

**Investigating the extent of “internal
colonialism,” or state penetration, of Inner
Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang by the
Nationalist government of China
(1912 – 1949)**

Dr. CHUNG Chien-peng

Professor

Department of Political Science

Lingnan University, Hong Kong

鍾健平 嶺南大學(香港) 政治系

Cp2chung@LN.edu.hk

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1. Introduction

For half a century before the end of the Qing (清) dynasty, the revitalization of national strength and search for unity had already become the underlying theme of Chinese politics and governance. Persisting in this quest, a fundamental goal of the Chinese revolutions of 1911 and 1949 was to restore a China that was semi-colonized, warlord-ridden, socially unstable and torn by war against Japan and a civil war to its former greatness. Under these circumstances, as detailed in this paper, separatist attempts by regional authorities and ethnic minority (少数民族) groups were perceived by Chinese nationalists as an existential threat to the Chinese nation-state, especially if the involvement of foreign governments was suspected, or discovered. In response, the Republic of China (中華民國) authorities under the Zhongguo Kuomintang (中國國民黨) or Chinese Nationalist Party tried to devise ways to extend central government rule over the resident ethnic minorities at the frontier, and at the same time, played against local warlords who took on the role of agents of Han-Chinese civilization and development in asserting their control and spreading their influence on the fringe communities.

2. The Frontier and National Question in Republican China

While ethnic nationalism (民族主義) for the Han-Chinese (漢族) meant the overthrow of the Manchu Qing (滿清) dynasty, for some of the empire's non-Han (非漢族) ethnic groups, it meant separation from China. When the revolutionaries in March 1912 called on the governments or assemblies of the existing twenty-two provinces and four provincial-level territories (Outer Mongolia 外蒙古, Inner Mongolia 內蒙古, Tibet 西藏 and Qinghai 青海) to send three (later five) representatives to Nanjing (南京) to convoke a national convention for the purpose of writing a provisional constitution for the new Chinese Republic, which was declared earlier on 1 January 1912, none arrived from (Outer) Mongolia or Tibet. In response to such presumed separatist tendencies from Tibet and Mongolia, the Republic declared Tibet (Xizang), Mongolia, and for good measure Xinjiang, to be integral parts of the country's territory in April 1912 (Goldstein 1997: 31). To keep the boundaries of the Qing Empire intact, Sun Yat-sen (孫中山), founder of the Chinese Nationalist Party or Zhongguo Kuomintang (KMT) and first president of the Republic of China (ROC), advocated a republic of five races (五族共和) – Han (漢), Manchu (滿), Mongolian (蒙), Tibetan (藏), and Muslim (回), without ruling out the possibility that China's racial minorities could be brought to the cultural level of the Han-Chinese so that, “with the dying out of individual peoples inhabiting China”(Sun 1953: 80), assimilation would eventually be possible. It bears mentioning here

that, although the “Republic of Five Races” idea rightfully belongs to Sun as its originator, it bears some semblance to the earlier concepts of “a united nation of five races” (五族國民統一) and “grand harmony of five races” (五族大同) advocated by the Constitutionalist Monarchist scholar Yang Du (楊度), who also called for Manchu and Han to be treated equally, and Mongols, Muslims and Tibetans to be acculturated (潘先林 2009: 135-137). To dampen ethnic separatist aspirations in China’s frontier regions, subsequent regimes centered on Beijing under Yuan Shikai (袁世凱) (1912-16) and the warlords which followed him in the next dozen years allowed the nobles and aristocrats of the former Manchu Qing dynasty and both Inner and Outer Mongolia to retain their pre-Republic ranks, titles and privileges (楊聖敏 2009: 152).

Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石), Sun’s successor as head of the KMT and leader of China from 1928 to 1949, declared that the differentiation among China’s peoples was due to the adoption of different religions and places of residence, not to race or blood (Chiang 1947: 33-34; Gladney 1998: 117). While the KMT constructed a race-based narrative of China’s ethnicities descending from a common ancestry and bloodline evolving along different paths, the Chinese Communist Party (中國共產黨) (CCP), founded in 1921, crafted a vision of multiple but intermingled lines of descent converging with the central ethnic Han into a unitary “geobody,” both doing so with particular urgency in the face of ethnic separatist threats provoked by Japanese imperialism in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia (Leibold 2007: 113-145). Yet, what all these ideas of nationalism brought out was the argument that Chinese state nationalism was constituted in sum total by the nationalist activities of the various racial or ethnic groups in China, and Chinese national identity is collectively made up of the racial or ethnic identities of the Han and other peoples residing within the boundary of the Chinese state. No desires or aspirations on the part of ethnic minorities for independence or self-determination from China or the Han-Chinese were, or could ever be with this mindset, seriously entertained or acknowledged by the leaders of modern China.

Han or Han-Chinese nationalism in its long formative years from 1895-1945 was a product of military defeats, economic exploitation, social disruption and cultural malaise brought on by the powerful countries of Europe and Japan, and a response to the successive failures of the ineffectual “alien” Qing Manchu court, regional warlords, and the Chiang Kai-shek regime to drive out these “foreign imperialists.” The KMT understood self-determination to be freedom from external intervention in the affairs of the Chinese nation-state. When the KMT’s first National Congress (全國代表大會) met in Guangzhou / Canton (廣州) in January 1924, the issue of whether self-determination included the right of political secession for non-Han ethnic groups was subjected to heated debate, with the result that the Congress’ final manifesto committed the party to an equivocal promise of recognizing “the right of

self-determination for all ethnic groups (民族 / minzu) within China,” followed immediately by a contradictory pledge that the party would “after the revolutionary victory against imperialism and warlordism, organize upon the voluntary agreement of all *minzu* a free and united Chinese Republic.” (陳連開 等 2011: 441) This line of thinking reflected the influence of the Third Communist International (共產國際 / Comintern) on Sun Yat-sen as the leader of the KMT, from which he was obtaining military and political support.

