

Comparative ethnic territorially-based autonomy in Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Ningxia of China: An analytical framework

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Paper Presented at the 2021 ASN World Convention, 5-8 May 2021

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This article proposes an analytical framework to address why implemented autonomy outcomes may differ across ethnically-defined autonomous regions in China. Comprised of an explanatory variable, inter-ethnic boundary-making processes, and an intervening variable, titular elites' representation in the ethno-regional state, the framework is applied to a synchronic comparison of four autonomous regions with differing autonomy outcomes for 2010-2015, Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, reliant upon fieldwork and state-generated data. Titular elites' representation in the ethno-regional state is used as a proxy for titular elites' bargaining capacity with the central state. It is argued that an 'integration-distinction balance,' or rather, higher inter-ethnic integration combined with robust consciousness of inter-ethnic distinction, can contribute to titular elites' bargaining capacity, which can lead to greater autonomy outcome for the ethno-region.

Keywords: ethnic regional autonomy in China; inter-ethnic integration/distinction; ethnic minority elites; Xinjiang; Tibet; Inner Mongolia; Ningxia

Introduction

The People's Republic of China (hereafter PRC) is a constitutionally multi-ethnic state. PRC

followed the model of the Soviet Union¹ in establishing ethnic territorially-based autonomous entities (hereafter ‘ethno-regions’) for certain ethnic minorities to reconcile distinct, entrenched ethnic identities with the multi-ethnic state’s territorial integrity. By the 2010s, while continuing to officially categorize its population in ethnic terms in censuses², China has established three tiers of ethno-regions, including five provincial-level autonomous regions, 30 sub-provincial-level autonomous prefectures, and 120 sub-prefectural-level autonomous counties. In such formally autonomous ethno-regions, the ethnic category for whom autonomy is designated is considered ‘titular’ to the ethno-region. Elites of such titular categories are supposed to have guaranteed representation in the ethno-regional state apparatuses, at least proportionate to the demographic weight of the titular population in the total ethno-regional population.

PRC’s other institutions to manage its ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse population include generating ethnic categories³, training and promoting ethnic non-Han cadres⁴, categorizing and standardizing ethnic languages⁵, state-sponsored institutions for the production

¹ Terry D. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 10.

² E.g. the 1982, 1990, 2000, 2010 population censuses.

³ Katherine Palmer Kaup, *Creating the Zhuang: Ethnic Politics in China* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), p. 20; Thomas S. Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p. 3.

⁴ Similar to the Soviet practice of *korenizatsiia*; Katherine Palmer Kaup, *Creating the Zhuang: Ethnic Politics in China* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), p. 65.

⁵ Arienne M. Dwyer, ‘The Texture of Tongues: Languages and Power in China’, in *Nationalism and Ethnoregional Identities in China*, ed. William Safran (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), pp. 68-85.

and reproduction of ethnically-specific knowledge/symbols⁶, and affirmative actions⁷. Since the very inception of its implementations in the 1940s-1950s, China's normative institution of ethnic territorially-based autonomy underwent dysfunction during the Cultural Revolution, especially when the 1975 Constitution removed the mention of ethnic territorially-based autonomy for ethnic minorities⁸, but was nevertheless reinstated in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when previously purged⁹ ethnic non-Han cadres were rehabilitated and restored to various positions in party-state apparatuses of all levels. The revival culminated in the 1984 passing of the Law of Ethnic Regional Autonomy by the PRC National People's Congress.

Ideally, ethnic territorially-based autonomy is meant to provide ethnic minorities with formal opportunities of participating in state affairs, especially in their eponymous ethno-regions. Notwithstanding, although autonomy as prescriptive institution applies to all of such ethno-regions in China, autonomy as implemented outcome varies across them. Some of them have been more capable of actually exercising the formally promulgated autonomy than others. What can explain the cross-ethno-regional variations in terms of implemented autonomy outcome? This article uses ethno-regions as units of analysis and proposes first a conceptual framework to represent such variations and then an analytical framework to account for the variations. The analytical framework consists of an explanatory variable, inter-ethnic boundary-making

⁶ Ibid. pp. 73-74.

⁷ Barry Sautman, 'Preferential Policies for Ethnic Minorities in China: The Case of Xinjiang', in *Nationalism and Ethnoregional Identities in China*, ed. William Safran (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), pp. 86-118.

⁸ Dianjun Zhang, *Minzu zizhi difang zizhiquan yanjiu* [A Study of Right to Self-Rule in Ethno-regions] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2015), p. 80.

⁹ Lei Ji, *Zhongguo minzu quyue zizhi zhidu fazhan yanjiu* [A Study of the Development of the Institutions of Ethnic Regional Autonomy in China] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2013), p. 99.

processes, and an intervening variable, titular elites' representation in the ethno-regional state. Both frameworks are applied to a synchronic comparative study of autonomy-building in four autonomous regions of China, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (hereafter XUAR, used as a reference case), Tibet Autonomous Region (hereafter TAR), Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (hereafter IMAR), and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (hereafter NHAR) for 2010-2015. Based upon data collected from fieldwork¹⁰ and secondary sources, the article investigates whether differing patterns of Uyghur-Han, Tibetan-Han, Mongol-Han, and Hui-Han inter-ethnic relations can contribute to varying degrees of bargaining capacity for the titular elites, which in turn can shape varying autonomy outcomes across the four ethno-regions.

The four ethno-regions are selected not out of the principle of 'most similar' cases but rather in light of their distinctive demographic, geographic, or historical significances. Indeed, they vary considerably in terms of titular-Han population ratio¹¹. Inner Mongolia is the first ethnic territorially-based autonomous entity established (in 1947) under the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter CCP). It is also the provincial-level ethno-region in China persistently with the lowest percentage¹² of its titular population in the total ethno-regional population. Xinjiang is the second provincial-level ethno-region established (in 1955) under CCP and the largest provincial-level unit of China by geographical area. It is also China's only provincial-level ethno-region

¹⁰ Participant observations and 40 anonymous interviews (about 40% elite interviews) in Xinjiang, Beijing, and Inner Mongolia from summer 2015 through spring 2017. Interviews were conducted in Mandarin, Uyghur, Kazakh, Mongolian.

¹¹ According to the 2010 census, the ratio is approximately 11:10 for XUAR, 11:1 for TAR, 11: 50 for IMAR, and 53:100 for NHAR. PRC State Bureau of Statistics and PRC State Ethnic Affairs Commission, *Tabulation on Nationalities of 2010 Population Census of China* (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2013).

¹² Below 20% since IMAR's territorial 'expansion' in the 1950s.

with autonomous prefectures under it¹³. Tibet is China's 'youngest' (since 1965) provincial-level ethno-region and smallest provincial-level unit by population. It is also the provincial-level ethno-region in China persistently with the highest percentage¹⁴ of its titular population in the total ethno-regional population. Most notably, both Xinjiang and Tibet saw violent inter-ethnic clashes in the 2000s¹⁵ and highly coercive, penetrative governance style in the 2010s¹⁶. Ningxia is China's smallest provincial-level ethno-region by geographical area and second smallest in terms of population.

Unlike a conventional wisdom that tends to assume inter-ethnic integration and inter-ethnic distinction as mutually conflictual processes¹⁷, I argue that an 'integration-distinction balance,' or rather, higher inter-ethnic integration combined with robust consciousness of inter-ethnic distinction, is conducive to building the capacity for titular elites to bargain with the

¹³ Including the semi-provincial İli Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, which itself administers two prefectures, Tacheng and Altay.

¹⁴ Above 90%.

¹⁵ Tibet in 2008, Xinjiang in 2009.

¹⁶ Tibet in the early 2010s, Xinjiang since spring 2017. In Xinjiang, entailing massive social surveillance and forcible 'ideological/vocational trainings' among the local population of various ethnic categories. Such 'trainings' are officially framed as 'means to enhancing employment.' 'Xinjiang laodong jiuye', PRC State Council Information Office, accessed September 22, 2020. <http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0918/c1001-31865875.html>.

¹⁷ Ted R. Gurr, *Peoples versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2000); Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Rahsaan Maxwell, *Ethnic Minority Migrants in Britain and France: Integration Trade-offs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

central state, which in turn can lead to greater autonomy outcome for the ethno-region.

Succinctly, the higher the level of social integration for the titular population, the higher the level of titular elites' representation in the ethno-regional state, the higher the level of implemented autonomy outcome for the ethno-region.

Prior research

Although prior studies of ethnic politics in China abound, such studies tend to be predominately with a single-region or single-population focus¹⁸, often lacking a cross-ethno-regional or cross-population comparative perspective, and autonomy-building is usually not the central issue addressed. Of the few comparative studies, Enze Han's explanation for why some ethnic populations in China have been more contesting of China's nation-building project than others focuses on titular population's external kinship networks¹⁹. However, Han's units of analysis are ethnic populations rather than ethno-regions, and his 'external-kinship' explanation can hardly account for varying autonomy outcomes across those ethno-regions without extensive external kinship networks for the titular population²⁰ or those ethno-regions with similarly extensive external kinship networks for the titular population²¹.

¹⁸ E.g. Katherine Palmer Kaup on ethnic Zhuang, Gardner Bovington on ethnic Uyghurs.

¹⁹ Enze Han, *Contestation and Adaptation: The Politics of National Identity in China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

²⁰ E.g. Inner Mongolia, Guangxi.

²¹ E.g. Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, İli Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture.

Meanwhile, prior studies of ethnic politics in general often treats ethnic territorially-based autonomy either as an independent variable impacting the likelihood of ethnic conflicts²², or as a prescriptive category to manage ethnic conflicts²³ rather than as an empirical and quantifiable fact. The question as regards ‘once launched, how autonomy actually works’ has not been adequately addressed, which results in a dearth of readily available analytical frameworks to explain implemented autonomy outcome, except for Nicholas Sambanis and Branko Milanovic’s political economy explanation for varying ‘policy autonomy’ across subnational-level regions²⁴. In response, I engage with Rahsaan Maxwell’s political sociology explanation (‘integration trade-offs’ theory²⁵), which posits that social segregation is conducive to political representation, by appropriating a structural variable, social integration, and an agential variable, elite representation, to account for implemented autonomy outcomes. Meanwhile, I challenge the

²² Valerie Bunce and Stephen Watts, ‘Managing Diversity and Sustaining Democracy: Ethnofederal versus Unitary States in the Postcommunist World’, in *Sustainable Peace: Power and Democracy after Civil Wars*, ed. Philip G. Roeder and Donald Rothchild (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), pp. 133-158; David S. Siroky and John Cuffe, ‘Lost Autonomy, Nationalism and Separatism’, *Comparative Political Studies* 48(1), (2015), pp. 3-34.

