizing Ethnic Minority Rights in China’s National Autonomous Regions*, *Chinese Journal of International Law* (2014) 13 (1) 55-90.).

In more recent times, exhortations to limit family size, increasing education for girls and greater gender equality, together with economic modernization, have led to a preference for smaller family size among China's ethnic minorities. (Colin Mackerras, pp. 135-138.) This will translate into a slower growth rate of the ethnic minority population in due course.

The Chinese government asserts that "sixty years of experiences have proved that China's ethnic policies are correct and effective, and are in keeping with China's actual conditions and the common interests of ethnic groups, winning the support of the people of all ethnic groups." (White Paper.) This statement leaves out, of course, the fact that Tibetan and Uyghur separatists did not support the existing policies of ethnic autonomy. There have been many Western reports, by the U.S. government especially, that based their findings on the information supplied by Tibetan refugees, and by Uyghur and Mongolian exiles, who are hostile to China. These reports are usually highly critical and condemnatory of China's ethnic policy and its implementation. Fair-minded Western scholars have cautioned against the use of refugee reports on politicized situations. (Colin Mackerras, p. 138.) The treatment of ethnic minorities in China has become a politically sensitive issue between the U.S. and China. Has the Chinese policy won the support of some of China's ethnic minority groups? It is a fact that apart from the Tibetans (6.2 million in 2010) and Uyghurs (9.4 million in 2010), no other ethnic minority groups (among China's 114 million ethnic minorities in 2010) are trying to secede from China. Since the 1959 revolt that led a large number of Tibetans to India with the Dalai Lama, there has not been any significant exodus of ordinary Tibetans from China, when they were free to do so. Although some Uyghurs have left Xinjiang for Turkey or Central Asian countries, it is noteworthy that no other minority groups are attempting to leave China to seek political shelter or economic advancement elsewhere.

Between December 2007 and May 2008, a nationwide survey was carried out by Asian Barometer Survey in China. The survey aimed to make comparisons between China's ethnic minorities from three different regions (western, central, and eastern) and Han Chinese from the same regions in life satisfaction, economic well-being and political attitudes during the preceding five years. On economic well-being, all people in China felt better off than five years earlier. On life satisfaction, while all those surveyed indicated that they were "generally satisfied with their lives", the Hans were more so than non-Hans. On "happiness", only Hans and minorities in eastern regions were "relatively happy"; the rest were "not very happy." In all three regions the non-Hans scored lower than the Hans on this indicator. On political interest and political capacity, ethnic minorities in the eastern region rated, surprisingly, higher than the Hans in the same region, but the Hans rated higher than non-Hans in the other two regions. Minorities in general believe less in government's responsiveness to their needs than the Hans; however, the minorities in the eastern region only marginally so. On political trust, the eastern region minorities have the same level as the Hans, while the non-Hans in both western and central region trusted the government less than the Hans. Except for the minorities in the east coast, non-Hans and Hans in all regions would like to see more speedy reform; the non-Hans in the western regions especially so. On the question of their level of pride as Chinese, the Hans in eastern region are slightly more proud than their minority counterparts, while larger gaps exist between the Hans and the minorities in the other two regions. The differences between the non-Hans and the Hans in all the items measured were not huge. The results of the above survey showed the need for the Chinese regime to

make more effort to bridge the gaps between the two groups. However, the regime was also expected to address serious inequalities which also existed within the Han Chinese themselves.