Karl Marx (馬克思), the founder of Communism (共產主義), had believed that nationalism, or national self-determination (民族自決) as he called it, was an invention of the bourgeois class, to preserve its economic interest by deliberately fostering or magnifying national divisions in an otherwise united international labor movement. As such, there would be no role in classical Marxism (馬克思主義) for nations under socialism. While accepting Marx's position, Vladimir Lenin (列寧) insisted on the right of self-determination for all nationalities, which he considered to be a necessary strategy to develop a common front for the struggle of the international working class against the bourgeoisie (Tucker 1978: 488-89).¹ Lenin interpreted national self-determination to include the right of political secession for areas of Russia inhabited by its non-Russian minorities who had attained the level of a nation or nationality, both before and after the success of the 1917 October Revolution (十月革命). He was convinced that, given a political atmosphere free of class or racial oppression and exploitation, minority national groups would make the more economically sensible choice of remaining or reuniting with a larger nationality in a common state rather than seek independence, by associating in this way with a more advanced and numerous socialist proletariat (Lenin 1964: 409-414). As to what comprised a nation, the definition from Stalin (斯大林) of a historically-constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological makeup manifested in a common culture, would apply (Tucker 1973: 152). Both Marx and Lenin viewed the movement toward assimilation as both progressive and inevitable (Conner 1984: 37), although Stalin would permit the form of a nation to exist within the content of a socialist state in the meantime.

As for the CCP, its position on the treatment of China's ethnic minorities shifted significantly as it got closer to the goal of eventual control of the country. Following the Soviet Union (蘇聯), which had created national republics in non-Russian areas with the right to secede, the party indicated in its pronouncements in the 1920s and 1930s that under a Chinese Communist regime, non-Han-Chinese regions could either join a proposed Chinese federation, or seek self-determination from China if they so wished. The second CCP

¹ For a discussion of ethnic self-determination as a Marxist stratagem to win the support of ethnic minorities in capitalist countries for the purpose of overthrowing their governments, see Connor (1984: 33-35).

Congress (黨代表大會) in 1922 adopted the platform that Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang should be "autonomous states" ("自治國") voluntarily united in a federated republic of China (中華聯邦共和國). In 1930, an outlawed CCP struggling to survive in the countryside and limit the territorial reach of the KMT went so far to obtain popular support from ethnic minorities as to offer the regions populated by them the choice to federate or secede. At the end of the Long March (長征 1934-6), Mao Zedong (毛澤東) and the remnant of the Communist forces had settled at Yan'an (延安), in northern Shaanxi (陝西) province, an area with significant presence of minorities. Mao then reformulated the Party's position on nationalities in November 1938: All non-Han minorities should have equal rights with the Han-Chinese; they should be encouraged to develop their languages and cultures; and they should be allowed to handle their own affairs where in areas where they form a numerical majority or significant minority (Eberhard 1982: 155). By 1940, in competition with the KMT then greatly weakened by the war with Japan to take charge of the nationalist project of unifying China, the CCP leadership under Mao adopted the concept of regional autonomy (區域自治) by granting the right of self-government to the non-Han-Chinese at local and regional levels, under the Party's overarching control, with no right of secession (Starr 2004: 91), or self-determination. The argument is that Marxist-Leninists understood the right of ethnic "self-determination" to be a question pertaining to the struggle against imperialism and colonial oppression, not to be applied to a socialist (社會主義) government (紀大椿 2000: 101-2), under which ethnic chauvinism would no longer exist. In both the contexts of the KMT and the CCP, self-determination for the non-Han ethnic minorities is understood to be part of the self-determination of all the peoples of China and the Chinese nation itself against foreign imperialism, not secession from the Chinese nation-state (楊荊楚, 王戈柳 1994: 3).

3. An Overview of Non-Han ethnic nationalism in Republican China

Non-Han ethnic nationalism in China, on the other hand, was first awakened by foreign presence on the frontier, which sparked off self-awareness of one's own group cultural identity, and then developed and strengthened as a reaction against both the chaos in China proper and attempts by Han-dominated warlord regimes and Chinese governments to assert their control over affairs in the non-Han ethnic areas. The frontier regions of China have long been populated by large and compact ethnic groups with well-developed collective identities and consciousness, and Mongolians (蒙古人), Tibetans (西藏人), and Uyghurs (維吾爾人) had even established vast kingdoms in the past to rival that of the Han. China's weakness and disunity in the first half of the twentieth century consequently created the bases or opportunities for independence claims to emerge from Manchuria (滿州), Outer Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang (新疆), with verbal encouragement or material backing

from foreign powers (Kirby 2005: 106-7; Crossley 2005: 149). A broad contour of these demands is given below, followed by an analysis of both state integration and ethnic separatism in modern China with a theoretical framework.

In Manchuria, Japan as a result of its victories over China and Russia in the wars of 1894 and 1904 controlled and managed many railways, utilities, banks, shipping companies, and mining interests between 1912 and 1931. However, it had only indirect political influence with the local Chinese warlords (軍閥), Zhang Zuolin (張作霖) and his son and heir Zhang Xueliang (張學良), and exercised no sovereignty over the region (Duara 2003: 48-51). These warlords derived their power and position from being members of the political hierarchy of Republican China, and were thus not prepared to renounce their allegiance to the largely powerless central government, although they practically governed their territory as an autonomous fief. Furthermore, Manchuria was largely populated by the Han, owing to immigration which saw its population rise from about 10 million at the turn of the 20th century to 30 million three decades later (Mackerras 2010: 225). Thus even after the Japanese military planted a bomb that killed Zhang Zuolin in September 1931, which they then blamed on the Chinese for damaging Japanese interests and proceeded to occupy all of Manchuria and proclaim the creation of the puppet state of “Manchukuo” (“滿洲國”) in 1932, no separatist Manchu or Manchurian nationalism existed (Mitter 2000: 97-98), although the last emperor of China, Aixinjueluo (Henry) Puyi (愛新覺羅 溥儀), became its titular head of state. Following Japan’s surrender in 1945, the region was fought over by the KMT and the ultimately victorious CCP.

