

Ethnic Minority Elites in China's Party-State Leadership: An Empirical Assessment

Cheng Li

Recent uprisings across Tibetan regions of China as well as purported terror plots planned by Uighur separatists seeking independence for Xinjiang have highlighted the challenges that the Chinese Communist Party faces in governing a Han-dominant but multiethnic China. How China handles the “nationalities question” will be a crucial determinant of social stability going forward. Chinese top leaders have long recognized the value to the Party of having ethnic minority cadres among the Party-state elites, both for propaganda purposes as well as to inspire minority peoples to view the system as containing opportunities for their own advancement. Yet the Party has also maintained a firm grip on power in the ethnic minority-dominant political units by appointing ethnic Hans to the most important positions. An understanding the changing role of ethnic minorities in Chinese politics is essential for comprehending the dynamics of China's rapidly transforming political landscape.

In the wake of the recent unrest in Tibet, ethnic tensions in China are in the spotlight of the international media.¹ The overseas torch rally for the Beijing Summer Olympics, which was supposed to promote China's prestige and influence, met with worldwide protests over China's treatment of Tibet, reinforcing the fact that the Tibet issue has severely damaged China's public image on the world stage. Ethnic conflict in the People's Republic of China (PRC) is, of course, not limited to the Tibetan region. Relations between the central government and several other ethnic minority groups in the country, most noticeably Uighurs, the largest Turkic Muslim population in China's northwestern province of Xinjiang, have also been beset by a great deal of trouble in recent years. In the spring of 2008, for example, the Chinese authorities announced that they had uncovered two terrorist plots involving kidnappings and a suicide bombing planned for the upcoming Beijing Olympics. Officials claimed that both were linked to the Uighur Muslim separatist movement.² These developments suggest that the Chinese government now has a pressing need to address ethnic tensions in the country, which have increasingly become a major liability for China's development.³ At a time when Hu Jintao and other top leaders have publicly placed priority on enhancing social harmony, the frequent occurrence of ethnic-related riots and other incidents in the country significantly undermines the central leadership's claims to be building a “harmonious society.”

One strategy for reconciling ethnic tensions in Han-dominant China has been to recruit more ethnic minority elites into the political establishment. Chinese authorities

have, in fact, made a concerted effort to promote ethnic minority elites to leadership positions. For the first time in PRC history, *all* of the governors of China's five provincial-level ethnic minority autonomous regions—the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, and the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region—have ethnic minority backgrounds. At the recently held 11th National People's Congress (NPC), Yang Chuantang, a Han leader who previously served as Party secretary of Tibet, was designated to become the new minister of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission. At the last moment, however, the Chinese top leadership decided to change this appointment because it was deemed politically inappropriate for a Han Chinese to hold this position. Instead, Yang Jing, a Mongolian and former governor of Inner Mongolia, was nominated and confirmed for this position.⁴

At the same time as it has appointed minority leaders to top posts in the ethnic minority regions, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has also maintained its firm control over these provinces by giving the most important leadership posts—the Party secretary positions—to cadres who come from Han Chinese backgrounds. Indeed, none of the Party secretary posts in any of the five provincial-level minority autonomous regions are currently held by an ethnic minority leader. Wang Lequan, a Han Chinese member of the Politburo, has served as Party secretary of Xinjiang since 1994. His tenure as provincial Party chief has already far exceeded the 10-year term limit regulated by the Organization Department of the CCP. Also of interest is the fact that, with the exception of Xinjiang, where all of the vice-governors are CCP members, each and every one of China's 31 provincial-level governments has a vice-governor who is a non-CCP member.⁵ These facts perhaps reflect Chinese authorities' serious concerns about the separatist movement in Xinjiang; and they have to make sure that the provincial leadership in this ethnic minority region is absolutely in line with the CCP policy.