### *Positive Responses of Various Ethnic Groups to the Autonomous System*

Besides criticisms, scholars and researchers outside China have also written about positive results of China's minority policy and how some minority groups have thrived in China. One of those are the approximate two million Koreans of the Yanban Korean Autonomous Prefecture (YKAP). (Choi Woo-Gil, *The Korean Minority in China: The Change of its Identity*, Sun Moon University, *Development and Society*, Volume 30, Number 1, June 2001, pp. 119-141.) As mentioned above, Koreans earn more on average than Han Chinese. Most Koreans support China's ethnic minority policy, and are loyal to China. (Choi Woo-Gil, "The Korean Minority in China", Sun Moon University, *Development and Society*, Vol 30, November 2001, pp.119-141.) They grasp the fact that the Chinese regime allows them cultural and administrative autonomy, but not political autonomy. Their positive attitude on this situation enables them to identify with China. (Ibid.) While they consider themselves Chinese politically, culturally they have been keen to take up the regime's offer to help them to keep their language, culture and tradition alive in their community. (Ibid.) Koreans are among the few ethnic groups which are strongly interested in the use of their own language as a medium of instruction in schools. (Colin Mackerras, *China's...p. 131.*) Finding Han Chinese culture as strongly assimilative, they have adopted Chinese culture without abandoning their own. (Ibid.) As a minority group, their educational attainment is also relatively high: 96.8% of the children of YKAP have achieved 9 years of compulsory education in 1998. (Ibid.) With the exception of the elderly, illiteracy hardly exists among Koreans age 15 and over. (Ibid.) If they were too unhappy about their situation in China, migrating to South Korea should not be difficult. Experiences of discrimination during their visits to South Korea served to strengthen their feeling of belonging to China. On their return from South Korea, some wrote that "only China embraces us" (Choi Woo-Gil, *The Korean Minority in China: The Change of Its Identity*, Sun Moon University, *Development and Society*, Volume 30, Number 1, June 2001, pp. 119-141.) It is not surprising that the Chinese consider them model minorities. (Ibid.)

Contrary to reports in the West that tend to focus on violent clashes between Mongolian secessionists and the Chinese authorities, most of the people of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region (population around 6 million in 2010) have demonstrated by their behavior that they have been won over by China's affirmative action policies, and accept that they are part of China. (Colin Mackerras, pp. 46-47.) They have embraced the ideology of reform and opening up, and have been eager to develop businesses and create wealth. (Ibid.) Apparently they have succeeded, for their average incomes were on a par with those of Han Chinese, as noted above. Inner Mongolia is the largest producer of milk for China. Probably because the economy of Inner Mongolia has been doing better than that of the independent Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) across the border since the early 1990s, there is little incentive for them to want to join up with the MPR. (Ibid.) A report published in the West that dwells on the exclusion and marginalization of China's ethnic minorities, based largely on the views of Chinese dissidents and anti-Chinese expatriates of Tibetan, Uyghur and Mongolian origins, censures the Chinese regime for not teaching Mongolian school children their mother tongue to sufficiently high levels. (Report by Human

Rights in China (HRIC), "China: Minority Exclusion, Marginalization and Rising Tensions," written by the staff of HRIC, commissioned by the Minority Rights Group International in 2007.) According to Naran Bilik, a Mongolian intellectual in China, it is not so much the regime's lack of effort towards educating Mongolians in their own language, but Mongolian parents "see little benefit in sending their children to Mongolian schools and opt for a Chinese education for their children, hoping that this will lead to a brighter economic future." (Colin Mackerras, p. 131-132.) Mongolian parents grasp the fact that knowing the language of the majority is essential for their children to get good jobs and to achieve upward social mobility in China. This is true anywhere in the world, and China is no exception.

According to Uradyn E. Bulag, a partly Western educated Mongol researcher who lives in the West, the creation of Han-dominated multi-ethnic China is not just a project of the Chinese state; it has been enthusiastically embraced in their diverse ways by many minority peoples in China in addition to the Mongolians, (Colin Mackerras, p. 47.) Development holds the key, a conclusion supported by the result of the Asian Barometer Survey, which show that the Hans and ethnic minorities in the eastern region, the most economically developed part of China, are the only people who rate themselves as "relatively happy" in China. (See above.) In this respect, the leaders of China have been correct to stress the economic development of the ethnic autonomous areas as the best way to win the allegiance of the peoples there. The privileges associated with the affirmative actions also help, as we will see below.