(Outer) Mongolia declared self-rule from China in November 1911, just weeks after the Chinese Republican revolution. However, pressured by Tsarist Russia, which had secured guarantees from the Chinese government to preserve its land rights, banking monopoly, and tax-free trading status in the region (傅啟學 1970: 33-34), Mongolia had to renounce its independence in a treaty made between China and Russia in 1915, and with the civil war raging in Russia, it was further reduced to a province of China in 1919. The Chinese presence in Mongolia was removed by anti-Bolshevik White Russian forces in 1921, which were in turn expelled by Mongolian nationalists with military backing from communist Russia. A Mongolian People’s Republic was declared in 1924, after which this nation of more than one-and-a-half million squared kilometers rode out of modern Chinese politics and came into its own as a state, although it soon fell under the tight control of Moscow. In exchange for a commitment from the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin not to support the CCP or the Uyghur nationalists who were attempting to detach Xinjiang from China, Chiang Kai-shek recognized Mongolia’s independence from the ROC in 1946 (K. Wang 1998: 319-20). This reality was accepted by the new People’s Republic of China (中華人民共和國 / PRC) government in 1949.

Inner Mongolia was governed by the Chinese central government in Beijing (北京) from 1912 to 1928, when it was divided into three provinces (i.e., Rehe 熱河, Chahar 察哈爾, and Suiyuan 綏遠) by the KMT government of Chiang Kai-shek. Inner Mongolian nationalists remonstrated repeatedly with Chiang to get him to reunite the provinces and halt Han immigration into the grasslands, but when their pleas fell on deaf ears, they established autonomous governments under Japanese sponsorship and control from 1936 to 1945 (K. Wang 1998: 217). Several separatist regimes then occupied parts of the region, but they were eliminated by the CCP by 1947.

Xinjiang was ruled with an iron hand by Chinese warlords Yang Zengxin (楊增新) from 1912 to 1928, who played a game of divide and rule by appointing a mix of ethnic nationalities to government positions, and Jin Shuren (金樹仁) from 1928 to 1932, who did not. Between 1933 and 1934, an uprising of Uighur Muslim radicals in the south, using smuggled Soviet arms, led to the establishment of the Turkish Islamic Republic of East Turkestan (TIRET), but this was crushed by Xinjiang's warlord Sheng Shicai (盛世才) (Forbes 1986: 121).² For the following decade, Sheng obtained from the Soviet Union troops to help him control Xinjiang, advisers for his government and security apparatus, and trade subsidies (Millward and Tursun 2004: 79-80; Tyler 2003: 118). After Sheng's removal by central government forces, there was a large-scale uprising of Uighurs and Kazakhs (哈薩克人) in the "Three Districts" of Ili (伊犁), Tacheng (塔城), and Altai (阿爾泰) in the northwest. With Soviet arms, advisers, and troops (Forbes 1986: 187-88; Benson 1990: 138), given surreptitiously, the ethnic nationalists established the Eastern Turkestan Republic (ETR) which lasted from 1944 to 1946. Stalin had hoped to limit the rising influence of the KMT in Xinjiang by supporting the ETR (D.D. Wang 1999: 31), but after obtaining China's acceptance of Mongolia's independence, he pressured the secessionists into forming a coalition with the Xinjiang provincial government (D.D. Wang 1999: 25). However, distrust between the KMT and the East Turkestan nationalists within the coalition government led to its collapse, and the independence of the "Three Districts" was again proclaimed in 1947. This regime existed unmolested until its absorption into the PRC in 1949.

Tibet declared its independence from China in early 1913, and the Tibetan government expelled all Chinese officials and refused to acknowledge Chinese authority (Goldstein 1997:

² According to another Xinjiang scholar, there were contacts between TIRET and the British consulate at Kashgar, but the regime failed to receive international recognition or foreign help. This could be an important reason why TIRET collapsed in little more than six months. See Millward (2007: 201-6).

36). In 1914, Tibet participated in a convention organized by Britain at Simla, India, to demarcate Tibet's borders with China, as Britain had use for Tibet as a buffer between China and British India. However, when the Chinese Republican government refused to ratify the agreement which its own representatives had endorsed, over the exact location of the boundary line between Tibet and China, the Tibetan authorities signed their own agreement with the British which declared the complete domestic autonomy of Outer Tibet (烏思藏 / U-Tsang) and ceded territories south of the Himalayas to British India (Goldstein 1997: 33-34). In 1917-18, the Tibetan army overran the Chinese garrison at Chamdo (昌都), which guarded the eastern approaches to the Tibetan capital of Lhasa (拉薩), and drove the Chinese forces all the way back east of the Yangzi (金沙/ Jinsha) River, which became the de facto boundary between Tibet and China's Sichuan Kham Special District (四川康特區) (later Xikang Province / 西康省) for the rest of the KMT period. Britain would later provide weapons and training for a small Tibetan army (Addy 1994:32), select the staff for an English school in Tibet (Goldstein 1997: 35), and dispatch occasional espionage, postal, and trade missions there. After the British departed from India in 1947, the Tibetans engaged in an ultimately futile quest for foreign recognition as a state entity (Norbu 2001: 266). With the CCP entering Tibet in 1950, and no one to turn to for help, the 14th Dalai Lama (達賴喇嘛), spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet, dispatched a delegation to Beijing to sign an agreement which recognized PRC sovereignty over Tibet, in exchange for guarantees to maintain his own status, the existing government structure, and Tibet's religion. Sporadic resistance to Chinese authority continued and even led to the training and equipping of a small Tibetan guerrilla force by the American Central Intelligence Agency (Ardley 2002:30). A failed uprising in Lhasa in March 1959 forced the Dalai Lama to flee to India.