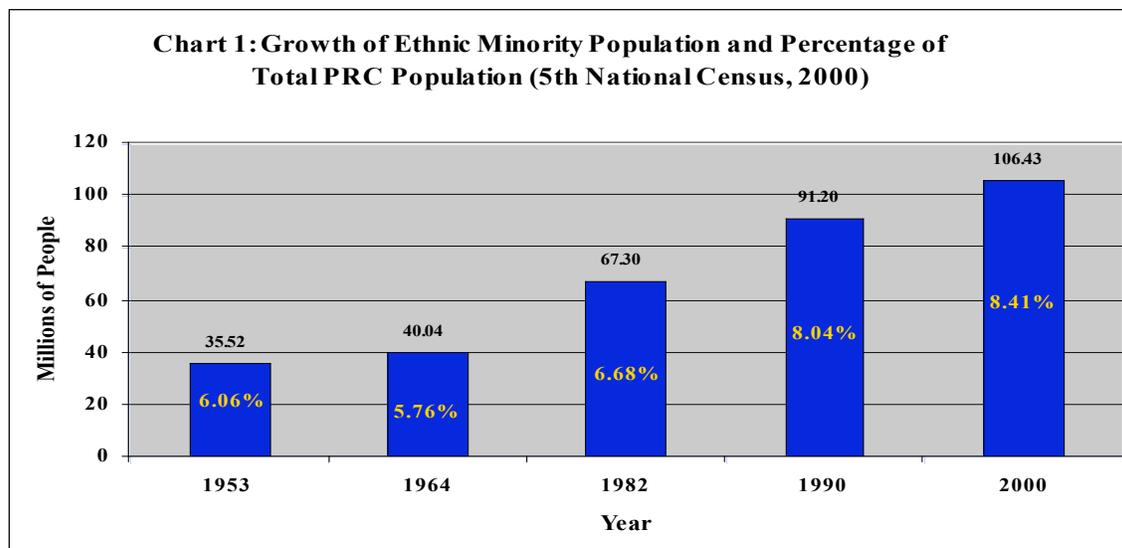
A review of the status of ethnic minority leaders in China, especially in minority autonomous regions, can help shed light on the dilemmas that the top leadership confronts with respect to ethnic tensions. While the Chinese authorities need to recruit and promote more non-Han leaders to carry out the Party-state's minority policies and demonstrate Chinese affirmative action to the public, they also want to make sure that Han Chinese leaders are firmly in charge.

This article offers an empirical assessment of ethnic minority elites in China's Party-state leadership at both the national and provincial levels, beginning with an overview of the growth of the ethnic minority population in the PRC and the changes in major ethnic groups in recent years. It then examines the minority policies of the Chinese leadership and the changes in ethnic representation in some of the most important leadership organs of the Party-state, such as the CCP Central Committee. The article analyzes the composition and characteristics of those ethnic minority elites, some of whom are in their 50s and early 60s and are members of the so-called fifth generation of leaders.

The Growth and Distribution of Ethnic Minority Population

China, unlike Japan or Korea, is usually not considered an ethnically homogeneous country. Nonetheless, Han Chinese account for an estimated 91.5 percent of the total population of the country, or 1.2 billion of the 1.3 billion people in China. In addition to the majority Han Chinese, the Chinese government officially recognizes 55 other “nationalities,” or ethnic minorities, numbering approximately 106 million people.⁶ Although the ethnic minority population constitutes only 8.5 percent of the population at present, the geographic area of those political units under the “autonomous” administration of ethnic minorities accounts for 64 percent of the total area of the country.⁷ These ethnic minorities vary greatly in terms of their population size. Eighteen of them exceed one million people, and they are: Zhuang, Manchu, Hui, Miao, Uighur, Tujia, Yi, Mongol, Tibetan, Buyi, Dong, Yao, Korean, Bai, Hani, Kazakh, Li, and Dai.⁸ The largest ethnic minority, the Zhuang, had over 16 million people in 2000 when China conducted its fifth national census. By contrast, the seven smallest ethnic minorities have populations of less than 10,000. The smallest ethnic group is the Lhoba, a group that resides in Tibet. This ethnic minority had only 2,965 people in 2000.⁹

Chart 1 shows the growth of the ethnic minority population in the PRC from 1953 to 2000, based on the five national censuses conducted in 1953, 1964, 1982, 1990, and 2000. The ethnic minority groups’ percentage of the total population of the country increased from 6.06 percent in 1953 to 8.41 percent in 2000. It should be noted that the Chinese government’s “one-child policy,” first adopted in 1979, has not been applied to many ethnic minority groups. In general, ethnic minority families can have two or even three children. Rural farmers and herdsmen in Tibet face no restrictions in terms of the number of children they can have.¹⁰ This helps explain the relatively rapid increase in the percentage of minority groups in the country during this period.



