

Evaluating Xinjiang and Tibet as “Internal Colonies” of China: Evidence from Official Data

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This study attempts to relate the discontent and occasional violence expressed by Tibetans in Tibet and Uyghurs in Xinjiang to the imposition of Internal Colonialism in Xinjiang and Tibet by the Chinese state, by drawing particularly on primary sources for analysis. Tibet and Xinjiang are the only provincial-level units in China where the majority Han Chinese constitute a demographic minority, and Tibetans and Uyghurs respectively comprise the majority and plurality. The discourse of Internal Colonialism focuses on three aspects: political domination, economic inequality and resource exploitation, and socio-cultural marginalization, by the core nation, of the periphery ethnic or cultural minorities and their territories, within a country. To test the applicability of Internal Colonialism in Xinjiang and Tibet, the paper posits several propositions containing these aspects, and employ evidences to affirm or refute, entirely or to some extent, their existence. Findings reveal that the paradigm is more convincingly sustained in the case of Xinjiang than Tibet.

Introduction

Since the early 1990s, writers have applied an Internal Colonialism paradigm to examine the rule of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) over its restive autonomous regions of Xinjiang and Tibet, where Turkic Muslim Uyghurs and Buddhist Tibetans still form respectively the demographic plurality and majority, unlike the rest of China where Han-Chinese dominates. While overseas Uyghur and Tibetan groups and many non-Chinese scholars have contended that Xinjiang and Tibet are internal colonies of China (Ingram, 1990, 1996; ICJ, 1960, 1997, 2001), others have counter-argued that the two regions do not fit the case of internal colonialism (Sautman 1999, 2005, 2006; Yan, 2000). However, this framework has not yet been systematically or methodologically employed to study Xinjiang and Tibet. From personal observations and interviews in the two regions, Hessler and Cliff (1999) have argued that the “colonial” appearances of Xinjiang and Tibet are rather the unintended results of inappropriate policies driven by material-oriented modernization goals of the Chinese central government (Cliff, 2016).

As a social studies framework, ‘internal colonialism’ attempts to explain persistent inequalities between ethnic groups within national borders. It seeks to illuminate 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 (Dmitrienko et. al., 2017). Simply put, it depicts the features associated with traditional forms of colonialism, but existing within an independent state (Casanova, 1965). 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; Mathews, 2016). 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, p. 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, p. 527), and socio-cultural marginalization. Any theoretical concept is open to challenge, but although Internal Colonialism was later criticized for being too general a framework to allow for measurability, it was widely applied by scholars in Latin America, the U.S. and Europe to describe the ethnic and social situation in their own countries, as well as that of South Africa, Israel, Thailand and the Soviet Union (Benlagha & Hemrit, 2018; Cervantes, 1975; Chigisheva,

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Soltovets, & Bondarenko, 2017; Mettam & William, 1998; Page, 1978; Simon, 1981).

As no one can be certain of the true intentions of the Chinese authorities' policies in governing Xinjiang and Tibet, investigations into this subject have hardly been objective and free from personal biases. Hence, adopting a structured yet qualitative methodological framework such as Internal Colonialism has the major advantage of guarding against possible partisan subjectivity and unsystematic analysis on the part of the investigator. Given the notorious difficulties in getting access to first-hand information on the attitudes of ethnic minorities toward the PRC government, due to the politically sensitive nature of the issues involved, few researchers have studied the cases of Tibet and Xinjiang comparatively on the same issues, and in detail with reference to primary sources. By drawing mainly from the PRC National Bureau of Statistics and the bureaus of statistics of the Xinjiang (Uyghur) Autonomous Region and the Tibet Autonomous Region, buttressed by relevant observations from credible secondary sources, this study hopes to understand why the two regions experience similarities and differences in various aspects, and whether they are caused by government policies. While always mindful of the need to interpret with care official statistics from Chinese sources, it would be interesting to make judicious use of information released by China's own authorities to try and 'falsify' the concept of Internal Colonialism as applied to Xinjiang and Tibet (which in this essay refers only to the Tibet Autonomous Region, which has a specific history of incorporation into the PRC, not other areas in China populated by Tibetans). The data for analyses include those recently published back to the mid-1990s, because this is a time-series study to assess the applicability of the concept since the end of the era of Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping.