²³ David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, ‘Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict’, *International Security* 21(2), (1996), pp. 41-75; Ruth E. Lapidoth, *Autonomy: Flexible Solutions to Ethnic Conflicts* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997); Renat Shaykhutdinov, ‘Give Peace A Chance: Nonviolent Protest and The Creation of Territorial Autonomy Arrangements’, *Journal of Peace Research* 47(2), (2010), pp. 179-191.

²⁴ Nicholas Sambanis and Branko Milanovic, ‘Explaining Regional Autonomy Differences in Decentralized Countries’, *Comparative Political Studies* 47(13), (2014), pp. 1830-1855.

²⁵ Rahsaan Maxwell, *Ethnic Minority Migrants in Britain and France: Integration Trade-offs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

assumption underlying his explanation that inter-ethnic integration and inter-ethnic distinction are mutually conflictual by drawing upon Elise Giuliano's insights on ethnic mobilization²⁶.

Sambanis and Milanovic's study pioneers in terms of measuring a subnational-level region's degree of actually-exercised autonomy by employing the 'share of regional expenditures that can be financed out of regional revenues'²⁷ as a proxy for political autonomy. However, as an effect of fiscal decentralization, financial self-sufficiency can be treated as just one component aspect of an ethno-region's implemented autonomy outcome. Besides, effects of regulatory decentralization (e.g. overall productivity, efficiency in terms of labor use, etc.²⁸) and ability to procure financial transfers from the central state can also suggest an ethno-region's level of political autonomy. Considering that, I use a conceptual framework that comprehensively assesses an ethno-region's implemented autonomy outcome on three dimensions, political participation among the ethno-region's titular population, economic development of the ethno-region, and cultural promotion among the titular population.

Maxwell's 'integration trade-offs' theory postulates that higher level of social integration may undermine a minority's ability to mobilize, which in turn may hinder its ability to bargain with the state for economic benefits and to be better politically represented in the state

²⁶ Elise Giuliano, 'Who Determines the Self in the Politics of Self-Determination? Identity and Preference Formation in Tatarstan's Nationalist Mobilization', *Comparative Politics* 32(3), (2000), pp. 295-316.

²⁷ Nicholas Sambanis and Branko Milanovic, 'Explaining Regional Autonomy Differences in Decentralized Countries', *Comparative Political Studies* 47(13), (2014), p. 11.

²⁸ Paolo Dardanelli, John Kincaid, Alan Fenna, André Kaiser, André Lecours and Ajay Kumar Singh, 'Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Theorizing Dynamic De/centralization in Federations', *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 49(1), (2019), pp. 1-29.

apparatus²⁹. He bases his argument on the assumption that social segregation can be conducive to the building of shared consciousness of distinct identity³⁰, which then prepares the minority for group-based mobilization that can improve political representation. Nevertheless, the type of minorities studied by Maxwell are migrant minorities without ethno-regions designated for them, while this article focuses on titular minorities with ethno-regions designated for them.

Furthermore, the institutional order of former colonial empires in Western Europe differs tremendously from that of such a colossal, multi-ethnic, authoritarian state as China. In Britain or France, political representation of migrant minorities is usually realized through electoral processes, whereas in China, representation of ethnic minority elites is usually realized through elite networks within the incumbent CCP. Last but not least, higher levels of acculturation and social integration do not necessarily translate into reduced group consciousness. On the contrary, inter-ethnic integration and distinction can be achieved at once and combined to improve titular elites' bargaining capacity.

In Elise Giuliano's study of ethnic mobilization in Russia's Tatarstan, she challenges the assumption that individuals' preferences automatically align with their ethnic affiliation³¹. The conventional wisdom that inter-ethnic integration and distinction are mutually exclusive has two built-in assumptions: 1) integration erodes distinction; 2) shared identity automatically translates into intra-ethnic cohesion and shared preferences. However, as Giuliano argues, intra-ethnic

²⁹ Rahsaan Maxwell, *Ethnic Minority Migrants in Britain and France: Integration Trade-offs*

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 4.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 22.

³¹ Elise Giuliano, 'Who Determines the Self in the Politics of Self-Determination? Identity and Preference Formation in Tatarstan's Nationalist Mobilization', *Comparative Politics* 32(3), (2000), pp. 295-316.

heterogeneous preferences may form despite shared consciousness of distinct identity, since other types of cleavages may contribute to ‘varied interests within the group’³². Meanwhile, cross-ethnic common preferences and cooperation can also exist³³. The empirical records of the four ethno-regions in China inform that 1) shared ethnic affiliation alone does not translate into improved bargaining capacity for titular elites, as in Xinjiang or Tibet; 2) social integration does not necessarily erode consciousness of distinction, as in Inner Mongolia. To the contrary, when robust consciousness of inter-ethnic distinction is treated as a given, inter-ethnic integration can be conducive to elite-level cross-ethnic collusion, especially through an incumbent party like CCP.

Autonomy as prescriptive institution and as implemented outcome

I conceptualize ethnic territorially-based autonomy in two separate modes, ‘autonomy as prescriptive institution’ and ‘autonomy as implemented outcome.’ ‘Autonomy as prescriptive institution’ is defined as territorially-based power-sharing arrangements distinguishing an ethno-regional state from the central state, in which a specific territory is formally attached to a specific ethnic category and in which elites of that category are supposed to be adequately represented in the decision-makings of the ethno-regional state. Such prescriptive institution is usually embodied in the relevant legally-binding documents that legitimate and delimit the expected roles of both the central and ethno-regional states in terms of how to govern the ethno-region. For ethno-regions in China, the governing documents include the PRC Constitution³⁴ and the

³² Ibid. p. 303.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Most recently amended in 2004 and 2018.

Law of Ethnic Regional Autonomy³⁵.

‘Autonomy as implemented outcome’ is defined in terms of how much of what is prescribed in the legally-binding documents establishing the formal autonomy for the ethno-region has been empirically implemented in compliance. To measure an ethno-region’s degree of such compliance, I devise an instrument (Table 1) that scores an ethno-region on three dimensions: titular political participation, economic development, and titular cultural promotion. Each dimension is assigned a weight of 1/3, generating an aggregate score up to 100%. Scoring is reliant upon a triangulation of state-generated data, respondents’ perspectives, and cross-verifications with the author’s observations.

For an autonomous region in China, the formula with which to calculate the degree of its actually-exercised autonomy, *A*, is proposed as

$$A = (p/9 \times 1/3 + e/8 \times 1/3 + c/6 \times 1/3) \times 100\%$$

Table 1. Scoring schemes for the implemented autonomy outcome of an autonomous region in China

Dimension	Sub-dimension	If	Then the score ^a will be
Titular political participation <i>p</i>	P1	Yes	1
	Has there been incidence of central-state’s mandates formally claimed as not suiting the ethno-region’s conditions by	No	0.5

³⁵ Most recently amended in 2001.

the ethno-regional		
state?		
P2	Yes	1
Has there been		
systematic training of	No	0
ethnic minority cadres?		
P3	Yes	1
Has there been formal		
consultation with	No	0.5
representatives of		
various ethnic		
populations?		
P4	Yes	1
Is the chair of the		
ethno-region of titular	No	0
category?		
P5	Yes	1
Has there been		
preferential treatment	Moderately yes	0.75
of ethnic minorities for		
recruitment in ethno-	No	0
regional state apparatus		
or in state-owned		
enterprises?		
P6	Both types	1

Have autonomy regulations or separate regulations ever been enacted?	Separate regulations without autonomy regulations	0.5
	Neither type	0
P7 Representation of the titular population in the ethno-regional-level People's Congress	Overrepresentation or proportionate representation	1
	Underrepresentation	0.5
	Absent	0
P8 Proportionality of titular cadres in party and state apparatuses to titular population	Overrepresentation or proportionate representation	1
	Underrepresentation	0.5
	Absent	0
P9 Proportion of titular-category chairs and vice-chairs at the ethno-	Overrepresentation or proportionate representation	1

	regional-level People's Congress	Underrepresentation	0.5
		Absent	0
Ethno-regional economic development	E1	Yes	1
<i>e</i>	'Donor' region?	No	0.5
	E2	Yes	1
	Have there been special funds set up for the ethno-region?	No	0.5
	E3	Yes	1
	Have fiscal transfer payments been increasing?	No	0.5
	E4	$0 < \text{ratio} \leq 1$	1
	Central-state's-budgeted-transfer-to-ethno-regional-revenue ratio	> 1	0.5
	E5	\geq national average	1
	GDP per capita of the ethno-region	$<$ national average	0.5

	E6	\leq national average	1
	Urban registered		
	unemployment rate of	$>$ national average	0.5
	the ethno-region		
	E7	Manufacturing sectors	0.75
	Ethno-regional	+ ethno-regional state	
	comparative advantages	implementing	
		innovative investment	
		policies	
		Agricultural or mining	0.5
		sectors	
		No comparative	0
		advantages established	
	E8	$\geq 75\%$	1
	Proportion of the ethno-		
	region's expenditures	$50\% \leq \text{proportion} < 75\%$	0.5
	covered by its own		
	revenues	$< 50\%$	0.25
Titular cultural	C1	Titular language	1
promotion		dominant in both	

c	Use of the titular language and script in the ethno-regional-level government	formal and informal conducts of the ethno-regional-level governmental apparatuses	0.75
		Titular language dominant not in formal but in informal conducts of the ethno-regional-level governmental apparatuses	
		<i>Lingua franca</i> of the multi-ethnic state dominant	0.5
	C2 Use of the titular language and script in public sphere	Formal use of the titular language present in academic institutions, print media, radio/TV, internet + ubiquitous informal,	1

	conversational use of the titular language	
	Formal use of the titular language present in academic institutions, print media, radio and TV, internet + noticeable, but not ubiquitous, informal, conversational use of the titular language	0.5
	Neither formal nor informal use	0
C3	Competing historical narratives with debates	1
Official historiography of the ethno-region promoting debates?	Controlled historiography discouraging debates	0

C4	Regulating mostly	1
Has the ethno-regional state been regulating individual citizens' practices of religion?	forms and interpretations	
	Regulating forms and interpretations + those who are allowed to practice and those who are not	0.5
C5	Yes	1
Has there been preferential treatment of the titular population in terms of matriculating students?	No	0
C6	Learning made	1
Use of the titular language and script in education	mandatory for all students in pre-tertiary education + medium of instruction for some students + used to some extent in higher education	

Not mandatory + medium of instruction for some + to some extent in higher education	0.75
Medium of instruction for some subjects only or merely taught as a subject in pre-tertiary education + barely used in higher education	0.5

^aSubdimensions considered necessary attributes of implemented autonomy can take the value of 0 if empirically evidence points to the absence of such attributes. For attributes considered concomitant but not necessary attributes of implemented autonomy, indexes can be dichotomous or trichotomous but do not take the value of 0.