4. Devising Han-Chinese Penetration of Nationalist China's Ethnic Frontiers: Internal Colonialism versus State Integration

The Republican government composed by warlords and centered on Beijing between 1912 and 1928 had no firm hold over any of the provinces, counties or territories populated to any extent by non-Han ethnic groups, so there was in fact no real minority policy to formulate or executive. The exception was (Outer) Mongolia, to which the warlord of Beijing dispatched an army of 10,000, but this Chinese occupation force lasted only from July 1919 to February 1921 before it was evicted from Urga (庫倫) and other garrisons by the invading White Russia forces (Jowett 2013: 111-112). The Kuomintang (or KMT or Nationalist) regime, which constituted the central government of the Republic of China (ROC) between 1928 and 1949 under Chiang Kai-shek, tried to preserve and augment whatever limited Chinese state sovereignty it held over its border areas by devising effective ways of governing its ethnic

non-Han-Chinese frontier – primarily the regions of Inner Mongolia, cultural Tibet (Central Tibet/Tibet Proper, Kham/Xikang and Amdo/Qinghai) and Xinjiang. To counter the attacks and espionage by the invading Japanese in the 1930s and during World War II, and suspected Soviet and CCP intrigues after the war, the KMT central government resolved to expand and deepen its administration over the frontier areas (X. Liu 2010). The KMT's frontier policy reflected a desire on the part of a weak central government to extend its rule to the furthest extent of the territories claimed by the ROC through securing the political allegiance of ethnic minorities with promises of political and cultural autonomy (Leibold 2007: 52). The KMT, CCP, and local warlord, in contesting for control over the frontier territories to further their own interests and power, demonstrated different degrees of willingness along the spectrum of preserving the autonomous rights and privileges of ethnic communities to instituting reforms or changes to their traditional modes of governance (Lin 2006; Lin 2010).

Discussion of the effectiveness of Han-Chinese penetration of Nationalist China's ethnic frontiers can be better illuminated and threaded together by referencing and highlighting the presence of assimilationist "internal colonialism" (or nation-state integration) thinking in the construction, consolidation and integration of the Chinese nation-state among China's Han and pro-Han ethnic minority frontier policy advisors, formulators and executors in Kuomintang China, for whom nation and state are, or should be, coterminous. As a social studies framework that attempts to explain persistent inequalities between ethnic groups within national borders, "internal colonialism" seeks to explain the structure of social relationships among groups within a state, in which one or more racial, ethnic or cultural clusters remained subordinated to and dominated by a different population. Simply put, it depicts the features associated with classical or traditional forms of colonialism, but with both the colonized and colonizer existing within an independent state (Casanova 1965). It also implies that, unlike colonization of foreign lands, no arguments can be put forward for the liberation or independence of the "internally colonized" object, as it is, or at least contemplated to be, forever linked to, or integrated into, the "internal colonizer."

Internal Colonialism was initially used in the 1960s and early 1970s to explain how, despite claims that the United States is a land of immigrants undocumented Mexicans had to hide from U.S. authorities in order to work and live in squalid conditions in what was once part of Mexico (Casanova 1965; Moore 1970). The theory was then popularized by African-American writers to describe the underclass status of blacks in general, and their social exclusion from mainstream white American society (Blauner 1969; Calderón-Zaks 2010). Defining the dominant ethnic or cultural group and its territory as the core, and one or more distinct subordinate population and their lands as the periphery, Hechter turned the concept of internal colonialism into a model of uneven national development (Hechter 1975:

9). In Hechter's understanding, the model demonstrates not convergence of the core and the periphery through the diffusion of industrialization, urbanization and public services provided by the state from the former to the latter, but rather increasing political domination of the periphery by the core, matched by economic exploitation (Jackson 1978: 527), and socio-cultural marginalization. Although Internal Colonialism was later criticized for being too general a framework to allow for much measurability, it was widely applied by scholars in Latin America, the U.S. and Europe to describe the historical evolution of the ethnic and social situation in their own countries, as well as that of South Africa, Israel, Thailand and the Soviet Union (Cervantes 1975; Page 1978; Simon 1981; Mettam and William 1998).

The discourse of "internal colonialism" deserves studied attention and systematic analysis here because it focuses on three aspects - military and political domination, economic differentiation and resource exploitation, and socio-cultural marginalization and assimilation - through which periphery non-Han ethnic or cultural minorities and their territories came to be subordinated to and dominated by the core Han nationality of China. Nation-state integration, in the form of "internal colonialism" undertaken by the KMT and associated regional warlords as a set of integrationist political-military, economic and socio-cultural moves, marked the revival of previous frontier settlement, consolidation and administration policies in Manchuria, Mongolia, Xinjiang, Tibet, and Kham (western Sichuan) from the last decade of the Qing dynasty, which were interrupted by the period of warlordism. This revitalized civilizational project of "opening up" the frontier and its inhabitants by Han-Chinese overseers or administrators also stimulated native resistance against such incorporation, as what was perceived by the Chinese authorities as efforts to promote nation-state integration could have been, and were, interpreted by non-Han ethnic groups as attempts by the Han-Chinese to settle their homelands, take their resources, and suppress or eradicate their identities. The authorities' multi-prong set of penetrative frontier policy actions should be investigated and described in detail, because they were actively pursued not only by the KMT central government and warlords, but because of their important implications for the country's territorial cohesion and state-nation integration, by the successor regime as well.