Testing of Propositions

The discourse of Internal Colonialism focuses on three features: political domination, economic/resource exploitation, and socio-cultural marginalization, by the core of the periphery. As we are interested in the applicability of Internal Colonialism in Xinjiang and Tibet, we posit propositions containing its features, and employ evidence to assess the presence of these features in our case studies.

A. Political Domination

Internal Colonialism is first and foremost based on political domination, produced by the subjugation of one group of people by another, typically from elsewhere and not one of the original inhabitants of the land (Fanon, 1963, p. 40). The dominant/core group not only controls the power structure within the national borders, but also encroaches upon and determines the policy-making processes of the territories where the subordinate/peripheral people inhabit and play minor roles. Hechter, in his study on the relationship between England and Britain's "Celtic Fringe" (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), revealed that the administration policies of the Celtic territories were decided in a larger political arena (i.e., London), and the Celtic peoples lost the privilege of determining their own fate (Hechter, 1975, p. 39). However, as Allen pointed out in his study of the black underclass in American society, to supervise and run the institutions of government within the ethnic community, an intermediary class of minority professionals, politicians, bureaucrats, businesspeople and state corporate managers are created and nurtured by the power structure, for co-opting as a buffer in controlling these communities (Allen, 2005, p. 4).

In China, led by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), administrative positions at all levels – central, provincial (autonomous region), prefecture/municipal, county/city, and village/town – are headed by both a party secretary and an administrative head. Although in theory the secretary of the CCP and the head of administration in one locality possess the same rank,¹ the party secretary is in reality the more powerful person. Very often, to ensure the central authority's unified control over the locality's policy-making process, the head of administration also takes the position of vice-party secretary. It is hypothesized that power distribution among political positions in China's ethnic autonomous regions demonstrates ethnic dominance by the Han-Chinese, which constitute more than 90 percent of China's population. This proposition is evaluated below.

Proposition 1: The position of CCP party secretary in Xinjiang and Tibet at the autonomous regional, prefecture and city/county levels are dominated by Han-Chinese.

Since the PRC's national People's Liberation Army (PLA) marched into the region in 1949, Xinjiang has had eight out of nine Han party secretaries at the regional level and only one Uyghur (See Table 1-1). In Tibet, since its absorption into the PRC in 1950, 12 out of 13 party secretaries at the regional level have been Han. No Tibetan has been Tibet's party secretary, with its only ethnic minority party secretary being of the Yi ethnicity from Sichuan (See Table 1-2). No Uyghur or Tibetan has ever been appointed party secretary of a provincial-level unit anywhere else in China. This, perhaps more than anything else, illustrates the constraint on the exercise of power by an ethnic minority at higher levels of the Chinese political structure, even in its own nominally ethnic autonomous region, although the position of the much less powerful regional head of government must by law be held by a Tibetan

in Tibet and an Uyghur in Xinjiang.

Table 1.1
Party Secretaries at the Regional Level in Xinjiang

No.	Name	Terms and Periods	Ethnicity (Birthplace)
1	Wang Zhen	1 st (1949.10-1952.06) 2 nd (1952.06-Cultural Revolution Period), 6 th (1981.10-1985.07)	Han (Hunan)
2	Wang Enmao		Han (Jiangxi)
3	Long Shujin Saifuddin Azizi	3 rd (1971.05-1972.07)	Han (Hunan)
4	(Saifuding Aizezi)	4 th (1972.07-1978.01)	Uyghur (Xinjiang)
5	Wang Feng	5 th (1978.01-1981.10)	Han (Shanxi)
6	Song Hanliang	7 th (1985.07-1994.09)	Han (Zhejiang)
7	Wang Lequan	8 th (1994.09-2010.04)	Han (Shandong)
8	Zhang Chunxian	9 th (2010.10-2016.08)	Han (Henan)
9	Chen Quanguo	10 th (2016.08-)	Han (Henan)

Source: *Zhongguo lingdao ganbu ziliaoku (Database of Chinese Leaders and Officials)*.