The Manchus of the Qing dynasty that ruled China from 1644 to 1911 were another ethnic group that seems contented with the regime's ethnic policy. Their population of around 10 million (in 2010) was too scattered to have a provincial size area to be named as the Manchu autonomous region, although a high percentage of them lived in the provinces of Liaoning (51%) and Hebei (20%). After they were officially recognized as an ethnic minority in 1952, 2.5 million people identified themselves as Manchus in the 1953 census. (Wikipedia, "Manchu People." Available at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manchu\\_people](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manchu_people).) In due course, many Manchu autonomous counties and townships were created in places where the Manchus concentrated. (Ibid.) Although the economic development of these areas was not as brisk as in those on the eastern seaboard, they were more developed than the minority areas in the western and southwestern border regions. As regards the Manchu language, even during the Qing dynasty when the Manchu officials were required to speak their own language, most Manchus, by the 19th century, preferred to use standard Chinese. (Ibid.) Although recently, there has been a resurgence of interest in Manchu language and culture in government circles, among scholars, and even ordinary Han Chinese, few Manchus still speak their own language. (Ibid. Colin Mackerras, p. 2.) The PRC's efforts to treat the Manchus well through the privileges it conferred on them as a recognized ethnic minority group encouraged them to acknowledge their Manchu ancestry, which some had hidden under KMT rule. (Ibid.) Between the official censuses of 1982 and 1990, the population of Manchus more than doubled from 4,299,159 to 9,821,180, making them the fastest growing ethnic minority in China. Apparently the difference did not come entirely from natural population growth. Some of the increase has been attributed to people choosing to be registered as Manchus, who had previously been counted as Hans. (Wikipedia, "Manchu People.") They probably would have continued to hide their Manchu origins if, in their perception, the Hans had despised them and discriminated against them. The behavior of the Manchus indicate that ethnic minority status was



desirable owing to the privileges that came with being an ethnic minority. It also provided a confirmation that the regime implemented its affirmative action policy towards the minorities.

Between the 1982 and 1990 census, attracted by the advantages of having an ethnic minority status, 14 million people who had previously identified themselves as Hans changed their registration to become ethnic minorities. (Xiaohui Wu, "From Assimilation to Autonomy: Realizing Ethnic Minority Rights in China's National Autonomous Regions," *Oxford Journals, Law and Social Sciences, Chinese Journal of International Law*, Volume 13, Issue 1, pp. 55-90, 2014. Available on line at <http://chinesejil.oxfordjournals.org/content/13/1/55.full>.) For similar reasons, the children of an intermarriage between a Han and a member of an ethnic minority normally adopt the nationality of the ethnic minority partner, even if they are culturally closer to the Han. (Colin Mackerras, p. 147.) The desire to become a privileged minority group induced some non-Han groups, which were left out of the officially recognized ones, to press the Chinese central government to grant them ethnic status. (Colin Mackerras, p. 40.) After 1979, the Chinese government closed the door on bestowing official recognition on any more ethnic minority groups. (Ibid.) These findings paint a very different picture from Western reports on China's ethnic minorities, which tend to emphasize the alleged discrimination, marginalization and oppression they suffered, and their resentment towards the Chinese regime and Han Chinese.

During a 2013 visit to Yunan, the province that harbors the largest number of different ethnic minority groups, the author conversed with members of a number of different ethnic groups, including the Dai, Bai, Naxi and Miao. These people spoke freely on a wide range of subjects, and appeared keen to maintain their own culture. But the idea of striking out as separate nations on their own seemed far-fetched and alien to them. Susan McCarthy, a Western scholar on minority groups in Yunnan, argues that a minority group's interest in keeping their own language and culture, as well as practicing their religion, need not prevent them from belonging to China. (Ibid., p.41.) The author concurs with Colin Mackerras' opinion that Yunnan's ethnic groups seem on the whole quite happy to remain a part of the PRC, while actively nurturing their own traditional culture. (Ibid., p. 41.) It is worth noting that some ethnic groups seem to care more about their local identity than their ethnicity. (Ibid.) This description fits the Zhuang ethnic minority which numbered nearly 17 million in 2010. (Ibid., p. 40. Wikipedia, "Demographics of China", available at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_China](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_China).) It would be unlikely for a secessionist movement to arise out of ethnic groups with such a narrow focus.