Source: *2006 nian Zhongguo tongji nianjian* (China Statistics Yearbook 2006), (Beijing: Zhongguo tongji chubanshe, 2006); <http://number.cnki.net/bigImage.aspx?id=51031>, and <http://number.cnki.net/bigImage.aspx?id=51033>.

The growth rate of the ethnic minority groups varies widely from one group to another. Table 1 shows the population and distribution of China's top 10 ethnic minority groups and the Han Chinese majority. With the exception of Zhuang and Manchu, all other minority groups had much faster growth rates than those of the Han Chinese between 1990 and 2000. The low growth rate of the Zhuang and Manchu is largely due to the fact that they are well integrated into the national community. Many members in these two groups are so intermarried that they have lost their distinctive cultural identities. A large number of people in these two groups presumably identify themselves as Han Chinese rather than ethnic minorities.

Table 1

Population and Distribution of China's Top 10 Ethnic Minority Groups and the Han Chinese Majority (1990–2000)

| <i>Ethnic group</i> | <i>Population (1990)</i> | <i>Population (2000)</i> | <i>Growth rate (%)</i> | <i>Main location</i> |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|---|
| Han | 1,042,480,000 | 1,159,400,000 | 11.22 | Entire country |
| Zhuang | 15,489,630 | 16,178,811 | 4.45 | Guangxi, Yunnan, Guizhou, Hunan |
| Manchu | 9,821,180 | 10,682,263 | 8.77 | Liaoning, Heilongjiang, Jilin, Hebei, Inner Mongolia, Beijing |
| Hui | 8,602,978 | 9,816,802 | 14.11 | Ningxia, Gansu, Henan, Xinjiang, Qinghai, Yunnan, Hebei, Shandong, Anhui, Beijing |
| Miao | 7,398,035 | 8,940,116 | 20.84 | Guizhou, Yunnan, Hunan, Sichuan, Guangxi, Hubei |
| Uighur | 7,214,431 | 8,399,393 | 16.42 | Xinjiang, Hunan |
| Tujia | 5,704,223 | 8,028,133 | 40.74 | Hubei, Hunan, Sichuan |
| Yi | 6,572,173 | 7,762,286 | 18.11 | Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou |
| Mongol | 4,806,849 | 5,813,947 | 20.95 | Inner Mongolia, Liaoning, Xinjiang, Heilongjiang, Jilin, Qinghai, Hebei, Henan |
| Tibetan | 4,593,330 | 5,416,021 | 17.91 | Tibet, Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu, Yunnan |
| Buyi | 2,545,059 | 2,971,460 | 16.75 | Guizhou |

Source and Notes: Data are based on the fourth national census of the PRC completed in July 1990 and the fifth national census of the PRC completed in November 2000. <http://hi.baidu.com/yuh1985/blog/item/bec0a6eca522242462d09f30.html>; and <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjgb/rkpcgb/>.

Table 1 also shows that most of these minorities are concentrated in autonomous regions and provinces in the northwest, north, northeast, south, and southwest parts of the country.¹¹ Indeed, the combined ethnic minority populations of Guangxi, Yunnan, Guizhou, and Xinjiang account for half of the total minority population in the country.¹² Most of these ethnic minority autonomous regions, prefectures, and counties are

economically underdeveloped, especially in comparison with many coastal areas of the country. According to an official CCP report in 2006, of the 80 million people in China living below the poverty line, 80 percent reside in the ethnic minority regions.¹³

Although Han Chinese have a relatively lower population growth rate in comparison with most of the ethnic minority groups in the country, the absolute number of Han Chinese nonetheless increased by nearly 117 million people between 1990 and 2000. According to one official Chinese source, in three minority autonomous regions (Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, and Ningxia), the number of Han Chinese has already surpassed that of the minority groups, while in Xijiang, the Han account for 40 percent of the total population.¹⁴

The ethnic composition of Tibet is one of the most contentious points of dispute between the Chinese government and the Tibetan exiles. According to the Xinhua News Agency, there are some 2.5 million Tibetans living in the Tibet Autonomous Region, accounting for 95.3 percent of its total population, while the percentage of Han Chinese has never exceeded 6 percent.¹⁵ According to the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), on the other hand, these official figures “fail to record the non-registered floating Chinese population in Tibet” and the large number of Chinese military personnel there.¹⁶ The recent completion of the railroad connecting Chengdu and Lhasa has hastened the influx of Han Chinese migration into Tibet.