Table 1.2
Party Secretaries at the Regional Level in Tibet

No.	Name	Terms and Periods	Ethnicity (Birthplace)
1	Zhang Guohua	1st (1950.01-1951.06), 4th (1965.09-Cultural Revolution Period)	Han (Jiangxi)
2	Fan Ming	2nd (1951.06-1951.12)	Han (Shanxi)
3	Zhang Jingwu	3rd (1952.03-1965.08)	Han (Hunan)
4	Ren Rong	5th (1971.08-1980.03)	Han (Sichuan)
5	Yin Fatang	6th (1980.03-1985.06)	Han (Shandong)
6	Wu Jinghua	7th (1985.06-1988.12)	Yi (Sichuan)
7	Hu Jintao	8th (1988.12-1992.11)	Han (Anhui)
8	Chen Kuiyuan	9th (1992.11-2000.09)	Han (Liaoning)
9	Guo Jinlong	10th (2000.09-2004.12)	Han (Jiangsu)
10	Yang Chuantang	11th (2004.12-2005.11)	Han (Shandong)
11	Zhang Qingli	12th (2005.11-2006.05, Acting Party Secretary), 13th (2006.05-2011.08)	Han (Shandong)
12	Chen Quanguo	14th (2011.08-2016.08)	Han (Henan)
13	Wu Yingjie	15 th (2016.08-)	Han(Shandong)

Source: *Zhongguo lingdao ganbu ziliaoku (Database of Chinese Leaders and Officials)*.

At the prefectural and municipal level in Xinjiang, party secretaries have almost always been Han. A notable exception is the current party secretary of Tacheng prefecture – Erkenjiang Tulahong, who is Uyghur. On the other hand, the mayors (administrative heads) of prefectures and municipalities have almost always been Uyghur and other ethnic minorities. A notable exception is the current mayor of Karamay city – Zhang Hongyan who is of Han ethnicity from Hunan. The pattern in Tibet is rather different. Based on official data, surprisingly perhaps, many more party secretaries and mayors at the prefecture and municipal level in Tibet have been Tibetans. This is although some are Tibetans from Han-majority provinces adjacent to the autonomous region, such as Qi Zhala, party secretary of Lhasa, Tibet's regional capital, and Zhang Yanqing, former mayor of Lhasa and currently party secretary of

Shigatse, its second city.

To legitimize and secure the CCP's rule in ethnic minority regions, the central government trains ethnic minorities who are prepared to align their own ambitions with the policy goals of the party-state into "local leaders" (Calderón-Zaks, 2010). According to *the Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional Ethnic Autonomy (LREA)*, enacted in 1984, "in ethnic autonomous regions where the population of an ethnicity takes up more than half of the total population of the region, the ethnic ratio of government officials in the region should be the same as the population ratio of the ethnicities; in regions where the population of the ethnicity is less than half the total population, the percentage of government officials of the ethnicity should be higher than its population percentage in the total population." (Committee on Legal Works, 1984, p. 43) However, even if ethnic minority cadres are thus overrepresented in terms of their population in autonomous regions, this would only apply to the government / administrative positions rather than the more powerful party / leadership positions.

A clear-cut ethnic division of decision-making versus administrative power in Xinjiang is obviously not a reflection of the *LREA*, even assuming the best of intentions. For one, although the high percentage of Uyghur mayors at the prefecture and municipal level is an indication that preference has been given to Uyghurs to fill government leadership positions in their region, it says nothing about the intent or efficacy of such preferential policies in grooming Uyghur cadres for political decision-making responsibilities, which typically belong to the Han. For another, the lack of party heads in Xinjiang may have resulted from the scarcity of minorities among CCP members in Xinjiang. According to official reports, by the end of 2014, of about 1.46 million CCP members in Xinjiang, only 37.55 percent were ethnic minorities (Mzb.com.cn 2015), even though they made up almost 60 percent of the region's population. This is likely because the CCP recruits disproportionately from the urban areas and among the more educated, and compared to minorities in Xinjiang, a much higher percentage of Han are urban, with higher average educational attainment. Also, the large pool of Han who belonged to the PLA's Xinjiang Production and Construction Corp (Bingtuan, or XPCC,) in settling Xinjiang and developing its economy makes it less necessary for the CCP to select Uyghur officials as governing proxies for the Han-dominated party.