Autonomy outcome in Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia

As summarized in Table 2, implemented autonomy outcome was highest in Inner Mongolia, followed by Ningxia, and lowest in Xinjiang and Tibet for 2010-2015. With regard to titular cultural promotion, the four autonomous regions are largely comparable with only minor discrepancies. Meanwhile, in terms of titular political participation and economic development, the cross-ethno-regional discrepancies tend to be more pronounced. In this section, I disaggregate implemented autonomy outcomes of the four autonomous regions according to different dimensions, using Xinjiang as a reference case while discussing Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Ningxia's outcomes as far as how they differ from Xinjiang's.

Table 2. Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Ningxia compared in terms of autonomy as implemented outcome (2010-2015)

		Xinjiang	Tibet	Inner Mongolia	Ningxia
Titular political participation	P1	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
	P2	1	1	1	1
	P3	1	1	1	1
	P4	1	1	1	1
	P5	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75
	P6	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
	P7	0.5	0.5	1	1
	P8	0.5	0.5	1	0.5
	P9	0.5	0.5	1	0.5
	<i>p</i>	6.25	6.25	7.75	6.75
Ethno-regional economic development	E1	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
	E2	1	1	1	1
	E3	1	1	1	1
	E4	1	0.5	1	0.5
	E5	0.5	0.5	1	0.5
	E6	1	1	1	1
	E7	0.5	0	0.5	0.5
	E8	0.25	0.25	1	0.25
<i>e</i>	5.75	4.75	7	5.25	
Titular cultural promotion	C1	0.75	0.5	0.5	Not applicable
	C2	1	1	0.5	Not applicable
	C3	0	0	0	0

	C4	0.5	0.5	1	1
	C5	1	1	1	1
	C6	0.5	0.5	0.75	Not applicable
	<i>c</i>	3.75	3.5	3.75	2/3
Autonomy as implemented outcome	A	67.9%	62.4%	78.7%	69.3%

Xinjiang

As Table 2 outlines, Xinjiang scores 6.25/9 in terms of titular political participation for 2010-2015. During this period, chairs of the XUAR Government³⁶ had been of the titular category. No incidence had been reported of central-state's decisions formally claimed as not suiting Xinjiang's 'conditions' by the XUAR Government or People's Congress. In fact, it was largely the 'Xinjiang Work' Forum (*Xinjiang gongzuo zuotanhui*)³⁷ organized by CCP Central Committee and PRC State Council that set the tone and determined the suitability of central-state's mandates to XUAR. Meanwhile, there had been systematic training of ethnic minority cadres³⁸ in XUAR for party-state apparatuses. Since 2014, up to 200,000 cadres regardless of ethnicity had been required to station themselves on usually a one-year term in economically

³⁶ Nur Bekri 2008-2014 and Shöhrət Zakir since 2014. Both are ethnic Uyghur.

³⁷ First-time in 2010 and second-time in 2014. Interviews in Ürümqi and Beijing, August 7, 2015, March 30, 2017.

³⁸ Drawn from the ethnic categories of Uyghur, Kazakh, Hui, Kyrgyz, Mongol (Oirat), Xibe, Uzbek, Tatar, Daur, Dongxiang, Tajik (Pamiri), etc. and most often enrolled either full-time or part-time in higher education institutions or in 'party schools.'

underdeveloped, ethnic-non-Han-concentrated villages throughout Xinjiang³⁹ and mandated to work on poverty-reduction, ideological promotion, infrastructural or agricultural improvements, and teaching of Mandarin⁴⁰. Nevertheless, ethnic Uyghurs remained underrepresented among party-state cadres in XUAR⁴¹. The XUAR party-state apparatuses conducted formalistic consultation with those designated as ‘representatives’ of various ethnic populations by holding forums, visiting families, etc. Nevertheless, such representatives usually were themselves party-state cadres⁴².

Overall, preferential treatment of ethnic non-Han for recruitment in ethno-regional party-state apparatuses or in state-owned enterprises (hereafter SOE) had long been practiced in Xinjiang, often in the forms of quota-setting or threshold-lowering, which stoked resentment among ethnic Han⁴³. Nonetheless, such preferential treatments had been practiced in party apparatus not as much as in state apparatuses⁴⁴ and more flexible in job markets. By 2015, only

³⁹ ‘Jiceng zhili Xinjiang tansuo’, accessed September 22, 2020. http://news.ts.cn/content/2016-08/29/content_12252819.htm.

⁴⁰ Interviews in Ürümqi and Beijing, August 7, 2015, March 2, August 10, 2016, March 30, 2017.

⁴¹ As of 2004, 51.6% of all party-state cadres in Xinjiang were of ethnic non-Han categories, lower than the population share of ethnic non-Han categories at 60.25%. As of 2005, 51.68% of all party-state cadres in Xinjiang were of ethnic non-Han categories, lower than the population share of ethnic non-Han categories at 60.42%. Lei Ji, *Zhongguo minzu quyu zizhi zhidu fazhan yanjiu* (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2013), p. 99; Peimin Zhu and Baoying Wang, *Zhongguo gongchandang zhili Xinjiang shi* [A History of the Governance of Xinjiang by the CCP] (Beijing: Dangdai Zhongguo chubanshe, 2015), pp. 161-165.

⁴² Interviews in Ürümqi and Beijing, August 7, 2015, March 2, August 10, 2016, March 30, 2017.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Barry Sautman, ‘Preferential Policies for Ethnic Minorities in China: The Case of Xinjiang’, pp. 94-97.

separate regulations⁴⁵ had been enacted in XUAR with no autonomy regulations⁴⁶. Of the initial composition of the 12th XUAR People's Congress as of 2013, the proportion of ethnic Uyghur representatives in the total number of representatives was 43%⁴⁷, lower than the 2012 ethnic Uyghurs' population share in the total population of Xinjiang at 47.2%⁴⁸. In its standing committee, the proportion of ethnic Uyghur members in the total number of members was 37.9%⁴⁹. The proportion of ethnic Uyghur chairs and vice-chairs in the total number of chairs and vice-chairs was 33.3%, again lower than the titular population share.

In terms of ethno-regional economic development, Xinjiang scores 5.75/8 for 2010-2015. The proportion of XUAR's budgeted expenditures that was covered by XUAR's own budgeted tax or non-tax-based revenues never exceeded 50% for 2010-2015⁵⁰. The ratio between PRC central state's budgeted transfers to XUAR and XUAR's budgeted tax and non-tax-based revenues was 93.2% for 2015⁵¹. Moreover, budgeted transfer payments from the central state to XUAR rose steadily throughout the 2010s⁵². For 2016 alone, XUAR contributed only ¥7.06 billion to the central-state budget while receiving ¥247.19 billion of fiscal transfers from the

⁴⁵ E.g. *Regulations on the Use of Languages and Scripts in the XUAR*, *XUAR Regulations on Inter-ethnic Unity and Progress*.

⁴⁶ Lei Ji, *Zhongguo minzu quyue zizhi zhidu fazhan yanjiu* (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2013), pp. 124-127.

⁴⁷ 'Xinjiang dishi'erjie rendadaibiao mingdan ji zhiwu', *Xinjiang Daily*, July 18, 2013.

⁴⁸ XUAR Statistical Bureau, *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook 2016* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2016).

⁴⁹ 'Xinjiang dishi'erjie renda gonggao', accessed September 22, 2020.

http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/xinwen/dfrd/xinjiang/2013-02/01/content_1753332.htm.

⁵⁰ XUAR Statistical Bureau, *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook 2016* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2016).

⁵¹ '2015nian zhongyang dui difang shuishou fanhuan zhuan yi zhifu', accessed September 22, 2020.

http://yss.mof.gov.cn/2015czys/201503/t20150324_1206398.html; XUAR Statistical Bureau, *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook 2016* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2016).

⁵² Ibid.

central state⁵³. Overall, since XUAR was almost as reliant upon central-state transfers as upon its own revenues, XUAR qualifies as a ‘recipient’ region. For 2010-2015, although XUAR’s GDP per capita had consistently been significantly lower than the national average, XUAR’s urban registered unemployment rate had been consistently lower than the national average, as demonstrated in Table 3. Meanwhile, XUAR received special funds for major infrastructural projects like the construction of Ürümqi metro subways⁵⁴. Best-known in China for its locally-specific agricultural products such as fruits and cash crops such as cotton, XUAR’s comparative advantages had mostly been concentrated in oil extraction and refining, whereas XUAR’s manufacturing sector was more or less underdeveloped compared to the rest of China. Innovative industries were still rare in Xinjiang especially in view of the limited research and development capability of Xinjiang-based institutes of science and technologies.