The Huis are another large minority group (10.5 million in 2010) well assimilated with the Han Chinese in language and culture. Like the Uyghurs, they are Muslims, but they have not, on the whole, succumbed to the influence of radical Islam like some of the Uyghurs. The Huis are the most dispersed minority group, who have spread themselves all over China, including a sizeable presence in Xinjiang, despite having their own Ningxia Hui Ethnic Autonomous Region. Unlike the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, the Huis are essentially loyal to the Chinese state; there is hardly any evidence of the Huis in Xinjiang wanting to secede from China. (Colin Mackerras, p. 119.) Other Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang, like the Kazaks and Kirgыз people have also shown little inclination towards secession. The examples of the Huis and

Manchus suggest that the more assimilated the ethnic minorities are with the culture of the majority, the less likely would they want to secede from China.

Although the PRC's ethnic policy and its implementation contains imperfections and leaves room for improvement as the Chinese government itself admits, it has secured the acceptance and cooperation, if not also the support, of most of China's minority peoples. Besides the Tibetans and Uyghurs, some of whom have agitated for separatism for a variety of reasons, there are no significant movements towards secession from any other ethnic minority group in China.

### *Modernization and Cultural Change Among China's Ethnic Minorities*

The PRC committed itself to cultural pluralism through helping its ethnic minorities to maintain their traditional culture when it set up the ethnic autonomous regions. A traditional culture could remain relatively stable if it existed in isolation from the world outside. Until the middle of the 19th century, the East Asian countries (China, Japan and Korea) had existed in relative isolation from the revolutionary developments that transformed the European nations and some of their offshoots in the Americas and other parts of the world. China had endeavored to maintain its traditional culture until its very existence as a sovereign state was undermined by its encounters with powerful modern Western nations. China's minority areas, being more isolated from the Western impact, kept their traditional culture and way of life relatively intact. While the happiness indices of people living in these areas were unknown, what was known was that these areas were plainly underdeveloped by modern standards, and the people there were very poor. The dream of generations of Chinese leaders of revitalizing China through modernization had not been realized until Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening up. The Chinese leaders' drive to develop China into a modern global economic powerhouse included its minority areas. Economic modernization and globalization tended to lead to cultural changes of the societies involved. Accepting the Chinese regime's commitment to cultural pluralism as sincere, it will nevertheless be difficult for it to prevent changes in the cultures of its ethnic minorities from the impact of modernization.

The lifestyle of the people of any given area is bound to be changed when the residents of that area are provided with better housing, electric power, and piped water, and given the opportunity to acquire modern household equipment and technologically advanced products. Provision of modern infrastructure for transportation smooths the path for the movement of goods and people. The availability of modern telecommunication systems expedites people-to-people contacts and the exchange of information and ideas among them. These modernizing developments that have taken place all over China have enhanced the integration of different parts of China with each other, and with its ethnic minority areas. They have also facilitated industrialization and trade within China, and made it easier for the different regions of China to trade with other parts of the world. They have created conditions for interregional migration within China, and enabled tourism to flourish. These modernizing

developments have transformed China, increased its internal integration, and changed its culture as well as that of its ethnic minorities.

When people from different European nations came to settle in the modern United States, they became homogenized and integrated into the cultural melting pot, which has been generally recognized as a U.S. attribute. Would modernization accompanied by globalization make China a melting pot for its ethnic minorities? This has already occurred to some extent, but there are also other forces at work, such as radical Islam, disturbing foreign ideas, and the paradoxical strengthening of local ethnic consciousness through contact with people from other parts of China and the world. (Colin Mackerras, pp. 152-180.) It seems reasonable to question, at this point, whether China should be blamed, as some writers in the West do, for cultural changes among China's ethnic minorities arising from the impact of modernization.