4.1 Political-Military Penetration

A crucial ROC central government institution set up in early 1929 to promote the administration and development of Mongolian and Tibetan territories and other frontier regions was the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission (蒙藏委員會/ MTAC), which the KMT central authorities in Nanjing had reorganized from the former Republican government's Mongolian and Tibetan Ministry (蒙藏院) and placed under the Executive Yuan

(行政院). The ministerial level MTAC was given the important task of recruiting, training and posting ethnic minorities to frontier regions to take charge of local affairs for the central government. MTAC also served as a body for Chiang Kai-shek to network with representatives of provincial and regional leaders whose influence extended to ethnic frontier territories, and dispatch agents to remote border cities and districts as “special appointees” (“特派員”), “Commissioners” (“專員”), or “correspondents” (“通訊員”) to keep an eye on the local authorities (Lin 2010: 24-5). Aside from the MTAC, another agent that was largely responsible for the incorporation of the country’s periphery into the national polity were somewhat paradoxically the semi-autonomous regional warlords or military commanders, such as Liu Wenhui (劉文輝) in Tibetan-populated Xikang or Yan Xishan (閻錫山) whose domain covered Mongol-dominated Suiyuan, who were looking for every opportunity to expand their power bases by extending their control over ethnic minority areas in the guise of promoting cultural and economic development.

Inner Mongolia

Earlier in 1928, without consulting the resident Mongols, Inner Mongolia was divided up into the provinces of Rehe, Chahar and Suiyuan (Lin 2010: 18). As much as the creation of the new Mongol border provinces served as rewards by ROC supreme leader Chiang Kai-shek to the northern warlords who allied with and helped him complete the Northern Expedition (北伐), by giving them opportunities to place their own men and absorb the local elite into the provincial administrations (Lin 2010: 19), the new boundaries and separate administrations contributed to the Mongols’ disunity, thus easing their ultimate absorption into the Han-Chinese cultural and political sphere.

Rapid encroachment of Han-Chinese settlers and colonizers on Inner Mongolian pasturelands was increasing tension between these frontiersmen and Mongol princes. Despite MTAC support for Inner Mongolian autonomy, Chiang’s fragile regime was not in a position to override strong resistance from the powerful northern warlords who acted as patrons to the frontiersmen in order to augment their own interests and territories, in the name of colonizing and developing the frontier, and civilizing its backward nomads (Leibold 2007: 59-60). As a compromise, an Organizational Law on Mongolian Leagues, Banners and Tribes (蒙古盟部旗組織法), passed by the Legislative Yuan (立法院) in October 1931, called for the preservation of the traditional banner system in Mongol-populated areas not currently under any Chinese county administration (Leibold 2007: 59). In response, Prince Demchugdongrob, then 31-year-old leader of the West Sunid banner, better known as Prince De (德王), convened a meeting of Mongolian princes in Bailingmiao (百靈廟), Suiyuan, in October 1933. They agreed to form an Inner Mongolian Autonomous Government (內蒙古自治政府) that claimed

complete authority to regulate affairs in all of the original territories of Inner Mongolia, except for defence and foreign relations, which would remain the responsibilities of the central government, and called for an immediate halt to the establishment of counties and Chinese colonization (Leibold 2007: 61; 陳健夫 1934: 36-38). The Executive Yuan, backed by Chiang, who wanted the Mongol's goodwill against the advancing Japanese troops, agreed to the establishment of a single, unified Mongolian Local Autonomous Political Affairs Council (蒙古地方自治政務委員會) (Leibold 2007: 65-66). However, the Council was prevented from collecting taxes in its own precinct by warlords Yan Xishan and Fu Zuoyi (傅作義), with the result that Prince De defected to the invading Japanese for the remainder of World War II. Even so, by 1940, China's central government, which had relocated from Nanjing to its wartime capital of Chongqing (重慶) in Sichuan, was able to incorporate league (盟) and banner (旗) militias in the Ordos (鄂爾多斯), Ulanab League (烏蘭察布盟), Tumet Banner (土默特旗), and elsewhere in unoccupied western Inner Mongolia into KMT-controlled garrison units, by giving hostilities with Japan as justification (Lin 2006: 119).

By the end of World War II, several autonomous movements had sprouted in Inner Mongolia, and with the civil war between the KMT and CCP underway in 1946, KMT officials were concerned that the CCP was taking advantage of local Mongols' discontent to penetrate these autonomous movements and seize control of the region. Yet, as in the 1930s, the KMT leadership was unable to decide on whether or how much compromise should be made to Inner Mongolian autonomy. Officials in agencies directly involved in Mongolian policy planning, such as the MTAC, Interior Ministry (內政部), Executive Yuan and Organizational Department of the KMT (中國國民黨組織部), were willing to make concessions to the Mongols, such as elevating Mongolian leagues to the level of provincial governments and establishing a Mongolian Political Council (蒙古政務會) as a coordinating body for Mongol-populated areas (X.Liu 2010: 96-7). However, these proposals proved unacceptable to officials in the Defense Ministry (國防部) and, particularly, generals charged with executing policies at the frontier, such as Xiong Shihui (熊式輝) in Rehe and Fu Zuoyi in Chahar and Suiyuan, who considered Mongolian leagues and banners as ineffective medieval administrative set-ups and accepted nothing less than political homogenization and cultural assimilation (X.Liu 2010: 96). As Chiang had to rely on these regional military commanders to enforce the central government's writ in Northeast China and Inner Mongolian territories, once again he had to compromise by promising the Mongolian activists a "Mongolian local autonomy promotion committee" ("蒙古地方自治促進會") to implement local Mongolian autonomy within established provinces (X.Liu 2010: 97-8). This arrangement proved unsatisfactory enough for Inner Mongolian leaders to push them into the arms of the CCP, which agreed to the formation of an Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region (內蒙古自治區 /

IMAR) in 1947, although it could be debated how much real autonomy was ever possessed by local Mongols in IMAR under the CCP.