Table 3. GDP per capita (in Chinese yuan) and urban registered unemployment rate (%) of Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia and China as a whole compared (2010-2015)

	Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
GDP per capita	Xinjiang	25,034	30,087	33,796	37,553	40,648	40,036
	Tibet	17,027	20,077	22,936	26,326	29,252	31,999
	Inner Mongolia	47,347	57,974	63,886	67,836	71,046	71,101
	Ningxia	26,860	33,043	36,394	39,613	41,834	43,805
	China	30,567	36,403	40,007	43,852	47,203	49,992
	Xinjiang	3.2	3.2	3.4	3.4	3.0	2.9

⁵³ ‘Xinjiang 2016nian yusuan zhixing 2017nian yusuan cao’an’, XUAR Department of Finances, accessed September 22, 2020.

http://www.mof.gov.cn/zhuantihuigu/2017ysbghb/201703/t20170302_2545588.html.

⁵⁴ ‘Guojia zhuanxiang jijin Xinjiang 542ge xiangmu’, accessed September 22, 2020.

<http://xj.people.com.cn/n2/2016/0401/c188514-28058904.html>.

Urban registered	Tibet	4.0	3.2	2.6	2.5	2.5	2.5
unemployment rate	Inner Mongolia	3.9	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.7
	Ningxia	4.35	4.24	4.18	4.06	4.02	4.02
	China	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.05	4.09	4.05

Sources: *2015 China Statistical Yearbook* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2015); *2016 China Statistical Yearbook* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2016); NHAR Statistical Bureau (2016).

With regard to titular cultural promotion, Xinjiang scores 3.75/6 for 2010-2015. Most of the meetings or sessions in XUAR governmental apparatuses, whether at the ethno-regional or the prefectural level, were conducted in Mandarin. Uyghur was used mostly in settings that required party-state cadres to reach out to Uyghur-speaking masses. Meanwhile, Uyghur was used to a considerable extent in court sessions where Uyghur-speaking plaintiffs or defendants were involved⁵⁵. Uyghur had been used as medium of instruction for some subjects in certain pre-tertiary schools (Uyghur-instructed schools, *weixiao*) while merely taught as a subject in other pre-tertiary schools ('bilingual' schools, *shuangyu xuexiao*)⁵⁶. Other titular languages used as medium of instruction in Xinjiang included Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Oiratic, and Xibe. In 'bilingual' schools, titular languages are taught as subject, and the language of instruction is Mandarin for the rest of the curricula. In higher education, except for the few departments where ethnically-specific knowledge is produced or experts with such knowledge are trained, the language of formal instruction is exclusively Mandarin. Uyghur had been used to a limited extent in the publications of Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences but more extensively used in print media, radio/TV, and internet. As of 2016, the ethno-regional-level TV station operates six exclusively

⁵⁵ Interviews in Ürümqi and Beijing, August 7, 2015, July 30, August 13, 2016.

⁵⁶ Author's observations.

Uyghur-language TV channels⁵⁷. Uyghur-language websites, though many of which closed down after the 2009 violent incidents in Ürümqi, had been the most commonly visited and the most visible of all ethnic-minority-language websites in China⁵⁸. The Chaghatay-based Uyghur script is also the most commonly used titular script in China's major social media app, WeChat (*weixin*)⁵⁹. Overall, there had been ubiquitous informal, conversational use of the titular language in public sphere in Xinjiang.

There has been strictly controlled, highly primordial historiography with regard to the 'ethno-genesis' of ethnic Uyghurs, whose 'origins' are officially either linked to the ancient Uyghur Khaganate or simply left unaddressed⁶⁰. Although the medieval eastern-branch of the Chaghatay Khanate was crucial for the formation of shared consciousness as well as common tongue among present-day ethnic Uyghurs, history of this Chinggisid dynasty is extremely understudied in Xinjiang. Nor is history of the Chaghatay Khanate strongly recognized among ethnic Uyghurs themselves⁶¹.

The XUAR state had been regulating the forms and interpretations of religious practices by incorporating clergies into such state apparatuses as the XUAR Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission and the XUAR Islamic Association. CCP members and minors were prohibited from participating in religious activities, while religious activities were forbidden in state apparatuses, schools (except those which train clergies), and non-entrepreneurial institutions

⁵⁷ XJTV-2, 5, 9, 13, 14, 15.

⁵⁸ Author's observations.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Based upon the author's visits to the museums in Ürümqi, Ghulja, Kashgar, Qumul, and Korla.

⁶¹ Author's observations.

affiliated to the state⁶². Preferential treatment in terms of matriculating students into higher education institutions had been systematically practiced with regard to students of ethnic non-Han categories who took the college entrance exams in Chinese rather than in titular languages, usually in the forms of bonus scores or lowered thresholds.

Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia

From 2010 through 2015, Tibet largely attained comparable level of titular political participation to that in Xinjiang. However, in terms of ethno-regional economic development, TAR differs from XUAR on the following dimensions: 1) The ratio of PRC central state's budgeted transfer to TAR's own tax and non-tax-based revenue was consistently higher than 1⁶³, signifying TAR's extraordinarily high financial reliance upon the central state; 2) TAR's comparative advantages were mostly concentrated in tourism and hydroelectric energy and not even in agricultural or mining sectors. TAR largely attained comparable level of titular cultural promotion to that in XUAR⁶⁴ except that Mandarin had been dominant in both formal and informal conducts of the TAR ethno-regional government. CCP members were prohibited from participating in religious activities, while minors needed to wait until age 18 to enter monkhood. Since the early 2010s, CCP branches had been established⁶⁵ in all Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in Tibet.

⁶² *XUAR Regulations on Religious Affairs*, Articles 31, 37.

⁶³ TAR Statistical Bureau, *Tibet Statistical Yearbook 2016* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2016).

⁶⁴ Rong Ma, 'Xizang shehui fazhan yu shuangyu jiaoyu [Social Development and Bilingual Education in TAR]', *China Tibetology* 96, (2011), pp. 108-139.

⁶⁵ 'Xizang jiaqiang chuangxin simiao guanli', accessed September 22, 2020.

http://cn.chinadaily.com.cn/2017-09/30/content_32673778.htm.

For 2010-2015, what distinguishes Inner Mongolia from Xinjiang in terms of titular political participation are the overrepresentation of ethnic Mongol representatives in the total number of representatives and the overrepresentation of ethnic Mongol chairs and vice-chairs in the total number of chairs and vice-chairs at the IMAR People's Congress, plus the overrepresentation of ethnic Mongol cadres in the total number of cadres in IMAR⁶⁶. In terms of ethno-regional economic development, IMAR differs from XUAR on the following dimensions: 1) IMAR's GDP per capita was consistently higher than the national average (Table 3); 2) The 2010-2015 average annual proportion of IMAR's expenditures covered by its own revenues is approximately 75%⁶⁷, signifying a much higher financial self-sufficiency of IMAR than of XUAR. IMAR's comparative advantages had mostly been concentrated in the sectors of mining⁶⁸, energy, dairy processing, agriculture⁶⁹, and forestry. With regard to titular cultural promotion, Mandarin had been dominant in both formal and informal conducts of the IMAR ethno-regional government. Formal use of the literary Mongolian language had been present in academic institutions, print media, radio/TV, and internet, while informal, conversational use of Mongolic dialects had been noticeable but not ubiquitous in public sphere. In education, the literary Mongolian language had been used as medium of instruction for some students, and

⁶⁶ 'Neimenggu minzu tuanjie xunli', accessed September 22, 2020. http://www.xinhuanet.com/2017-08/01/c_1121411747.htm.

⁶⁷ IMAR Statistical Bureau, *Inner Mongolia Statistical Yearbook 2016* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2016).

⁶⁸ Especially in terms of rare earth, non-ferrous metal, coal, and uranium.

⁶⁹ Animal husbandry and crop production.

Inner Mongolia is the only provincial-level ethno-region⁷⁰ in China that boasts of a full-package titular-language-instructed education system spanning kindergarten, elementary, secondary, tertiary, and even postgraduate educations⁷¹. Unlike in Xinjiang, IMAR had been regulating mostly the forms and interpretations of religious practices while not strictly regulating who are allowed to practice and who are not⁷².

For 2010-2015, what distinguishes Ningxia from Xinjiang in terms of titular political participation is the overrepresentation of ethnic Hui representatives in the total number of representatives at the NHAR People's Congress. In terms of ethno-regional economic development, what distinguishes NHAR from XUAR is the ratio of PRC central state's budgeted transfer to NHAR's own tax and non-tax-based revenue being consistently higher than 1⁷³. With regard to titular cultural promotion, the dimensions on use of titular language do not apply, since NHAR has no titular language. Meanwhile, what distinguishes NHAR from XUAR for 2010-2015 is the ethno-regional state's accommodative attitude towards rise of Muslim identity

⁷⁰ Another ethno-region with a full-package titular-language-instructed education system in China is the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture of Jilin Province. Interviews in Beijing and Hohhot, August 16, August 21, 2016.

⁷¹ Starting fall 2020, the central state requires the medium of instruction for certain curricula in titular-language-instructed elementary/secondary schools to switch to Mandarin, which sparked controversies in Inner Mongolia.

⁷² Author's observations.

⁷³ '2015nian zhongyang dui difang shuishou fanhuan zhuan yi zhifu', accessed September 22, 2020. http://ysss.mof.gov.cn/2015czys/201503/t20150324_1206398.html; NHAR Statistical Bureau, *Ningxia Statistical Yearbook 2016* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2016).

expressions among ethnic Hui to attract investments from Gulf countries⁷⁴, which sparked policy debates online.

Inter-ethnic boundary-making in Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia

The explanatory variable, an ethno-region's inter-ethnic boundary-making, is defined as processes in which individuals of both the ethno-region's titular ethnic category and the multi-ethnic state's ethnic majority category relate to existing boundaries by trying either to maintain them or to change them, either to reinforce them or to de-emphasize them⁷⁵ in a historical context shaped by previous processes of boundary-makings. Such processes entail both tendencies towards integration and tendencies towards differentiation and are analyzed on three dimensions, acculturation, social integration, and psychological identification⁷⁶.