In Tibet, proportionately more party heads and administrative officials at the prefectural and municipal level have been Tibetans. Two factors may have accounted for this. Firstly, there is a considerable number of Tibetans joining the CCP.² This enables the CCP to choose party heads and government leaders for Tibet's prefectures and municipalities from a sufficient pool of Tibetan party members. Secondly, despite decades of rule by the formally atheist CCP, religion still retains much influence over the broad Tibetan populace (Smith 2004; Yao 2009), thus Tibetan cadres who demonstrate no outward signs of piety are selected for loyalty to the regime. As religion, specifically Tibetan Buddhism, is a core marker of Tibetan identity, and can easily be mobilized for political purposes, the CCP relies on its Tibetan cadres to closely monitor its practice as well as signal to higher authorities what religious facilities need to be constructed or renovated, at government expense.³ Since Chen Kuiyuan became party secretary of Tibet in 1993, monks have been appointed to "Democratic Management Committees" (Minzhu Guanli Weiyuanhui), established in all of Tibet's major monasteries, to serve as informants on worshippers or their fellow clergy for the authorities (Karmel, 1995).

It seems apparent that the Han-dominated CCP-led government tries to ensure its rule over Xinjiang by maintaining ethnic division of the highest-ranking regional positions, with Han dominating more powerful party head posts and ethnic minorities appointed as less powerful administrative heads. This appears to be consonant with the workings of Internal Colonialism. However, not all party secretary positions at every level of the two autonomous regions are dominated by Han-Chinese. For practical reasons and provided that ethnic minorities are party members, the CCP is prepared to groom ethnic minorities in Tibet to be both party secretaries and government officials at lower levels of the political structure such as prefectures and cities.

Ensuring the political domination of the Han over other ethnic groups in China seems to be neither the goal nor approach of the CCP government *per se*. To legitimize, secure and strengthen the party's absolute control over ethnic minority regions, the CCP uses whatever tools that work well to serve this purpose. Given the necessary preconditions for selection of ethnic minorities as party heads in localities where they are concentrated, even troublesome places in Xinjiang and Tibet can be countenanced. Yet the CCP is dominated by the Han, and to them, the loyalties of ethnic minorities elites, coopted though they may be, are sometimes, if not often, suspect. What the Han perceive strictly as political dominance of the CCP over China, including Xinjiang and Tibet, Uyghurs and Tibetans with grievances against the authorities see as alien domination of their homelands with the CCP representing Han rule.

B. Economic Exploitation

Internal Colonialism scholars have stressed economic inequality between the periphery and the core, particularly the exploitation of human labor and natural resources of the former by the latter

(Hechter, 1975; Murray, 1994; Wolpe, 1975), whereby economic development of the periphery is dependent on and complementary to the core (Murray, 1994, p. 130). According to Hechter (1975), peripheral industrialization, if it occurs, is “a highly specialized and export-focused activity, typically involving specialization in a narrow range of primary commodities or raw materials for export,” (p. 9) and Michie (1978) has argued that “industrialization did nothing to eliminate existing economic inequality, and might have aggravated it” (p. 779).

To examine the merits of the allegation that the PRC government engages in economic exploitation of Xinjiang and Tibet, we first establish the proportions of Uyghurs and Tibetans as agriculturalists and as workers in the industrial and tertiary sectors (Proposition 2), compared to the Han in the two regions and the national average. We then test several propositions on the economic development or underdevelopment of the two regions: whether economic inequality between local Han and Uyghurs/Tibetans has been narrowed (Proposition 3A), whether industrialization and urbanization in Xinjiang and Tibet have benefitted Uyghurs and Tibetans (Proposition 3B), and whether the government budgets of Xinjiang and Tibet are heavily reliant on central government transfers (Proposition 4).