As for other ethnic minority issues in the PRC, approximately 2 million Koreans are PRC citizens. Most of them reside in the three northeastern provinces of China. It is believed that about 1.2 million South Koreans presently live in China as business representatives, factory workers, and exchange students.¹⁷ In recent years, about 300,000 North Korean refugees found their homes in Beijing and other parts of China. Meanwhile, approximately 500,000 PRC citizens with Korean ethnicity live, work, and study in South Korea. It has also been widely noticed that Chinese and Koreans have territorial disputes. Strong nationalistic sentiments in China and the Korean Peninsula are on the rise, as evident in the frequent occurrence of ethnic tensions between the Chinese and Koreans in the recent years. It is important to note how the Chinese Koreans will react to these developments.

Recruiting and Promoting Ethnic Minority Leaders

As the ethnic minority population has grown rapidly over the past half century, the number of ethnic minority cadres has also significantly increased. According to official Chinese sources, the number of ethnic minority cadres at all levels of leadership increased from about 10,000 in 1950 to almost 3 million in 2007.¹⁸ The CCP leaders have been explicit about the necessity of recruiting and promoting more ethnic elites into the Party-state leadership. In an interview with the *People's Daily* in 2007, Li Dezhu, then-minister of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, observed that “since the Second World War, the world has had 332 major international disputes, violent conflicts, and wars; and 278 of them were caused by ethnic tensions, which accounted for 83.73 percent of the

total.”¹⁹ According to Li, ethnic tensions have often been intertwined with religious, cultural, economic, and sociopolitical issues, and have frequently linked domestic problems with international conflicts. As such, ethnic issues in China, in Li’s view, have “profound implications for state sovereignty, territorial integrity, social stability, economic vitality, border security, and national unity.”²⁰

Soon after becoming a member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in 1993, Hu Jintao made a long and important speech at the National Conference on the Promotion of Ethnic Minority Cadres. In the speech, Hu argued that recruiting and promoting ethnic minority leaders is a major strategic objective for the PRC, one that “will determine whether China can resolve its ethnic problems and whether the Chinese state can achieve long-term sociopolitical stability.”²¹ Hu particularly emphasized that the CCP should provide more educational and training opportunities as well as leadership experiences for young ethnic minority cadres.

One important development in terms of promoting ethnic minority leaders is in the realm of legislation. In 2002, for example, China’s NPC revised the *Law of Ethnic Minority Autonomous Areas of the People’s Republic of China*. The revised law now specifies that the top post of the local government in all ethnic minority autonomous areas should be held by a leader who hails from the same ethnic minority background as the majority of the citizens in that area.²² According to one official Chinese source, at present *all* of the heads of China’s 155 local governments that have status as ethnic minority autonomous areas, including five provincial-level regions (*qu*), 30 prefectures (*zhou*) and 120 counties (*xian* or *qi*), are non-Han ethnic minority leaders.²³ The post of head of the local government is usually considered the second-highest-ranking official in a given administrative jurisdiction, second only to the Party secretary.

Table 2 (next page) shows the change in representation of ethnic minority leaders on the Central Committee of the CCP since the Eighth Party Congress in 1956, the first Party congress held after the founding of the PRC. Ethnic minority leaders have occupied more seats on this important decision-making body in the reform era than during the Mao era. In the five congresses held since 1987, ethnic minority members usually constituted from about 10 to 11 percent; almost double their numbers from the five congresses of the earlier period. A total of 40 ethnic minority leaders serve on the 17th Central Committee as both full and alternate members.