Acculturation connotes the processes of linguistic/cultural diffusions or changes that result in greater linguistic and cultural similarity⁷⁷ between populations of the titular category

⁷⁴ Corresponding to Wang Zhengwei and Liu Hui's tenures as NHAR's chair. Wang showed enthusiasm in introducing "Islamic finance" as a means to poverty reduction in Ningxia. Learning of Arabic gained some popularity. The tolerant attitude towards rise of Muslim identity expressions shifted to a more containing one, following central-state's relocations of Wang and Liu from Ningxia to positions at the central-state level. Nevertheless, the annual China-Arab States Expo continues to be held in Ningxia.

⁷⁵ Andreas Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making: Institutions, Power, Networks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 49.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 104; Rubén G. Rumbaut, 'The Melting and The Pot: Assimilation and Variety in American Life', in *Incorporating Diversity: Rethinking Assimilation in a Multicultural Age*, ed. Peter Kivisto (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2005), pp. 166-168.

⁷⁷ Rubén G. Rumbaut, 'The Melting and The Pot: Assimilation and Variety in American Life', p. 167.

and the majority category. Social integration is associated with aggregating the processes of interpersonal, socioeconomic, and spatial interactions relevant to the economy, the polity, and the community among populations of both the titular category and the majority category. Inter-ethnic social integration can be assessed according to such demographic indicators as levels of urbanization, educational attainments, intermarriage rates, and residential patterns. Psychological identification is associated with the level of ethnic consciousness among individuals of the titular category. Notably, robust level of ethnic consciousness among individuals of the titular category is indispensable for them to act socio-politically in ethnic terms. Weak ethnic consciousness can obscure the boundary between the titular and majority populations, which can in turn render the formally designated autonomy increasingly dissociated with its intended ‘agents.’

According to the 2010 census⁷⁸, in China, the overall level of urbanization reached 50.4%, whereas the overall level of higher education⁷⁹ reached 9.5%. The overall level of illiteracy in China was 4.88%, while the rate of inter-ethnic marriages⁸⁰ reached 3%⁸¹. Among the total married population of ethnic non-Han categories in China, the percentage of those married outside their own ethnic categories reached a much higher level, at 21.9%. Of the total population of those ethnic minority categories for whom ethno-regions have been designated, 64.8% were residents in those ethno-regions.

⁷⁸ PRC State Bureau of Statistics and PRC State Ethnic Affairs Commission, *Tabulation on Nationalities of 2010 Population Census of China* (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2013).

⁷⁹ Percentage of those who have received tertiary education in the total population age six and older.

⁸⁰ Percentage of those married outside their own ethnic categories in the total population married.

⁸¹ The rate is low due to those categorized as ethnic majority in China constituting 91.6% of the total population in 2010.

To evaluate and compare the China-wide level of social integration for the titular population of an ethno-region according to the 2010 census, I use an instrument (Table 4) that scores, relative to the national average, a population's level of integration on five dimensions, urbanization, higher education, illiteracy rate, inter-ethnic marriage rate, and residential concentration within designated ethno-regions. These dimensions were informed in Rahsaan Maxwell's study of immigrant minorities' integration in Western European democracies⁸² as well as in Rubén Rumbaut's discussion of minority 'assimilation' in the US⁸³. The score of each dimension is assigned a weight of 1/5. Scoring is mostly based on census data, cross-verified with respondents' perspectives and the author's observations. For an autonomous region in China, the formula with which to calculate the country-wide level of social integration for its titular ethnic population, SI, is proposed as

$$SI=(Du\times 1/5+De\times 1/5+Di\times 1/5+Dm\times 1/5+Dr\times 1/5)\times 100\%$$

The five dimensions are assessed on an ordinal scale of three categories. Accordingly, a titular population's score on these dimensions will take one of three mutually discrete values, as listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Scoring schemes for the China-wide level of social integration of an autonomous region's titular population

⁸² Rahsaan Maxwell, *Ethnic Minority Migrants in Britain and France: Integration Trade-offs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 13.

⁸³ Rubén G. Rumbaut, 'The Melting and The Pot: Assimilation and Variety in American Life', pp. 166-168.

Dimension	National average (2010)	Formula	Range	If the location quotient is	Then the score will be
Urbanization <i>Du</i>	50.4%	$LQ_u = u/50.4\%$	(0, 1.98]	<0.75 (significantly lower than national average)	0.25
				$0.75 \leq LQ_u \leq 1.25$ (largely comparable to national average)	0.75
				$1.25 < LQ_u < 1.98$ (significantly higher than national average)	1
Higher education <i>De</i>	9.5%	$LQ_e = e/9.5\%$	(0, 10.5]	<0.75 (significantly lower than national average)	0.25
				$0.75 \leq LQ_e \leq 1.25$ (largely comparable to national average)	0.75
				$1.25 < LQ_e < 10.5$ (significantly higher than national average)	1
Illiteracy <i>Di</i>	4.88%	$LQ_i = i/4.88\%$	(0, 20.4]	<0.75 (significantly lower than national average)	1
				$0.75 \leq LQ_i \leq 1.25$ (largely comparable to national average)	0.75
				$1.25 < LQ_i < 20.4$ (significantly higher than national average)	0.25
Inter-ethnic marriages <i>Dm</i>	3%	$LQ_m = m/3\%$	(0, 33.3]	<0.25 (significantly lower than national average)	0
				$0.25 \leq LQ_m < 0.75$ (significantly lower than national average)	0.25
				$0.75 \leq LQ_m \leq 1.25$ (largely comparable to national average)	0.75
Residential concentration <i>Dr</i>	64.8%	$LQ_r = r/64.8\%$	(0, 1.54]	$1.25 < LQ_m < 33.3$ (significantly higher than national average)	1
				<0.75 (significantly lower than national average)	1
				$0.75 \leq LQ_r \leq 1.25$ (largely comparable to national average)	0.75
					0.25

1.25 < LQ_i < 1.54
(significantly higher
than national average)

Table 5. Ethnic Uyghurs', ethnic Tibetans', ethnic Mongols', and ethnic Hui's China-wide level of social integration compared (2010)

	Ethnic Uyghurs			Ethnic Tibetans			Ethnic Mongols			Ethnic Hui		
	%	Location quotient	Score	%	Location quotient	Score	%	Location quotient	Score	%	Location quotient	Score
Urbanization	22	0.44	0.25	19.7	0.39	0.25	46.1	0.91	0.75	53.5	1.1	0.75
Higher Education	6.4	0.67	0.25	5.5	0.58	0.25	14.3	1.5	1	9.4	0.99	0.75
Illiteracy	3.44	0.7	1	29.59	6.1	0.25	3.26	0.67	1	8.99	1.8	0.25
Cross-ethnic Marriage	0.53	0.18	0	6	2	1	35.7	11.9	1	11.4	3.8	1
Residential Concentration	99.3	1.5	0.25	92.1	1.4	0.25	78.9	1.2	0.75	37	0.57	1
Total score			35%			40%			90%			75%

Source: PRC State Bureau of Statistics and PRC State Ethnic Affairs Commission (2013).

While Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Ningxia all feature robust ethnic consciousness among the titular population, they vary more conspicuously with regard to linguistic acculturation (knowledge of Mandarin) and the level of social integration of the titular population, as demonstrated in Table 5. An 'integration-distinction balance' is most pronounced in Inner Mongolia, followed by Ningxia, and least in Xinjiang and Tibet.

Xinjiang

Although censuses in China do not survey language uses, ethnic Uyghurs in Xinjiang still prefer to use Uyghur 'in all but the professional realm'⁸⁴. As of 2016, the majority of adult-age ethnic

⁸⁴ Joanne Smith Finley and Xiaowei Zang, ed, *Language, Education, and Uyghur Identity in Urban Xinjiang* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p. 13.

Uyghurs in Xinjiang either actively or passively know and use Uyghur, but only some of them are bilingual and able to competently use Mandarin, with the rest knowing only Uyghur. Urban-based ethnic Uyghurs tend to place emphasis upon bilingual skills in both Uyghur and Mandarin, while among those rural-based, Uyghur language dominates, where proficiency in and enthusiasm about learning Mandarin tend to be low. In the rural areas of the prefectures of Aksu, Kashgar, Hotan, and the Kyzylsu Kyrgyz Autonomous Prefecture, the *lingua franca* among individuals of different ethnicities tends to be Uyghur rather than Mandarin⁸⁵. Meanwhile, consciousness of being ethnically Uyghur has been robust in Xinjiang, as the percentage of ethnic Uyghurs in the total population of XUAR rose from 45% in 2000 to 49% in 2014⁸⁶.

As summarized in Table 5, the calculated China-wide level of social integration for the total population categorized as ethnic Uyghurs in China is 35% as of 2010. With 99.3% of ethnic Uyghurs in China concentrated in Xinjiang, the odds for them to frequently interact with the majority of the population of China who live outside Xinjiang can be relatively small. As statistical analysis of the samples from the 2005 PRC mini-census demonstrates, ethnic Uyghurs tended to be most disadvantaged in terms of ‘earnings in urban labor markets’⁸⁷. Most of my respondents confirmed ethnic Uyghurs’ relatively low level of social integration:

Some believed that the level of social closure among ethnic Uyghurs had more or less risen since the late 2000s and that it may negatively impact ethnic Uyghurs’ long-run prospects

⁸⁵ Xiaoxia Li, *Xinjiang nanbu xiangcun Hanren [Ethnic Han in the Countryside of Southern Xinjiang]* (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2015), p. 404.

⁸⁶ PRC State Bureau of Statistics and PRC State Ethnic Affairs Commission, *Tabulation on Nationalities of 2010 Population Census of China* (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2013); XUAR Statistical Bureau, *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook 2016* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2016).

⁸⁷ Xiaogang Wu and Guangye He, ‘Changing Ethnic Stratification in Contemporary China’, *Journal of Contemporary China* 25(102), (2016), p. 953.

of broader participation in the China-wide labor market, of social mobility, and of improved economic standings⁸⁸. Other respondents tended to treat growing economic inequality as a ‘cause’ of growing Uyghur-Han mutual segregation in Xinjiang⁸⁹. With the growing residential self-segregation⁹⁰ among both ethnic Uyghurs and Han in Xinjiang since the violent inter-ethnic clashes in 2009, maintaining cross-ethnic friendship has become more challenging for both ethnic Uyghurs and Han alike in Xinjiang. A lack of cross-ethnic affective ties and of enthusiasm in reaching out to individuals ‘on the other side’ at both elite and mass levels was observable among both populations alike⁹¹. Uyghur-Han marriages have never been a common phenomenon in Xinjiang and is becoming even rarer⁹², and ethnic Uyghurs’ intermarriage rate with ethnic Han is one of the lowest of all ethnic minorities in China.

Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia

According to the 2010 census, of the total population categorized as ethnic Tibetans in China, only 43.3% were residents of TAR, with the remaining residing mostly in the provinces of Sichuan (23.8%), Qinghai (21.9%), Gansu (7.8%), and Yunnan (2.3%). Ethnic Tibetans living in Sichuan and Yunnan who have graduated from high schools are usually bilingual in a Tibetic/Qiangic and a Sinitic dialect, since the language of instruction in schools for ethnic Tibetans in Sichuan and Yunnan has primarily been Mandarin. Inside TAR, similar to the

⁸⁸ Interviews in Ürümqi and Beijing, August 7, 2015, March 4, August 13, 2016, March 30, 2017.

⁸⁹ Interviews in Ürümqi and Beijing, July 30, August 13, 2016, March 31, 2017.

⁹⁰ Interviews in Ürümqi and Beijing, August 7, 2015, March 4, August 2, August 13, 2016, March 31, 2017.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Interviews in Ürümqi and Beijing, August 7, 2015, July 30, August 10, 2016.

linguistic demographics among ethnic Uyghurs in Xinjiang, the majority of adult-age ethnic Tibetans either actively or passively know and use Tibetic dialects, but only some of them are bilingual and able to competently use Mandarin. Meanwhile, consciousness of being ethnically Tibetan remains robust in Tibet, as the percentage of ethnic Tibetans in the total population of TAR was stable above 90% throughout 2000-2014⁹³. As of 2010, the China-wide level of social integration for the total population categorized as ethnic Tibetans is 40% (Table 5), largely comparable to that for ethnic Uyghurs.

According to the 2010 census, of the total population categorized as ethnic Mongols in China, 70.7% were residing in Inner Mongolia, among whom at least 13.7%⁹⁴ would claim a Sinitic dialect as mother tongue while having no knowledge of any Mongolic dialect. Meanwhile, 20.1% of ethnic Mongols in China were residing in Liaoning (11%), Hebei (3%), Jilin (2.4%), Heilongjiang (2.1%), and Beijing (1.3%). Ethnic Mongols in these provinces/municipalities are either bilingual in a Sinitic and a Mongolic dialect or monolingual in a Sinitic dialect. In this sense, unlike ethnic Uyghurs or Tibetans, a significant portion of ethnic Mongols in China know only a Sinitic dialect. Nevertheless, consciousness of being ethnically Mongol remains robust in Inner Mongolia, as the percentage of ethnic Mongols in the total population of IMAR rose from 17.1% in 2000 to 18.65% in 2014⁹⁵. As of 2010, the China-

⁹³ PRC State Bureau of Statistics and PRC State Ethnic Affairs Commission, *Tabulation on Nationalities of 2010 Population Census of China* (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2013); TAR Statistical Bureau, *Tibet Statistical Yearbook 2016* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2016).

⁹⁴ Summing up the populations of ethnic Mongols in county-level administrative units where they traditionally know and use only Sinitic dialects.

⁹⁵ PRC State Bureau of Statistics and PRC State Ethnic Affairs Commission, *Tabulation on Nationalities of 2010 Population Census of China* (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2013); IMAR Statistical Bureau, *Inner Mongolia Statistical Yearbook 2016* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2016).

wide level of social integration for the total population categorized as ethnic Mongols is 90% (Table 5), tremendously higher than that for ethnic Uyghurs.

According to the 2010 census, of the total population categorized as ethnic Hui in China, only 20.5% were residing in Ningxia, with the rest found in Gansu (11.9%), Xinjiang (9.3%), Henan (9.1%), Qinghai (7.8%), Yunnan (6.6%), Hebei (5.4%), Shandong (5.1%), etc. Almost all those categorized as ethnic Hui in China speak a Sinitic dialect as mother tongue. Meanwhile, consciousness of being ethnically Hui has been robust in Ningxia, as the percentage of ethnic Hui in the total population of NHAR rose from 33.9% in 2000 to 36% in 2014⁹⁶. As of 2010, the China-wide level of social integration for the total population categorized as ethnic Hui is 75% (Table 5), significantly higher than that for ethnic Uyghurs. That said, about 50.8% of ethnic Hui were concentrated in the northwest of China⁹⁷, where ethnic Hui tended to be socially less integrated than those found in the rest of China⁹⁸.

Titular elites' representation in the ethno-regional state of Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia

The intervening variable, titular elites' bargaining capacity with the central state, activates the link from inter-ethnic boundary-making processes to implemented autonomy outcome. Such

⁹⁶ PRC State Bureau of Statistics and PRC State Ethnic Affairs Commission, *Tabulation on Nationalities of 2010 Population Census of China* (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2013); NHAR Statistical Bureau, *Ningxia Statistical Yearbook 2016* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2016).

⁹⁷ PRC State Bureau of Statistics and PRC State Ethnic Affairs Commission, *Tabulation on Nationalities of 2010 Population Census of China* (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2013).

⁹⁸ A unique characteristic of clerical institutions among ethnic Hui in China is a variety of Sufi orders (*menhuan*) and their strong mobilizational capacity over their followers.

capacity is their ability to employ both material and discursive resources to influence decision-makings at both central and ethno-regional states self-consciously and reflexively⁹⁹. It is constituted by four dimensions, elite-level inter-ethnic relations, central state's perception of the ethno-region, intra-ethnic cleavage structure, and titular elites' representation in the ethno-regional state and its most powerful positions. Proportionate representation of titular elites in the ethno-regional state is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for higher level of implemented autonomy outcome, since proportionate or overrepresentation needs to be combined with individual incumbent elites' agency in the actual governance of the ethno-region.

Although not tracing in details the process of how differing patterns of inter-ethnic boundary-making can lead to differing patterns of titular elites' bargaining capacity for the four autonomous regions, this section applies an instrument to measure and compare titular elites' level of representation in the respective ethno-regional state and its most powerful positions of Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Ningxia. Titular elites' representation is used as a proxy for titular elites' bargaining capacity. Based upon such a comparison, I test whether, across the four ethno-regions, the higher the level of social integration for the titular population, the higher the level of titular elites' representation in the ethno-regional state, the higher the level of implemented autonomy outcome for the ethno-region.

In terms of operationalization, I calculate the 'representation-by-population quotient' of an ethno-region's titular elites by weighting the quotients of the 2015 percentages of such elites in the key posts of various ethno-regional party-state apparatuses divided by the 2014 percentage of the titular population in the total population of the ethno-region. The instrument takes into

⁹⁹ James Mahoney and Richard Snyder, 'Rethinking Agency and Structure in the Study of Regime Change', *Studies in Comparative International Development* 34(2), (1999), p. 24.

consideration the distribution of decision-making and enforcement powers across different party-state apparatuses. I base my understanding of power distribution across party-state apparatuses on what is stipulated in the PRC Constitution, the Law of Ethnic Regional Autonomy, and on respondents' perceptions.

The largest weight, 50%, is assigned to the key posts in the ethno-region's CCP committee, including the secretary, vice-secretary, and heads of key departments¹⁰⁰. The second largest weight, 35%, is assigned to the key posts in the executive organs, including the leadership of the ethno-regional People's Government, the head of the Department of Public Security, and the head of the Committee of Development and Reform, in light of the authority in terms of policy implementations and law enforcements such organs wield despite their lack of decision-making power in terms of policy formulations and personnel. Specific to Xinjiang, key posts in the XUAR executive organs receive a 20% weight, whereas a 15% weight is assigned to the leadership of Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (hereafter XPCC). XPCC is a combination of paramilitary administrative units and SOEs but nominally also a part of the XUAR. However, in terms of jurisdiction, XPCC is *de facto* 'autonomous' from XUAR, governing enclaves of land and population throughout XUAR¹⁰¹. Engaged in agriculture, manufacturing, construction, as well as service industries, XPCC functions as enterprises and contributes to the revenue of both the central state and the XUAR ethno-regional state. A smaller weight of 10% is assigned to the key positions in the legislative and advisory organs. The

¹⁰⁰ Committee of Political and Legal Affairs, Department of Organization, Department of Propaganda, Committee of Disciplines, Department of United Front.

¹⁰¹ 12% of XUAR's population (among whom 13.9% ethnic non-Han) and 4.24% of XUAR's land mass as of 2014. 'Bingtuan de lishi yu fazhan', PRC State Council Information Office, accessed September 22, 2020. <http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/2014/Document/1382598/1382598.htm>.

legislative organ, ethno-regional People's Congress, is nominally the supreme state organ of an ethno-region in China¹⁰². Its standing committee has the authority to enact ethno-regional-level autonomy regulations or separate regulations¹⁰³. Meanwhile, the ethno-regional People's Political Consultative Conference is an advisory organ intended for formally incorporating a broader spectrum of political, economic, and cultural elites in the ethno-regional state. Finally, 5% of the weight is assigned to the key positions of ethno-regional People's Court and People's Procuratorate, considering that their major roles are to apply laws in civil and criminal justice, to prosecute, and to investigate law enforcements with very limited decision-making power¹⁰⁴.

Table 6. Titular elites' representation in the ethno-regional state of Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Ningxia compared (2015)

	Number of those occupying the most powerful positions who are of the titular category	Number of all those occupying the most powerful positions	Representation-by-population quotient	Weight assigned
<u>Xinjiang (Titular category: Uyghur)</u>				
CCP Committee	4	14	0.6	50%
Executive organs	5	11	0.9	20%
Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps	0	3	0	15%
Legislative and advisory organs	8	27	0.6	10%
Judiciary	2	2	2	5%

¹⁰² *PRC Constitution*, Article 99.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* Article 100.

¹⁰⁴ Interviews in Ürümqi and Beijing, August 7, 2015, August 9, 2016.