Xikang / Kham

In 1928, a Preparatory Office (筹备處) was established for western Sichuan's Kham Special District on the Sino-Tibetan borderland to convert it in time into a new Xikang (Western Kham in Chinese) province, which was realized in 1939. In February 1932, a Kham Tibetan named Tsering Kesang was dispatched by MTAC to Xikang, where he established and headed a Headquarters for Xikang Province Defence (西康省防禦總部), and claiming to have a mandate from Nanjing to organize a militia, recruited local males to do battle with Xikang's warlord Liu Wenhui, against whom his forces ultimately lost (Lin 2006: 62-3). Still, under the pretext of reclaiming and developing Xikang's wastelands, China's wartime government in Chongqing had by 1940 succeeded in introducing a conscription program to recruit Xikang aborigines into the local KMT army units (Lin 2006: 119). Notwithstanding the Tsering Kesang fiasco, on another occasion, this time under orders from Chiang, the MTAC in 1943 paid 100,000 yuan a month, an exorbitant sum at that time, to another Kham Tibetan named Pandatsang Ragpa, a China nationalist, intellectual and follower of ROC founder Sun Yat-sen, to launch a revolution in Tibet Proper and Tibetan-controlled Kham, which failed to take place (Lin 2006: 145).

Xinjiang and its approaches

In July 1942, Chiang instructed the Muslim Chinese (回 / Hui) warlord Ma Buqing (馬步青) to transfer his cavalry from the Gansu Corridor (甘肅走廊) to the Tsaidam Marshes (柴旦盆地) in northwestern Qinghai (Amdo), for the purpose of "colonizing and guarding" it against Tibetan forces that might wish to expand northwards from Tibet proper (Lin 2010: 76). Although there was no indication of Tibetan activities in northwestern Qinghai, the relocation of Ma's forces had the effect of allowing the KMT troops to wrest the strategic land corridor which opens up to Xinjiang from the Hui. By mid-1943, four KMT divisions stationed in southern Gansu had moved into the Gansu Corridor (Lin 2010: 76). When, expecting Germany to defeat Russia, the erstwhile pro-Soviet Xinjiang warlord Sheng Shicai welcomed Chongqing's officials to the provincial capital of Dihua (迪化) (presently Urumqi 烏魯木齊) to take charge of the province's foreign affairs, Chiang's forces in the Gansu Corridor marched northwestward into Xinjiang. It could be argued that, more than anything else, it was the presence of 150,000 largely Han-Chinese KMT troops in Xinjiang, a province made up of some 95 percent Uyghurs and other non-Han ethnic minorities then facing a separatist rebellion centered on Ili which referred to itself as the East Turkestan Republic, that

convinced Governor Burhan Shahidi (包爾漢) and Military Commander Tao Zhiyue (陶峙岳) to neither declare the province independent nor resist the advancing CCP forces which arrived in Xinjiang in September 1949.

Tibet

In 1934, the Nationalist government dispatched General Huang Musong (黃慕松) to Lhasa to participate in the memorial service for the 13th Dalai Lama, who had passed from this world the year before. While in the Tibetan capital, Huang repeatedly stressed to leading members of the *Kashag*, Tibet's governing council, that while his government considered Tibet to be Chinese territory, it would not alter Tibet's existing governing system, although the appointment of foreign affairs, national defence, communications and other important positions must be decided by the central authorities (陳連開 等 2011: 429-531). The Tibetan authorities offered no reply to this proposal, but agreed to let two members of Huang's delegation to remain behind as advisors. Having slightly better luck or skill was General Wu Zhongxin (吳忠信), who as head of the MTAC represented the Nationalist government at the investiture ceremony of the 14th and present Dalai Lama in Lhasa. He managed to convince the Tibetan authorities to let the MTAC establish a branch office in Lhasa and staff it with ROC government personnel, carried out in 1944 (陳連開 等. 2011: 531-533).

Shortly after recognizing the independence of (Outer) Mongolia in early 1946, Chiang announced to the Tibetans in Central Tibet (U-Tsang) that he was prepared to grant them “a very high degree of autonomy,” and even stated that if in future they fulfill economic requirements for independence, the KMT would help Tibet achieve Mongolia's status (Lin 2010: 100). Since the ROC had never for a day exercised political control over Central Tibet, Chiang might have said this to prevent the Tibetans from pressing for immediate Chinese recognition of their full de-facto independence. However, at least from the integrationist perspective, it is to Chiang's credit as a Chinese nationalist that he did not act on his independence inducement to the Tibetans to spite the CCP, which he could have done, when his regime was collapsing on mainland China in 1949.

4.2 Economic Penetration

Xikang / Kham and Qinghai / Amdo

After the KMT central government appointed General Liu Wenhui as the supreme military commander of Xikang in 1927, he immediately established a Xikang Special Administrative Committee (西康建省委員會), even before obtaining Nanjing's authorization, to attract

Han-Chinese settlers and administrators to his sparsely- and largely Tibetan- populated province. By drawing detailed plans to develop new roads, railway lines, factories, mines, and agricultural research stations, Liu's Committee intended to open up for exploitation the region's forests, grasslands and minerals (Leibold 2007: 69).³

By 1940, following its introduction in the western Inner Mongolian steppes, the national currency, *fabi* (法幣), had been introduced to China's southwestern peripheries and circulating in parts of Xikang, and even in the remote pasturelands of Qinghai (Lin 2006: 120). Although the Lhasa authorities were issuing their own currency in Central Tibet, KMT policy planners had hoped to expand the national government's financial influence in Tibetan-populated areas and among the local elite by promoting the use of the *fabi* in Kham, west of the Yangzi (Jinsha) River. They had also hoped to increase the central government's economic presence in the region by investing significant capital in the Xikang-Tibetan Trading Company (康藏貿易公司). This company dealt with various businesses, was run by influential Khampa (康巴) merchants, powerful local headmen, and respected lamas, had a number of branches along traditional Sino-Tibetan commercial routes, and even maintained its own private militia to escort goods shipments (Lin 2006: 129). Branches of the national China Bank (中國銀行) were also established in Xikang's Kangding (康定) and Qinghai's Xining (西寧) (Lin 2006:120; 時事問題研究會 1940: 382; Barber and Hanwell 1939: 104-5).