Table 3 (next page) shows the distribution of leaders by ethnic background. In addition to the ethnic minority members on the 17th Central Committee, the table also includes ethnic minority leaders at the provincial and ministerial levels who belong to the fifth generation (i.e., those born between 1950 and 1965).²⁴ The Hui, Zhuang, Tibetan, Mongolian, and Uighur ethnic groups have the highest representation on the 17th CC, and
(text continues on p. 8)

Table 2

National Minority Representation on the Central Committee (CC) of the Chinese Communist Party

| <i>CC</i> | <i>Year</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 8 th | 1956 | 9 | 5.2 |
| 9 th | 1969 | 13 | 4.6 |
| 10 th | 1973 | 18 | 5.6 |
| 11 th | 1977 | 19 | 5.7 |
| 12 th | 1982 | 31 | 8.0 |
| 13 th | 1987 | 32 | 11.2 |
| 14 th | 1992 | 33 | 10.3 |
| 15 th | 1997 | 38 | 11.0 |
| 16 th | 2002 | 35 | 9.8 |
| 17 th | 2007 | 40 | 10.8 |

Notes and sources: This includes both full and alternate members of the CC. Cheng Li and Lynn White, "The Sixteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: Hu Gets What?" *Asian Survey* Vol. 43, No. 4 (July/August), pp. 553-597. For the data on the 17th CC, see <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2007-10-28/082514179177.shtml>.

Table 3

Distribution of Leaders by Ethnic Background

| <i>Nationality</i> | <i>Members of the 17th Central Committee</i> | | <i>Fifth-generation leaders (provincial level or above)</i> | |
|--------------------|---|-------------------|---|-------------------|
| | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
| Han | 331 | 89.2 | 477 | 88.7 |
| Hui | 8 | 2.2 | 5 | 0.9 |
| Zhuang | 7 | 1.9 | 3 | 0.6 |
| Tibetan | 4 | 1.1 | 14 | 2.6 |
| Mongolian | 4 | 1.1 | 9 | 1.7 |
| Uighur | 3 | 0.8 | 4 | 0.7 |
| Manchu | 2 | 0.5 | 5 | 0.9 |
| Miao | 2 | 0.5 | 5 | 0.9 |
| Korean | 2 | 0.5 | 2 | 0.4 |
| Tujia | 2 | 0.5 | 2 | 0.4 |
| Yi | 1 | 0.3 | 5 | 0.9 |
| Bai | 1 | 0.3 | 2 | 0.4 |
| Buyi | 1 | 0.3 | 1 | 0.2 |
| Dai | 1 | 0.3 | 1 | 0.2 |
| Kazakh | 1 | 0.3 | 1 | 0.2 |
| Yao | 1 | 0.3 | 1 | 0.2 |
| Naxi | — | — | 1 | 0.2 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>371</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>538</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

(continued from p. 6)

Tibetan, Mongolian, Hui, Manchu, Miao, and Yi minority groups are well-represented among the fifth generation of leaders. Table 4 provides information about the Party-state leadership positions of those 61 ethnic minority leaders in the fifth generation. Most of them work in the provincial leadership, including 4 (6.6 percent) full governors, 37 (60.7 percent) vice-governors, and 7 (11.5 percent) who serve in other provincial leadership positions. They constitute 78.8 percent of the total number of fifth-generation leaders with ethnic minority backgrounds. Only two ethnic minority leaders serve in the leadership of the departments of the CCP Central Committee: Sita, vice-director of the United Front Work of the CCP Central Committee, a Tibetan; and Ouyang Jian, vice-director of the Organization Department of the CCP Central Committee, a member of the Bai ethnic group. Sita was one of two senior-level leaders who participated in dialogue with the Dalai Lama's special emissaries in the past two years.

Table 4

Distribution of the Leadership Positions Held by the Fifth-Generation Leaders with Ethnic Minority Backgrounds

| <i>Positions</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Central CCP organs | 2 | 3.3 |
| Ministers | 1 | 1.6 |
| Vice-ministers | 4 | 6.6 |
| Governors | 4 | 6.6 |
| Vice-governors | 37 | 60.7 |
| Other provincial leaders | 7 | 11.5 |
| College presidents | 1 | 1.6 |
| Municipal leaders | 4 | 6.6 |
| Mass organization leaders | 1 | 1.6 |
| <i>Total</i> | 61 | 100.0 |

Table 5 (next page) lists all of the most prominent ethnic minority elites in the current national leadership of the PRC. Vice-Premier Hui Liangyu, a Hui, is the only ethnic minority leader who serves on the 17th Politburo. Hui has not spent much of his career in minority regions. He served as a provincial leader in the Han-dominated provinces of Jilin, Hubei, Anhui, and Jiangsu for most of his career before he was promoted to the Politburo in 2002. Since the founding of the PRC in 1949, only three other ethnic minority leaders have served on this important leadership body. These were: Ulanhu, a Mongolian; Wei Guoqing, a Zhuang; and Seypidin Eziz, a Uighur. From the 13th to the 15th Party Congress, a period of 15 years between 1987 and 2002, no ethnic minorities served on the Politburo. As yet, no ethnic minority leader has ever risen to membership on the Politburo Standing Committee.