Weighted representation-by-population quotient 0.64

Tibet (Titular category: Tibetan)

CCP Committee	7	15	0.5	50%
Executive organs	8	15	0.6	35%
Legislative and advisory organs	21	32	0.7	10%
Judiciary	1	2	0.6	5%

Weighted representation-by-population quotient 0.56

Inner Mongolia (Titular category: Mongol)

CCP Committee	4	12	1.8	50%
Executive organs	5	10	2.6	35%
Legislative and advisory organs	7	20	1.8	10%
Judiciary	1	2	2.6	5%

Weighted representation-by-population quotient 2.12

Ningxia (Titular category: Hui)

CCP Committee	4	15	0.7	50%
Executive organs	4	13	0.9	35%
Legislative and advisory organs	5	17	0.8	10%
Judiciary	1	2	1.4	5%

Weighted representation-by-population quotient 0.82

Sources (all accessed September 22, 2020): People's Daily: Database for Local Leaders, <http://ldzl.people.com.cn/dfzlk/front/firstPage.htm>; China Economy Net: Database for Local Leaders, <http://district.ce.cn/zt/rwk/index.shtml>; XUAR Government, <http://www.xinjiang.gov.cn>; XUAR People's Congress, <http://www.xjpcsc.gov.cn>; TAR Government, <http://www.xizang.gov.cn>; IMAR Government, <http://www.nmg.gov.cn>; IMAR People's Congress, <http://www.nmgrd.gov.cn>; NHAR Government, <http://www.nx.gov.cn>; NHAR People's Congress, <http://www.nxrd.gov.cn>.

Table 7. Those occupying the most powerful positions at the ethno-regional state of Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Ningxia (2010-2017)

	Position	Person occupying that position	Ethnicity	Tenure
	<u>Xinjiang</u>			
CCP apparatus	Secretary of the Committee	Zhang Chunxian	Han	2010-2016
		Chen Quanguo	Han	2016-
	Vice-Secretary of the Committee	Nur Bekri ^a	Uyghur	2003-2014
		Shöhrät Zakir ^b	Uyghur	2014-
	Secretary of the Committee of Political and Legal Affairs	Fu Qiang	Han	2009-2011
		Xiong Xuanguo	Han	2011-2016
		Zhu Hailun	Han	2016-
	Head of the Department of Organization	Han Yong	Han	2004-2013
		Ma Xuejun	Dongxiang	2013-
	Head of the Department of Propaganda	Hu Wei	Han	2010-2013
Li Xuejun		Han	2013-2016	
Yan Guocan		Han	2016	
Tian Wen		Han	2016-	
Secretary of the Committee of Disciplines	Fu Qiang	Han	2006-2011	
	Song Airong	Han	2011-2015	
	Xu Hairong	Han	2015-2017	
	Luo Dongchuan	Han	2017-	
Head of the Department of United Front	Wang Wei	Han	2006-2013	
	Cheng Zhenshan	Han	2013-2016	
	Shəwkät İmin	Uyghur	2016-	
Executive organs	Chairperson of the People's Government	Nur Bekri Shöhrät Zakir	Uyghur Uyghur	2007-2014 2014-

	Head of the Committee of Development and Reform	Liu Yanliang Zhang Chunlin	Han Han	2003-2013 2013-
	Head of the Department of Public Security	Zhu Changjie Wang Mingshan	Han Han	2009-2017 2017-
Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps	Secretary of the CCP Committee	Che Jun Han Yong Sun Jinlong	Han Han Han	2010-2015 2015-2016 2016-
	Vice-Secretary of the CCP Committee	Hua Shifei Liu Xinqi Peng Jiarui	Han Han Han	2006-2011 2011-2017 2017-
Legislative and advisory organs	Head of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress	Erkin İminbaqay ^c Nəim Yasin	Uyghur Uyghur	2008-2015 2015-
	Chair of the People's Political Consultative Conference	Əsgat Kərimbay Nurlan Abdilməjid	Kazakh Kazakh	2003-2013 2013-
Judiciary	Head of the People's Court	Rozi İsmail Nəim Yasin Mutalip Obul	Uyghur Uyghur Uyghur	2008-2012 2012-2015 2015-
	Head of the People's Procuratorate	Kasim Məkhmut Nizam İbrahim	Uyghur Uyghur	2008-2012 2012-
		<u>Tibet</u>		
CCP apparatus	Secretary of the Committee	Zhang Qingli Chen Quanguo Wu Yingjie	Han Han Han	2005-2011 2011-2016 2016-
	Vice-Secretary of the Committee	Padma Chöling ^d Losang Jamtsan Qizhala	Tibetan Tibetan Tibetan	2010-2013 2013-2017 2017-
	Secretary of the Committee of Political and Legal Affairs	Hao Peng Deng Xiaogang He Wenhao	Han Han Han	2010-2012 2012-2016 2016-

	Head of the Department of Organization	Yin Deming Liang Tiangeng Zeng Wanming	Han Han Han	2005-2012 2012-2014 2014-
	Head of the Department of Propaganda	Cui Yuying Dong Yunhu Jiang Jie Byamba Tashi	Tibetan Han Han Tibetan	2006-2011 2011-2015 2016 2016-
	Secretary of the Committee of Disciplines	Jin Shubao Wang Yongjun	Han Han	2006-2013 2014-
	Head of the Department of United Front	Qizhala Kongpo Tashi Danke	Tibetan Tibetan Tibetan	2010-2011 2011-2016 2016-
Executive organs	Chairperson of the People's Government	Padma Chöling Losang Jamtsan Qizhala	Tibetan Tibetan Tibetan	2010-2013 2013-2017 2017-
	Head of the Committee of Development and Reform	Ji Guogang Purbu Tsereng	Han Tibetan	2013-2016 2016-
	Head of the Department of Public Security	Li Zhao Liu Jiang	Han Han	2008-2013 2013-
Legislative and advisory organs	Head of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress	Qiangba Puntsog Padma Chöling Losang Jamtsan	Tibetan Tibetan Tibetan	2010-2013 2013-2017 2017-
	Chair of the People's Political Consultative Conference	Pagbalha Geleg Namgyal	Tibetan	1993-
Judiciary	Head of the People's Court	Norbu Thondup Suoda	Tibetan Tibetan	2007-2013 2013-
	Head of the People's Procuratorate	Zhang Peizhong	Han	2003-

Inner Mongolia

CCP apparatus	Secretary of the Committee	Hu Chunhua	Han	2009-2012
		Wang Jun	Han	2012-2016
		Li Jiheng	Han	2016-
	Vice-Secretary of the Committee	Baatir ^e	Mongol	2008-2016
		Bu Xiaolin ^f	Mongol	2016-
	Secretary of the Committee of Political and Legal Affairs	Xing Yun	Han	2006-2011
		Liu Hui	Han	2016
		Li Jia	Han	2011-2016, 2016-
	Head of the Department of Organization	Li Jia	Han	2009-2011
		Li Pengxin	Han	2011-2016
Zeng Yichun		Han	2016-	
Head of the Department of Propaganda	Ulan	Mongol	2006-2016	
	Bai Yugang	Mongol	2016-	
Secretary of the Committee of Disciplines	Zhang Li	Han	2008-2016	
	Liu Qifan	Han	2016-	
Head of the Department of United Front	Wang Suyi	Mongol	2010-2013	
	Bu Xiaolin	Mongol	2014-2016	
	Wang Lixia	Mongol	2016-	
Executive organs	Chairperson of the People's Government	Baatir	Mongol	2008-2016
		Bu Xiaolin	Mongol	2016-
	Head of the Committee of Development and Reform	Liang Tiecheng	Mongol	2003-2013
		Bao Manda	Mongol	2013-
Head of the Department of Public Security	Zhao Liping	Han	2005-2012	
	Ma Ming	Han	2012-	
Legislative and advisory organs	Head of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress	Hu Chunhua	Han	2010-2013
		Wang Jun	Han	2013-2016
		Li Jiheng	Han	2017-

	Chair of the People's Political Consultative Conference	Chen Guanglin Ren Yaping	Han Han	2007-2011 2011-
Judiciary	Head of the People's Court	Wang Weishan Hu Yifeng	Mongol Mongol	2003-2011 2011-
	Head of the People's Procuratorate	Xing Baoyu Ma Yongsheng	Han Han	2003-2012 2012-
		<u>Ningxia</u>		
CCP apparatus	Secretary of the Committee	Chen Jianguo Zhang Yi Li Jianhua Shi Taifeng	Han Han Han Han	2002-2010 2010-2013 2013-2017 2017-
	Vice-Secretary of the Committee	Wang Zhengwei ^g Liu Hui ^h Xian Hui	Hui Hui Hui	2007-2013 2013-2016 2016-
	Secretary of the Committee of Political and Legal Affairs	Su Deliang Wang Yanfei Li Wenzhang Xu Guangguo	Han Han Han Han	2007-2013 2013-2015 2015-2016 2017-
	Head of the Department of Organization	Xu Songnan Fu Xingguo Sheng Ronghua	Han Han Han	2006-2012 2012-2016 2016-
	Head of the Department of Propaganda	Yang Chunguang Cai Guoying Zhao Yongqing	Han Han Han	2007-2012 2012-2017 2017-
	Secretary of the Committee of Disciplines	Liu Xiaobin Chen Xuguo Xu Chuanzhi	Han Han Han	2008-2011 2011-2016 2016-
	Head of the Department of United Front	Ma Jinhui Ma Sangang Ma Tingli Bai Shangcheng	Hui Hui Hui Hui	2005-2011 2011-2015 2015-2017 2017-

Executive organs	Chairperson of the People's Government	Wang Zhengwei	Hui	2007-2013
		Liu Hui	Hui	2013-2016
		Xian Hui	Hui	2016-
	Head of the Committee of Development and Reform	Yuan Jinlin	Han	2007-2013
		Zhang Bawu	Han	2013-2017
		Xu Ning	Han	2017-
	Head of the Department of Public Security	Su Deliang	Han	2005-2013
		Wang Yanfei	Han	2013-2015
		Xu Erfeng	Han	2015-
Legislative and advisory organs	Head of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress	Chen Jianguo	Han	2002-2010
		Zhang Yi	Han	2010-2013
		Li Jianhua	Han	2013-2017
		Shi Taifeng	Han	2017-
	Chair of the People's Political Consultative Conference	Xiang Zongxi	Han	2008-2013
		Qi Tongsheng	Han	2013-
Judiciary	Head of the People's Court	Ma Sangang	Hui	2008-2011
		Li Yankai	Hui	2011-
	Head of the People's Procuratorate	Wang Yanfei	Han	2008-2013
		Li Dingda	Han	2013-

^aNur Bekri became in 2014 head of PRC's National Energy Administration. In 2019, he was sentenced to life imprisonment for corruption charges in Shenyang, Liaoning.