Proposition 2: Percentages of Uyghurs and Tibetans as agricultural workers (farmers and herders) are significantly higher, and as workers in the industrial and tertiary sectors significantly lower, compared to the Han in their autonomous regions and to the national average.

Among all districts (prefectures / municipalities) of Xinjiang where the population of Uyghur or an ethnic minority is larger than the population of the Han ethnicity, the number of agricultural workers tends to be larger than the number of non-agricultural workers (see Table 2-1). The two exceptions are Changji Hui Autonomous City and Bayingol Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture, where the population of the Han ethnicity exceeds that of ethnic minorities, but the number of agricultural workers is more than that of non-agricultural workers. This anomaly can be explained by the presence of two groups of Bingtuan - the Sixth Division in Changji and Second Division in Bayingol (Gov. cn., 2015). Bingtuan groups contain a much bigger Han population of demobilized soldiers than ethnic minorities and have traditionally focused on agricultural production.

From Table 2-1, it can be observed that the larger the gap between the populations of the Han and the ethnic minorities, the bigger the difference between the number of non-agriculture and agriculture workers. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the percentage of ethnic minorities (mainly Uyghurs) as agriculture workers is generally bigger than that of the Han ethnicity in Xinjiang.

Table 2.1
Population in Different Districts in Xinjiang

Districts	Han	Minority Ethnicity	Non-Agricultural Workers	Agricultural Workers
Urumqi City	1973649	694666	2063500	604800
Karamay City	223920	75800	296800	2900
Turpan District	121569	530284	235900	416000
Kumul District	427657	189054	337100	279600
Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture	1006646	386116	576100	816700
Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture	1934571	2761751	2035800	2660500
Ili City	1097765	1906405	1310800	1693400
Tacheng District	569318	454846	455500	568700
Altay District	267488	400500	269500	398500
Bortala Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture	306988	172749	231400	248300

Bayingol Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture	826063	567749	637500	756300
Aksu District	465983	2064523	830400	1700100
Kizilsu Autonomous Prefecture	41438	554626	127400	468700
Kashgar District	292972	4206186	1090100	3409100
Hotan District	71233	2253054	618400	1705900

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (2016)*.

The agricultural population is mostly concentrated in rural areas in both Xinjiang and Tibet. Official data further reveals that the agricultural population percentages in both Tibet and Xinjiang have been higher than the national average since 2003 (see Table 2-2). However, while the percentage of agricultural workers at the county level in Tibet has been decreasing, the corresponding agricultural population in Xinjiang has been increasing. This reduces the gap between Tibet's agricultural population percentage and the steadily declining national average, but enlarges that between Xinjiang's and the national average.

Given the fact most Han people are concentrated in cities and towns where the agricultural population tends to be much smaller than the non-agricultural population, we can further infer that the percentages of Uyghurs and Tibetans as agricultural workers are relatively higher than the percentages of Han as agricultural workers in the two autonomous regions and the country as a whole.

Table 2.2
Percentages of Agricultural Workers at County Level

Time	Xinjiang	Tibet	National Average
2012	37%	37%	28%
2011	37%	37%	28%
2010	35%	38%	29%
2009	35%	38%	29%
2008	35%	38%	30%
2007	35%	38%	30%
2006	35%	38%	31%
2005	35%	38%	32%
2004	35%	38%	32%
2003	35%	38%	33%
2002	34%	40%	34%
2001	34%	41%	35%

Note: percentages are calculated by the number of agricultural workers/the total population at county level. Data after 2012 are not available.

Sources: *Statistical Yearbook of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (2015)*; *Statistical Yearbook of Tibet Autonomous Region (2015)*; *Statistical Yearbook of China (2015)*.