Upon the orders of Chiang Kaishek, by 1943, two Sichuan-Xikang roads, one from Ya'an (雅安) to Kangding, and another from Xichang (西昌) to Leshan (樂山) via northern Yunnan (雲南), were completed, and a third road, from Kangding to Xining, capital of Qinghai, was in progress (Lin 2006: 130). These constructions facilitated the penetration of central government and Han-Chinese influence in the two Tibetan-dominated provinces of Xikang and Qinghai.

In January 1945, the KMT government signed a 40-year agreement with three major American oil companies – Standard Vacuum, Shell, and California Texas Oil Company – to jointly drill for petroleum in Qinghai, Tibetan-dominated southern Gansu, and Hui-dominated Gansu-Ningxia (甘肅-寧夏) border districts, for which the KMT government would control 55 percent of the shares (Lin 2010: 106).

Xinjiang

³ On the supposed accomplishments of the Liu regime as of late 1929 and its future plans, see 杜向榮 (1929). For a 1929 report released by Liu's administration outlining extensive opportunities for *kenhuang* (opening-up of wastelands) in Xikang, see 梅心如 ([1934] 1970).

To exercise direct control over Xinjiang's customs revenues, in January 1944, Chongqing established a Xinjiang customs office in Urumqi, headed by an inspector-general directly responsible to the central government, together with branch customs offices set up in other major cities in Xinjiang (Lin 2010: 83).

The end result of economic penetration or domination of the frontier regions by the Chinese nation-state by the time the KMT regime collapsed on mainland China was the presence of a small but core group of Han-Chinese professionals, engineers, technicians, administrators, managers, clerks, merchants, manufacturers, transporters and laborers. By largely choosing to stay put when CCP forces arrived, these personnel in large measure assured the succeeding regime of quicker control and smoother running of these places than would otherwise have been the case. Collectively, they certainly played a distinguished role in the economic aspect of Chinese nation-state integration.

4.3 Socio-cultural Penetration

Publishing Journals

Journals specifically dedicated to frontier affairs and administrations were published by the authorities, for the purpose of luring Han-Chinese colonists to the frontier regions, and highlighting the warlords' own contributions to the development of the localities under their control. A prominent example was the *Bianzheng* (邊政) magazine launched in September 1929 by Liu Wenhui's 24th Army (二十四軍) in Xikang, which described the province as a "gold vault" and "treasure trove" rich in gold, silver, copper, timber, medicinal herbs and other natural resources (Leibold 2007: 69; 胡 1929). In January 1943, Liu published a collection of ten public lectures (劉文輝 1943), in which he addressed such issues as the cultivation, acculturation, and refinement of local lamas and tusi (土司) to pacify and control Xikang (3rd lecture); development of the local economy, education, and people's livelihood (6th lecture); and construction of a new cadre policy in Xikang (7th lecture).

Appointing Officials

The late Qing dynasty policy of *gaitu guiliu* (改土歸流), replacing hereditary chieftains with appointed officials, was resurrected, with the official abolition in 1931 by the ROC authorities and regional warlords of the traditional titles and prerogatives of non-Han nobilities and aristocracies in sub-provincial localities (Lin 2006, 67), as they were considered incompatible with the republican form of the country. Notwithstanding the Puyi Emperor of Manchukuo, the last effective king in China, the Khan of Hami (哈密), was

removed in 1930 by warlord Jin Shuren of Xinjiang. Traditional chieftains and tribal headmen were afterwards given non-hereditary official positions with titles such as “District Leader” (“區領導人”) or “Village Chief” (“村長”) to legitimize their authority, in exchange for which they were required to pay taxes to the Chinese state (Lin 2006, 68; 甘孜藏族自治州概況編寫組 1986: 88-9; 甘孜州誌編纂委員會 1997: 831-55).

Training Cadres

To recruit both Han and non-Han students as frontier affairs cadets (Lin 2010: 31), a Mongolian and Tibetan Class (later renamed School /蒙藏學校) was initiated in Nanjing in November 1930 with full financial and administrative support from the central KMT authorities. Over 90 percent of the Class’ mostly Han and Inner Mongolian graduates would go on to serve in governmental frontier planning bodies or teach frontier politics in China’s higher educational institutes (Lin 2010: 32). A Mongolian and Tibetan Political Training Corps (蒙藏政治訓練團) was formed in March 1933 under the MTAC to provide for the teaching of the Mongolian and Tibetan languages to civil servants or KMT special agents working in the frontier regions, for which non-Han applicants were targeted with preferential admission and financial scholarships (Lin 2010: 32; 黃奮生 1936: 616-19). However, this program was shut down shortly due to financial stringency.

Using Religion

While monitoring the major Tibetan Buddhist lamaseries of Xikang, Qinghai and Gansu for potential politically subversive activities, the KMT central government had not been hesitant to make use of ethnic religious leaders to build friendly relations and spread its own influence among ethnic minority communities which subscribe to Tibetan Buddhism.