^bShöhrät Zakir grew up in Ürümqi. His father, Abdullah Zakirov, was a member of the CCP XUAR standing committee and vice-chair of XUAR government during the 1950s and 1960s. Zakirov participated in the Latinization of Uyghur and Kazakh scripts in XUAR. The Latinized scripts were officially in use from the 1960s until 1982, when they were officially abolished and replaced with the Arabic-based (Chaghatay) scripts currently in use.

^cErkin İminbaqay has been serving as a vice-president of the standing committee of PRC's National People's Congress since 2013.

^dPadma Chöling has been serving as a vice-president of the standing committee of PRC's National People's Congress since 2013.

^eBaatır served as head of PRC's State Ethnic Affairs Commission 2016-2020.

^fBu Xiaolin is a granddaughter of Ulanfu (Yun Ze). Once trained in Moscow and based in Yan'an, Ulanfu (Yun Ze) was IMAR's founding chair and its "paramount leader" in the 1950s and early 1960s. He became in 1983 PRC's vice-president and presided over the drafting of Law of Ethnic Regional Autonomy. His son, Buhe, was also once IMAR's chair (1983-1993). The Yun family maintains exceptionally amicable relationship with the Xi family.

^gWang Zhengwei served as head of PRC's State Ethnic Affairs Commission 2013-2016.

^hLiu Hui has been serving as a vice-head of PRC's State Ethnic Affairs Commission since 2016.

Sources: see Table 6.

For Xinjiang, the weighted representation-by-population quotient for ethnic Uyghur elites as of 2015 is 0.64 (Table 6), which is lower than 1 and signifies their underrepresentation in the XUAR ethno-regional state and its most powerful positions. Overall, of the 38 individuals who

occupied the most powerful positions of XUAR 2010-2017, only nine are ethnic Uyghurs (Table 7), making up barely a quarter and thus underrepresented in relation to ethnic Uyghurs' population share in the total population of Xinjiang.

For Tibet, the weighted representation-by-population quotient for ethnic Tibetan elites as of 2015 is 0.56 (Table 6), signifying their underrepresentation in the TAR ethno-regional state and its most powerful positions. Overall, of the 29 individuals who occupied the most powerful positions of TAR 2010-2017, only 12 are ethnic Tibetans (Table 7), making up barely a half and thus underrepresented in relation to ethnic Tibetans' population share in the total population of Tibet.

For Inner Mongolia, the weighted representation-by-population quotient for ethnic Mongol elites as of 2015 is 2.12 (Table 6), signifying their overrepresentation in the IMAR ethno-regional state and its most powerful positions. Overall, of the 26 individuals who occupied the most powerful positions of IMAR 2010-2017, ten are ethnic Mongols (Table 7), making up more than a third and thus overrepresented in relation to ethnic Mongols' population share in the total population of Inner Mongolia.

For Ningxia, the weighted representation-by-population quotient for ethnic Hui elites as of 2015 is 0.82 (Table 6), signifying their underrepresentation in the NHAR ethno-regional state and its most powerful positions. Overall, of the 32 individuals who occupied the most powerful positions of NHAR 2010-2017, only eight are ethnic Hui (Table 7), making up a quarter and thus underrepresented in relation to ethnic Hui's population share in the total population of NHAR.

To sketch the mechanism as regards how an inter-ethnic 'integration-distinction balance' can lead to greater autonomy outcome, I focus upon Xinjiang while discussing Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Ningxia tangentially. As all the four autonomous regions feature robust titular

consciousness, the major difference consists in the extent to which an ‘integration-distinction balance’ has been achieved, or rather, how titular-Han acculturation and social integration shapes titular elites’ bargaining capacity. In this regard, robust titular consciousness is a necessary condition for titular elites to build their bargaining capacity, since first and foremost they need to be aware of their being ‘titular.’

In Xinjiang, relatively low level of linguistic Sinicization combined with low level of Uyghur-Han social integration not only hampers ethnic Uyghur elites’ capacity to build cross-ethnic political networks but also contributes to less collusive, more hierarchical types of relationships with ethnic Han elites, especially in terms of their capacity to build cross-ethnic coalitions and to consolidate standings within the incumbent CCP¹⁰⁵. Ethnic Uyghurs’ low level of social integration also contributes to less positive perceptions of Xinjiang by the central state as China’s ‘most challenging’ autonomous region¹⁰⁶ and translates into highly differentiated, highly polarized intra-ethnic socio-economic and cultural contour despite highly robust shared consciousness of being ethnically distinct. Ethnic Uyghurs’ lack of solid relationships with both the central state and their co-ethnics, coupled with a less-than-positive image of Xinjiang in the

¹⁰⁵ Interviews in Ürümqi and Beijing, August 7, 2015, March 2, August 10, August 13, 2016, March 30, March 31, April 4, 2017.

¹⁰⁶ Informed by a team of researchers specializing in ‘borderland studies’ (e.g. Ma Dazheng at Chinese Academy of Social Sciences), central-state elites in Beijing are well aware of ethnic Uyghurs’ lack of social integration into China’s mainstream polity, economy, and culture. Central-state elites attribute such lack of integration to perceived strong consciousness of being ethnically distinct and frame it as a ‘major challenge’ for the governing of Xinjiang. Concerns about such a challenge became more pressing after the 2009 Ürümqi inter-ethnic clashes. Interviews in Ürümqi and Beijing, August 7, 2015, August 10, 2016, March 30, 2017.

eyes of Beijing, have been jointly sufficient for underrepresentation of Uyghur elites¹⁰⁷ in the party-state organs and their most powerful positions of Xinjiang.

As compared to Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia has been considerably more capable of striking an ‘integration-distinction balance,’ and Ningxia slightly more capable. Their levels of titular representation in the party-state apparatuses tend to be higher than that of Xinjiang (Table 6). Meanwhile, Tibet features a similar ‘integration-distinction imbalance’ to Xinjiang, and its level of titular representation in the party-state apparatuses tend to be even lower than that of Xinjiang (Table 6).

Conclusion

This article first introduces a conceptual framework to measure and compare autonomy as implemented outcome across different autonomous regions in China. It then proposes an analytical framework, composed of an explanatory (inter-ethnic boundary-making processes) and an intervening (titular elites’ representation in the ethno-regional state) variable, to account for cross-ethno-regional variations in terms of implemented autonomy outcome. Both frameworks

¹⁰⁷ Gardner Bovingdon attributes ethnic Uyghur elites’ underrepresentation in the 1990s-2000s to three tendencies: ethnic Han elites’ monopoly over decision-making, ethnic Uyghur elites’ reluctance to join CCP, and dilution of ethnic Uyghur elites’ influence via overrepresentation of elites of other ethnic non-Han categories in Xinjiang. Gardner Bovingdon, ‘Heteronomy and Its Discontents’, in *Governing China’s Multiethnic Frontiers*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), pp. 129-131.

are applied to four autonomous regions, Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Ningxia, for 2010-2015. A comparison of these ethno-regions in terms of the empirical evidence on inter-ethnic boundary-making, titular elites' bargaining capacity, and implemented autonomy outcome tends to substantiate my argument that an 'integration-distinction balance,' or rather, higher inter-ethnic integration combined with robust consciousness of inter-ethnic distinction, can contribute to titular elites' representation in the ethno-regional state, which is a necessary condition for greater autonomy outcome for the ethno-region. As summarized in Table 8, the level of Mongol-Han integration was the highest, followed by that of Hui-Han integration, while that of Tibetan-Han and Uyghur-Han integration was the lowest. Titular elites were most represented in the ethno-regional state of Inner Mongolia, followed by Ningxia, and least represented in the ethno-regional state of Xinjiang and Tibet. Accordingly, Inner Mongolia attained the highest implemented autonomy outcome of the four autonomous regions, and Xinjiang and Tibet the lowest.

In such a colossal, multi-ethnic, authoritarian state as China, certain degree of minority-majority integration may be necessary to improve ethnic minority elites' bargaining capacity. The socially more integrated section can defend the space for expressing inter-ethnic distinction. Moreover, integration possesses the potential of undermining the central state's essentializing schemes of inter-ethnic distinctions, increasing the 'legibility'¹⁰⁸ of the 'rules of the game' of the multi-ethnic state for ethnic minority elites, and allowing them to expand their political networks, to build their physical and human capital, as well as to increase their control over

¹⁰⁸ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

knowledge-production. Otherwise, the central state can use rigid inter-ethnic divide to justify highly coercive practices.

Table 8. Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia compared on the key variables

	Titular social integration	Titular consciousness	Titular elites' representation	Implemented autonomy outcome
Xinjiang	Low	Robust	Underrepresentation	Low
Tibet	Low	Robust	Underrepresentation	Low
Inner Mongolia	High	Robust	Overrepresentation	Relatively high
Ningxia	Moderate	Robust	Underrepresentation	Relatively low

Future research can test the statistical significance of my argument to a larger sample of ethno-regions in China by collecting either synchronic observations or a mix of synchronic and diachronic, within-case observations and by including sub-provincial-level autonomous prefectures as cases. The diachronic aspect of such research would examine whether growing or dwindling levels of integration over time have contributed to growing or dwindling levels of titular elites' bargaining capacity as well as growing or dwindling levels of autonomy outcomes. Moreover, additional data-collecting fieldwork may be needed to comparatively trace the process of how differing patterns of inter-ethnic boundary-making can lead to differing patterns of titular elites' bargaining capacity, especially for Tibet and Ningxia. What can also be investigated is whether China's fiscal federalism can amplify or inhibit an autonomous region's implemented autonomy outcome.