In addition to Vice-Premier Hui Liangyu, two other ethnic minority leaders currently serve on the State Council. These are State Councilor Dai Bingguo, a member of the Tujia ethnic minority, and Yang Jing, a Mongolian who serves as minister of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission. Among the 28 ministers on the State Council, Yang is

the only member of an ethnic minority. Two ethnic minority leaders serve as vice-chairs of the NPC and five ethnic minority leaders serve as vice-chairs of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, including the 98-year-old Tibetan Ngapoi Ngawang Jigme. At one point, reports were circulating that Chinese authorities planned to elevate Gyaltzen Norbu, the Beijing-appointed Panchen Lama, to the post of vice-chairman of the NPC at the 11th NPC session in March 2008. That this did not happen is apparently attributable to the fact that Norbu was not yet 18 years old, the minimum age requirement for a delegate to the NPC.²⁵ Most of the ethnic leaders listed in table 5 were born in the 1940s. These ethnic minority leaders at the national level have usually advanced their political careers through the ranks of provincial leadership.

Table 5
High-Ranking Ethnic Minority Leaders in the National Leadership of the PRC (2008)

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Current position</i> | <i>17th Central Committee status</i> | <i>Nationality</i> | <i>Birth year</i> | <i>Birthplace</i> | <i>Main career experience</i> |
|-------------------------|---|---|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Hui Liangyu | Vice-premier | Politburo member | Hui | 1944 | Jilin | Provincial leadership |
| Dai Bingguo | State councilor | Full member | Tujia | 1941 | Guizhou | Foreign service |
| Yang Jing | Minister of State Ethnic Affairs Committee | Full member | Mongolian | 1953 | Inner Mongolia | Provincial leadership |
| Uyunqing (f) | Vice-chair of NPC | Full member | Mongolian | 1942 | Liaoning | Provincial leadership |
| Ismail Tiliwaldi | Vice-chair of NPC | Full member | Uighur | 1944 | Xinjiang | Provincial leadership |
| Ngapoi Ngawang Jigme | Vice-chair of CPPCC | None | Tibetan | 1910 | Tibet | NPC leadership |
| Pagbalha Geleg Namagyai | Vice-chair of CPPCC | None | Tibetan | 1940 | Tibet | Provincial leadership |
| Li Zhaozhuo | Vice-chair of CPPCC | Full member | Zhuang | 1944 | Guangxi | Provincial leadership |
| Bai Lichen | Vice-chair of CPPCC | Full member | Hui | 1941 | Liaoning | Provincial leadership |
| Abdulahat Aburixit | Vice-chair of CPPCC | Full member | Uighur | 1942 | Xinjiang | Provincial leadership |
| Lu Bing | Vice-chair of Ethnic Affairs Comm. of NPC | Full member | Zhuang | 1944 | Guangxi | Provincial leadership |
| Li Chengyu | Chair of All China Federation of Supply & Marketing Co-op | Full member | Hui | 1946 | Ningxia | Provincial leadership |
| Li Jingtian | Executive vice president of Central Party School | Full member | Manchu | 1948 | Inner Mongolia | Party organization |

Notes: Comm. = Committee; Co-op = Co-operative; CPPCC = Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference; f = female; NPC = National People's Congress.