As categorized in the official statistics, in both Xinjiang and Tibet, while the percentage of workforce in the primary industries has been higher than the national average since 1995, the figure for secondary industries has been significantly lower. The percentage of workforce in the tertiary industries in both regions, however, have approached or exceeded the national average (see Table 2-3).

The specific percentages of Uyghurs and Tibetans working in secondary and tertiary industries remain unknown due to the unavailability of relevant data. Nevertheless, given the lower percentages of the non-agricultural populations among Uyghurs and Tibetans as compared to the Han, it can be safely assumed that the workforce of Uyghurs and Tibetans in secondary and tertiary industries must be lower than that of the Han in their respective autonomous regions and nationwide.

From the early 1950s to the late 1970s, many Han people migrated to Xinjiang and Tibet from elsewhere in China under the central government's directives. Although the Han immigrants were originally from different provinces and social sectors, they were relocated to live in major cities and resource-based towns in both autonomous regions (Ma, 2011), where secondary and tertiary industries

were more developed, and related job opportunities more accessible (Hannum & Xie, 1998; Wang, 2015). This trend continued with voluntary migration beginning in the 1980s when Han immigrants, mostly males of working age, were lured by economic opportunities to reside in Xinjiang and Tibet. With their higher educational attainment, professional skills and greater proficiency in Mandarin, Han migrants also have more advantages than Uyghurs and Tibetans in the urban labor market. As such, in spite of preferential policies for ethnic minorities in public employment, more Han can be found working in non-agricultural industries than Uyghurs and Tibetans.⁴

Table 2.3
Percentage of Workforce in the Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Industries

Year	Primary Industries(%)			Secondary Industries(%)			Tertiary Industries(%)		
	Xinjiang	Tibet	National	Xinjiang	Tibet	National	Xinjiang	Tibet	National
2016	43.5	37.7	27.70	14.4	16.4	28.80	42.2	45.9	43.5
2015	44.1	41.2	28.20	15.2	13.3	29.30	40.8	45.5	42.4
2014	45.4	43.7	29.50	16.0	14.7	29.90	38.7	41.6	40.60
2013	46.17	45.1	31.40	16.31	14.1	30.10	37.52	40.8	38.50
2012	48.73	46.3	33.60	15.61	13.4	30.30	35.66	40.3	36.10
2011	48.66	50.3	34.80	15.63	12.2	29.50	35.71	37.5	35.70
2010	48.97	53.6	36.70	14.84	10.9	28.70	36.19	35.5	34.60
2009	49.35	54.5	38.10	14.7	10.8	27.80	35.95	34.7	34.10
2008	49.71	54.6	39.60	14.16	10.5	27.20	36.13	34.9	33.20
2007	50.3	56	40.80	14.25	10.8	26.80	35.45	33.2	32.40
2006	51.06	58.9	42.60	13.71	9.6	25.20	35.23	31.4	32.20
2005	51.54	60.1	44.80	15.51	9.5	23.80	32.95	30.4	31.40
2004	54.17	62.6	46.90	13.23	9.6	22.50	32.6	27.8	30.60
2003	55.07	64.1	49.10	13.27	9.3	21.60	31.66	26.6	29.30
2002	55.86	68.8	50.00	13.66	6.2	21.40	30.48	25	28.60
2001	56.64	71	50.00	13.45	6.5	22.30	29.91	22.5	27.70
1998	56.95	74.3	49.80	15.6	5.7	23.50	27.45	20	26.70
1995	57.42	77.8	52.20	18.37	4.9	23.00	24.21	17.3	24.80

Sources: *Statistical Yearbook of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (2017)*; *Statistical Yearbook of Tibet Autonomous Region (2017)*; *Statistical Yearbook of China (2017)*.

Proposition 3A: Per capita net incomes for Uyghurs and Tibetans in rural areas of their autonomous regions are still significantly lower than that of the average for rural China.

