

**A Retrospect and Reflection on Chinese Ethnic Minority Policy:**  
**From the Pursuit of Unity to Respect of Diversity**

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- This study is supported by the Institute of Federalism of University of Fribourg (IFF). Its main objective is to enhance the mutual understanding between different cultures.

The main questions I try to answer in this paper is

- Why the Chinese ethnic minority policy stresses the importance of unity so much? What is the background and theoretical basis?
- Are these theories still valid nowadays?
- If they are not enough to meet the needs of current times, what kinds of changes need to be done?

**1. Background Information of Ethnic Minority Policy in China**

- **1.1 Highly homogenous population structure**
  - The Han ethnic group account for 91.59% of all the population
  - All the 55 ethnic minority groups only account for 8.41%
  - Some largest ethnic minority groups are highly sinicized
    - The Zhuang ethnic group: 16.18 million
    - The Man ethnic group: 10.68 million
    - The Hui ethnic group: 9.82 million

The data is from the 2000 population census, the latest accurate statistics

**1. Background Information of Ethnic Minority Policy in China**

- **1.1 Highly homogenous population structure**
  - The reasons of this highly homogenous situation are complex, and the most important ones are below:
    - The long tradition of highly centralized political system
    - The dominant but inclusive Han-Chinese culture
    - The strong movements which initiated by Mao Zedong and CPC
    - The lately but strong influence of marketization of Chinese economy

Two famous emperors who strengthened the centralization greatly  
 Qin Shihuang(259-210BC in position) Han Wudi(140-87BC in position)



### 1. Background Information of Ethnic Minority Policy in China

- 1.2 Ethnic-mixed living structure

China's ethnic groups live together over vast areas while some live in individual concentrated communities.

The Han account for 61.6 in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, 65.4% in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, 79.2% in Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region.

The only exception is in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous region(40.6%) and Tibet Autonomous Region(6.1%).



### 1. Background Information of Ethnic Minority Policy in China

- 1.2 Ethnic-mixed living structure

The reasons for this living structure are complicated too, and the most important ones are below:

- (1) Central Governments of various dynasties organized people to immigrate to border area to exploit these areas, which facilitated the control to these areas and reinforced the national defense
- (2) The Han Chinese who lived in dense areas went to the sparsely populated area to make their living.
- (3) The marketization of Chinese economy makes more people to move to the border area to search for trade opportunities.
- (4) The traffic improvement in the minority areas facilitates the ethnic mixing and movement.

## 1. Background Information of Ethnic Minority Policy in China

- **1.3 Long history of dealing with interethnic relation**
- China has a long history of dealing with interethnic relation. When the first dynasty of China, the Xia dynasty emerged in 4000 years ago, China is a country includes a lot of ethnic minority groups. In fact, the prototype of this dynasty is a coalition of ethnic groups for managing the flood of Yellow River.

## 1. Background Information of Ethnic Minority Policy in China

- **1.3 Long history of dealing with interethnic relation**
- There are three kinds of ethnic relationship in Chinese history generally.
  - (1) Han ethnic group in the dominant position
  - (2) The ethnic minority group in the dominant position
  - (3) Power sharing between ethnic groups



## 2. Theories which Have Important Influence on Chinese Ethnic Minority Policy

- **2.1 Confucius' theory**
- The main points of the Confucius theory on ethnicity issues are below:
  - (1)The culture, not the blood or origin, is the distinguishing standard between Chinese and foreigners.
  - (2)Every nation is equal on the inner side, and harmony is the most precious.
  - (3)However, the Huaxia civilization is more advanced than the barbarians' civilization, and there is need to spread our culture to them.
  - (4)The religion is not an important matter, and people need to focus on their current life. That's why there is no such kind of religious war in Chinese history.



## 2. Theories which Have Important Influence on Chinese Ethnic Minority Policy

- **2.2 Marxism theory**
- (1) Ethnic issues are subordinate to class issues, and root in the economic issues at last.
- (2) The working class has no ethnicity or nationality, and proletariat all over the world should unite to struggle for their liberation.
- (3) The ethnicity, accompanied with the nation, and state will eventually disappear when the communism society has been achieved.
- (4) Religion is the drug of people, which makes the oppressed classes accept their submissive position and not to fight with their rulers.

## 2. Theories which Have Important Influence on Chinese Ethnic Minority Policy

- **2.3 Mao's theory**
- (1) Every ethnic group in China is equal, and we must combat with the Great-Hansm and local-nationality chauvinism.
- (2) The ethnic minority region can not secede from China, but they can exercise rights of ethnic region autonomy.
- (3) The leadership of CPC is unshakable, and Party will cultivate the ethnic minority cadres to represent the ethnic minority group.
- (4) The religion should be tolerated in limited level in limited period, and regulated by state strictly.

## 3. The Characters of Chinese Ethnic Minority Policy under these Theories

- **Emphasizing the common identity**



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- Emphasizing the common identity
- Limited tolerance to ethnic diversity in politics



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- Emphasizing the common identity
- Limited tolerance to ethnic diversity in politics
- Preferential treatments to ethnic minority groups and ethnic regions

Rabiye Qadir's family



### 3. The Characters of Chinese Ethnic Minority Policy under these Theories

- Emphasizing the common identity
- Limited tolerance to ethnic diversity in politics
- Preferential treatments to ethnic minority groups and ethnic regions
- Repression to religions, especially the Islam and Lamaism

### 4. The Dilemma of Current Ethnic Policy in China

- The resent from some ethnic minority groups
- July 5, 2009
- March 14, 2008



#### 4. The Dilemma of Current Ethnic Policy in China

- The resent from some ethnic minority groups
- The discontent from Han ethnic group
- Han Chinese in Xinjiang request the Secretary Wang Lequan to resign



#### 4. The Dilemma of Current Ethnic Policy in China

- The resent from some ethnic minority groups
- The discontent from Han ethnic group
- The sever criticism from international world

#### 5. The Reasons of the Difficulties

- The illusion of culture superiority



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- The illusion of culture superiority
- The decay of Marxism belief
- The over-emphasized unity on political and cultural field
- The over-sensitiveness to the religion exercise

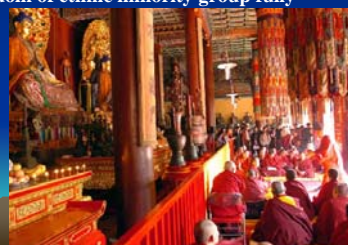
### 6. The Key to Adjustment of Ethnic Policy: Respect the Diversity and Evolve a More Inclusive Culture

- Guarantee the rights of ethnic minority to enjoy the full autonomy in cultural, educational and religious fields



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- Respect the human rights especially the religious freedom of ethnic minority group fully



**6. The Key to Adjustment of Ethnic Policy: Respect the Diversity and Evolve a More Inclusive Culture**

- Guarantee the rights of ethnic minority to enjoy the full autonomy in cultural, educational and religious fields
- Respect the human rights especially the religious freedom of ethnic minority group fully
- Tolerate the ethnic minority dissidents who protest peacefully and establish an institution to have dialogues with them



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- Tolerate the ethnic minority dissidents who protest peacefully and establish an institution to have dialogues with them
- Absorb more elites from the ethnic minority groups into governments, state-run agencies and state-owned corporations in every level
- Ensure the equality of civil and criminal law both in enactment and enforcement

**Thanks!**