Table 6 lists current top ethnic minority leaders in the provincial leadership. Most
(text continues on p. 11)

Table 6
Top Ethnic Minority Leaders in the Provincial Leadership of the PRC (2008)

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Current position</i> | <i>17th Central Committee status</i> | <i>Nationality</i> | <i>Birth year</i> | <i>Birthplace</i> | <i>Main career experience</i> |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Shi Zongyuan | Guizhou Party secretary | Full member | Hui | 1946 | Hebei | Provincial leadership |
| Wang Zhengwei | Ningxia governor | Full member | Hui | 1957 | Ningxia | Provincial leadership |
| Qiangba Puncog | Tibet governor | Full member | Tibetan | 1947 | Tibet | Provincial leadership |
| Bater | Inner Mongolia acting governor | None | Mongolia | 1955 | Liaoning | Provincial leadership |
| Ma Biao | Guangxi governor | Alternate member | Zhuang | 1954 | Guangxi | Provincial leadership |
| Nur Bekri | Xinjiang governor | Alternate member | Uighur | 1961 | Xinjiang | Provincial leadership |
| Legqog | Chair of Tibet NPC | Full member | Tibetan | 1944 | Tibet | Provincial leadership |
| Pagbalha Geleg Namagyai | Chair of Tibet CPPCC | None | Tibetan | 1940 | Tibet | Provincial leadership |
| Ailigeng Yimingbahai | Chair of Xinjiang NPC | None | Uyghur | 1953 | Xinjiang | Provincial leadership |
| Ashat Kerimbay | Chair of Xinjiang CPPCC | Full member | Kazakh | 1947 | Xinjiang | Provincial leadership |
| Huang Yao | Chair of Guizhou CPPCC | None | Buyi | 1948 | Guizhou | Provincial leadership |

Notes: CPPCC = Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference; NPC = National People's Congress

(continued from p. 11)

of them were born in the same province or autonomous region in which they now serve. All advanced their political careers through the ranks of provincial leadership. Most of them were born in the 1940s and 1950s. One exception is Xinjiang governor Nur Bekri, who was born in 1961. He is presently one of just six full minister- or governor-level leaders in China born in the 1960s.²⁶ Only one ethnic minority leader, Guizhou Party secretary Shi Zongyuan, serves as provincial Party secretary in China's 31 province-level administrations. Although ethnic minority leaders serve as governors in each of China's five ethnic minority autonomous regions, without exception it is Han Chinese leaders who occupy the posts of Party secretary in these regions.

It is also worth noting that Han Chinese leaders who serve as Party secretary or deputy Party secretary in Tibet are often given opportunities for further promotion. The most noteworthy example is, of course, Hu Jintao, who served as Party secretary of Tibet from 1988 to 1992 before being appointed to the Politburo Standing Committee. During the past few months, the CCP has appointed three leaders with substantial leadership experiences in Tibet to important positions. These include Beijing mayor Guo Jinlong, who was deputy Party secretary and Party secretary of Tibet from 1993 to 2004; acting governor of Hebei Province Hu Chunhua, who previously served as deputy Party secretary of Tibet from 2003 to 2006; and Wuhan Party secretary Yang Song, who held the posts of vice-governor and deputy Party secretary of Tibet between 1993 and 2006. These Han Chinese leaders were not necessarily all hardliners in their approach to the Tibet issue, but they were all known for their obedience to the orders of the central government and their firm control over this ethnically contentious region. Of course, the current Party secretary of Tibet, Zhang Qingli, has established a reputation as a hardliner who is ready to use force to crack down on any Tibetan protests.

Concluding Thoughts

For understandable reasons, the Chinese Communist Party is not willing to give up its power over personnel appointments, particularly in China's five ethnic minority autonomous regions. The growing ethnic tensions in Tibet and Xinjiang have led Chinese authorities to conclude that they need to exert tighter control over these regions. In practice, this has meant appointing Han Chinese leaders to serve in the most important posts in these administrative units. At the same time, top Chinese leaders have recognized the value of having ethnic minority cadres serve in the Party-state elite, both for propaganda purposes as well as to inspire minority peoples to view the system as containing opportunities for their own advancement and therefore work within the system rather than against it. Those ethnic minority elites who have been appointed by the CCP Organization Department have usually gone through a great deal of scrutiny to make sure that they are loyal to the Communist regime and will obediently carry out the orders of the Party's national leadership.

As in many other countries today, ethnic identity in China is becoming an increasingly important political issue. The recent riots in Tibet and the worldwide

protests they helped fuel over the Olympic torch rally suggest that ethnic tensions in China may constitute a major liability for the country's future stability and territorial integrity. How top Chinese leaders handle ethnic tensions and how effectively they recruit ethnic minorities into the political establishment will be not only crucial determinants of social stability going forward, but also major criteria for China's international image.