Ethnic stratification in economic sectors or industries, established in the previous Proposition, addresses the discourse of Internal Colonialism because these differentials are reflected in income and occupational status disparities. With rapid economic development, disposable incomes of villagers in rural areas across China, including Xinjiang and Tibet, have significantly improved. However, per capita net incomes of villagers in Xinjiang and Tibet are still below the national average (see Table 3-1), although they have been consistently higher for Xinjiang than for Tibet after 1995. Although the gap between the per capita net incomes of villagers in Tibet and the national average has been getting smaller in recent years, in 2016, the figures for Tibet were still about 25 percent lower than the national average (See Table 3-1). A notable exception is Nagqu Prefecture, where many herders derive high incomes from harvesting valuable caterpillar fungus, or cordyceps, used in traditional Chinese medicine.

Table 3.1
Per Capita Net Incomes in Rural Areas (in Yuan)

Year	Xinjiang	Tibet	National Average
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2016	10183	9094	12363.4
2015	9425	8244	10772.6
2014	8724	7359	9892.0
2013	7296	6578	8895.9
2010	4643	4139	5919.0
2007	3183	2788	4140.4
2000	1618	1331	2253.4
1995	1137	1200	1577.7

Sources: *Statistical Yearbook of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (2015-2017)*; *Statistical Yearbook of Tibet Autonomous Region (2015-2017)*; *Statistical Yearbook of China (2015-2017)*.

In Tibet, although the value of agricultural production has greatly increased with the improvement of road, rail and air transportation infrastructure, and the introduction of machinery and new technology, its speed has been relatively slow due to development's low and late start (Ma, 2011; Sautman 2006). For reasons of relative geographic inaccessibility and the central government's priority in developing coastal areas, the economic reforms of Deng Xiaoping proceeded much slower in Tibet than in the rest of China (Karmel, 1995). Also, given the region's ethnic sensitivities and social disturbances, the central government has tended to be more hands-on and conservative in directing the reforms and development of Tibet. Consequently, even with many more subsidies provided to Tibet than to other regions, top-down economic policies that reflect the central government's national strategy could not engage development at all sectors or levels in Tibet (Davis, 2009; Koch, 2006). These factors, taken together, contribute to the limited economic development in Tibet, particularly its rural parts.

In Xinjiang, cotton is the main cash crop. However, more than 40 percent of the cotton production comes from the Bingtuan which controls a third of Xinjiang's arable land, mainly in the north. In southern Xinjiang where small farmers (mostly Uyghurs) live, cotton and a variety of other crops are usually grown, but due to limited land availability and low levels of mechanization, the output value from these small household farms is quite low (Spoor & Shi, 2008). Cotton production, therefore, does not necessarily help improve incomes in rural southern Xinjiang, which can be as low as that of the average for Tibet, but farmers lack other non-agricultural income sources.

Proposition 3B: The Han have higher status/income occupations (professional and technical, managerial, administrative, clerical, sales, services, manufacturing, and transportation) in the Xinjiang and Tibet autonomous regions than ethnic minorities.

Although statistics on specific occupations by ethnicities is not available, census data and anecdotal evidence from secondary sources seem to affirm this proposition. In general, Han tend to congregate in the municipalities and cities where higher-paying secondary and tertiary industry jobs are more likely to be found, while the Tibetans and Uyghurs are more dispersed and rural.

In Tibet, data from the 1982, 1990 and 2000 national census on the occupational structures of Han and Tibetan workers confirmed that more Han have higher-status occupations than Tibetans (see Table 3-2). Since the 1950s, the central government has arranged the placement of some 100,000 Han cadres, professional personnel and workers in government institutions of Tibet, including hospitals and schools, under programs of assistance to the Tibet Autonomous Region (Ma, 2011), although most of them did not stay there permanently. Since the early 2000s, when the number of Tibetan functionaries and workers started falling as part of a national directive to streamline the state sector in Tibet, wage increases were increasingly and disproportionately captured by urban non-Tibetan cadres and residents (Fischer, 2013). Similarly, large waves of educated Han youths were periodically dispatched to Xinjiang beginning in the 1950s (Hannum & Xie, 1998), to the extent that the Han dominated capital intensive and high value-added manufacturing and mining (Fischer 2014, p. 51). Except for administrative and public institutions, where the state's preferential policies are still at work, with jobs in private and public enterprises and self-employment, Uyghurs in Xinjiang face fierce competition from Han-Chinese and earn much lower wages (Wu & Song, 2014). Already possessing higher-status occupations and higher educational attainment than Uyghurs and Tibetans, Han migrants therefore took up more exalted job opportunities in secondary and tertiary industries in Tibet and Xinjiang (Koch, 2006).