In 1932, the 7th Janggiya Hutuktu, the most authoritative Yellow Sect dignitary in Inner Mongolia was appointed “Publicity Commissioner for the Mongolia Banners” (“蒙旗宣化使”), given an office in Inner Mongolia, and supplied with ammunitions (Lin 2006: 93; 黃英傑 1995: 233-4; Bulag 2006: 260-91; 朱文原 1933). In May 1935, Nanjing appointed the 7th Norla Hutuktu, Red Hat Sect prelate of Kham, as “Consolatory Commissioner” (“巡撫使”) to succor the local Khampas, recruit them into a fighting force against both the Xikang warlord Liu Wenhui and the CCP, and enroll pro-KMT personnel to take charge of local administrative affairs in areas controlled by the Hutuktu (Lin 2010: 51-2). Between March 1935, when the Panchen Lama (班禪額爾德尼) announced his intention to return to Tibet from Beijing, and his unexpected death in December 1937, the central government offered to provide an armed escort for the Lama’s trip, given that he had pledge to Nanjing that he

would publicize central government policies and work for ethnic unity in Tibet (Lin 2006: 89-91).

Although Chiang Kai-shek would not recognize the Muslims of China as a separate nationality, he often extolled their patriotic and martial spirit in defending the country against the invading Japanese (陳連開 等 2011: 539-541). This should not be construed as idle compliment, considering that the “Three Ma” warlords of Ningxia, Gansu and Qinghai – Ma Hongkui (馬鴻逵), Ma Bufang (馬步芳) and Ma Buqing, as well as Bai Chongxi (白崇禧), a vaunted warrior and commander of the Guangxi provincial army, were all Muslims.

Dispatching Personnel

By 1939-40, KMT party branches, intelligence units, telegraph stations, post offices, hospitals and tax offices were established at district levels in Chinese-controlled western Inner Mongolia, where staff dispatched from Chongqing began to administer local affairs there directly for the first time on behalf of the KMT regime (Lin 2010: 66; 中国第二历史档案馆编 2000: 373-6), and in the provinces of Gansu, Qinghai and Ningxia, with their sizeable non-Han minorities.

In August 1944, Chiang Kai-shek appointed Shen Zonglian (沈宗濂), his trusted English-speaking senior advisor, as the KMT regime’s representative to Tibet. Shen managed to organize the Chinese representative office (代表處) in Lhasa into a bureaucracy comprised of political, intelligence, meteorological and agricultural branches, which included a wireless station and Chinese primary school, so that by 1945, with the representative office acting as a magnet, there were more Han-Chinese officials, secret agents and merchants residing in Lhasa than at any time since the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1912 (Lin 2010: 95).

Settling Immigrants

From late 1942 onwards, having secured the allegiance of Xinjiang’s warlord Sheng Shicai, Chongqing launched a large-scale land settlement project in eastern Xinjiang, by moving some 11,400 Han-Chinese refugees, demobilized soldiers and unemployed workers from Henan (河南), Shanxi (山西) and Shaanxi to Hami and Turfan (吐魯番) to undertake reclamation work (Lin 2010: 80). Settler colonies were also established by the military, and supervised by officials from Chongqing, in the Gansu Corridor, Ningxia and Qinghai to receive Han-Chinese immigrants from KMT-controlled southwestern China, who were assigned to road construction, irrigation, forestry, and land development projects (Lin 2010: 80).

Besides the KMT, the CCP also attempted socio-cultural penetration of the areas under its control and inhabited largely by non-Han minorities, particularly at the juncture of the borders of Shaanxi, Gansu and Ningxia (陝甘寧邊區). To create a corps of ethnic minority cadres to draw from, and mobilize the resident Mongols and Huis, the CCP leadership under Li Weihan (李維漢) created national minority classes at its Yan'an Party School (中共中央黨校) in 1939, which became the Nationalities Institute (民族學院) in 1941. By 1942, the Institute, with three (Hui, Tibetan and Mongolian) departments, had enrolled three hundred students, with 40 percent Mongol, 20 percent Hui and the rest others (Leibold 2007: 104). To promote and reform Mongolian culture and language, the party founded the Mongolian Cultural Advancement Society (蒙古文化促進會) in Yan'an in 1940 (Leibold 2007: 104; 郝維民 1997: 387-9; 李維漢 1986: 459-61).

5. Summary and Agenda for Further Research

Shen Zonglian, the KMT regime's representative to Tibet, did manage to entice the Tibetan government to send a delegation to the first ROC National Assembly (國民大會) in 1946, albeit without telling the delegates what kind of meeting they were invited to attend (Lin 2006: 172-3). This act constituted a major propaganda victory for the Chinese at that time in drawing Tibet back into their constitutional framework, although the Dalai Lama's government in Lhasa would subsequently argue that the delegates were in Nanjing as representatives of an independent country. Overall, however, the piecemeal penetrative or integrative changes wrought on China's ethnic frontier by the KMT government were admittedly less than earth-shaking. Yet, for the purpose of state integration, or incorporation of frontier ethnic areas into the regular processes or normal operations of the state, a transformative template has been bequeathed for the successor regime to follow.

With the current state of the literature surveyed, one major drawback is the insufficient attention given to the effectiveness or otherwise of governance or control over China's largely ethnic-minority-dominated frontier by Han-Chinese regimes, whether it was that of the central government, or the warlords who had actual and direct hold over those regions. Patchy anecdotes and illustrations aside, there is still insufficient research on what the central government's rhetoric of promoting or safeguarding "ethnic autonomy" entailed, irrespective of what the actual situations were on the ground. It is also not clear to what degree were ethnic minority leaders relied upon to govern their own communities or serve the mandates or objectives of their provincial or central government superiors. It would be interesting to know the measures, in terms of roles and functions as well as taxation and spending, and the levels, in terms of leagues, banners, prefectures or counties, of autonomy or self-government

allowed to the chieftains and officials governing ethnic localities. Given more releases expected from the archives of Taiwan and mainland China on the KMT period, greater details on these aspects could be anticipated for future investigations.

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