Notes

¹ The author is indebted to Yinsheng Li for his research assistance. The author also thanks Sally Carman, Christina Culver, and Scott W. Harold for suggesting ways in which to clarify the article.

² The government arrested 35 people that it claimed were involved in the first plot and 10 people supposedly involved in the second one. Both plots were purportedly linked to the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, which the U.S. government has listed as a terrorist group. See <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2008-04-11/040015333139.shtml>. Also see *Guangzhou Daily*, 11 April 2008.

³ For more discussion on the ethnic issues in China, see Dru C. Gladney, *Dislocating China: Muslims, Minorities, and Other Subaltern Subjects* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2004); and Robyn Iredale, Naran Bilik, and Fei Guo, eds., *China's Minorities on the Move: Selected Case Studies* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003).

⁴ See http://www.dwnews.com/gb/MainNews/SinoNews/Mainland/2008_3_12_17_37_13_664.html.

⁵ Cheng Li, "China's Fifth Generation: Is Diversity a Source of Strength or Weakness?" *Asia Policy*, no. 6 (July 2008, forthcoming).

⁶ In 1979, the Chinese government recognized 55 ethnic minorities in the country. This number has remained fixed. See <http://www.seac.gov.cn/ZT/xghgszn/2007-04-28/1177750836062379.htm>. For more discussion of the population growth of ethnic minorities in China, see Jiang Ping, ed., *Zhongguo minzu wenti lilun yu shijian* (China's Ethnic Minority Issue: Theory and Practice). Beijing: The Central Party School Press, 1994), pp. 492–496.

⁷ See <http://www.fmcoprc.gov.hk/chn/xwfb/zfbps/t55528.htm>.

⁸ This is based on the fifth national census conducted in November 1, 2000. See <http://hi.baidu.com/yuh1985/blog/item/bec0a6eca522242462d09f30.html>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See <http://www.china.com.cn/ch-book/shaoshu/shaoshu3.htm>.

¹¹ For more discussion of the distribution of ethnic minority groups in China, see Wu Shimin, ed., *Minzu wenti gailun* (Introduction to Ethnic Issues), 3rd edition (Chengdu: Sichuan People's Publishing House, 2007).

¹² For an overview of ethnic minority issues and backgrounds from the perspective of Chinese authorities, see <http://www.showchina.org/zgmz/jbqk/200701/t104950.htm>.

¹³ For a more thorough discussion of the CCP policy toward the recruitment and promotion of ethnic minority elites, see <http://www.bjdj.gov.cn/Article/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=10873>.

¹⁴ See <http://www.showchina.org/zgmz/jbqk/200701/t104950.htm>.

¹⁵ These data were cited by the Chinese officials at a recent press conference in Beijing, see http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2008-04/10/content_7954932.htm.

¹⁶ See <http://www.savetibet.org/news/positionpapers/populationinflux.php>.

¹⁷ The discussion on the Koreans in this paper, including all the statistics cited, is based on the author's interview with a PRC think tank member, which was conducted in Washington DC on 5 June 2008.

¹⁸ See http://ns.luan.gov.cn/citizen/10/news_52595_0.html.

¹⁹ *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily), 19 June 2007.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ For Hu Jintao's speech, see http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2005-03/17/content_2710193.htm.

²² For the amendment of this law in 2004, see <http://www.seac.gov.cn/gjmw/zcfg/2004-07-10/1168742761853498.htm>.

²³ See <http://www.china.com.cn/ch-book/shaoshu/shaoshu1.htm>.

²⁴ Li, "China's Fifth Generation."

²⁵ See <http://news.cctv.com/china/20080304/102425.shtml>.

²⁶ The other five are Zhang Qingwei (b. 1961), the minister-rank chairman of China Commercial Aircraft Co.; Sun Zhengcai (b. 1963), minister of agriculture; Zhou Qiang (b. 1960), who serves as the governor of Hunan Province; acting governor of Hebei Province Hu Chunhua (b. 1963); and secretary of the Chinese Communist Youth League Lu Hao (b. 1967).