Table 3.2
Occupational Structures of Han and Tibetans in Tibet

Occupation	1982 Census		1990 Census		2000 Census		National Average		
	Tibetan (%)	Han (%)	Tibetan (%)	Han (%)	Tibetan (%)	Han (%)	1982 (%)	1990 (%)	2000 (%)
Professional	2.9	25.4	5.8	18.8	4.3	15.2	5.1	5.3	5.7
Cadre	1.4	9.1	1.5	8.4	1.0	6.1	1.6	1.8	1.7
Office staff	1.0	12.9	1.1	16.6	1.7	9.9	1.3	1.7	3.1
Trade labor	0.4	2.4	1.2	7.8	3.1	38.8	1.8	3.0	9.2
Service labor	0.9	7.6	1.1	8.1			2.2	2.4	
Agricultural labor	87.1	2.3	83.5	3.4	86.6	7.9	72.0	70.6	64.5
Industrial worker	6.3	39.9	5.8	36.9	3.2	21.5	16.0	15.2	15.8
Others	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: *Statistical Bureau of Tibet 2002, 508-11 & 821-24*, cited from Ma, 2011, p. 63. Service labor is incorporated into trade labor for the 2000 census.

In Tibet, of the total urban workforce in 2014, personnel employed in public administration and social organizations constituted 42 percent, while personnel employed in education made up 14.3 percent. These employees would usually be located in towns and cities. Since 79.5 percent of the Han population in the autonomous region reside in urban areas compared with 15.2 percent of Tibetans according to the 2000 census (Fischer, 2008), it is possible to surmise that the major beneficiaries of government spending on these economic sectors, which accounts for the higher than national average per capita wages in Tibet's towns and cities (see Table 3-3), are the Han functionaries and their Tibetan counterparts, rather than most ordinary Tibetans. Percentage-wise, the figures for personnel employed in public administration/social organizations and education are 16 and 12 for Xinjiang, and only 8.7 and 9.5 for the nation as a whole.

Table 3.3
Per Capita Wages in County-level Towns and Cities (in Yuan)

Year	Xinjiang	Tibet	National Average
2016	63739	103232	67569
2015	60117	97849	62029
2014	53471	61235	56360
2013	49064	57773	51483
2012	44576	51705	46769
2011	38238	49464	41799
2010	32003	49898	36539
2009	27617	45347	32244
2008	24686	44055	28898
2007	21249	42820	24721
2006	17704	28119	20856

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of China (2007-2017)*

Proposition 4: Xinjiang and Tibet are dependent on subsidies provided by the central government to cover their budget deficits.

Since 1978, although the growth in per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Xinjiang has been significant, its fiscal incomes have been limited by the size of its GDP, about the average among provincial-level units. Furthermore, the secondary industries of Xinjiang are mainly heavy industries related to oil and gas production. According to current PRC taxation policies, all consumption tax and income tax, as well as 75 percent of value-added tax from natural resource-based heavy industries, go to the central government, while the regional government only receives incomes from resource tax, sales tax and 25 percent of the value-added tax (Koch, 2006). As such, Xinjiang cannot benefit much from the tax revenue from its secondary industries which contribute significantly to its total GDP.

Given the unavoidable and rising fiscal expenditures on improving the less-developed education and welfare systems in Xinjiang, particularly southern Xinjiang, where the natural environment is harsh and basic infrastructures are lacking, the regional government has been faced with large and increasing budget deficits (See Table 4-1).

Table 4.1
Budget Deficits in Xinjiang (million Yuan)

Year	Public Budgetary Incomes	Public Budgetary Expenditures	Budget Deficits
2016	129.895	413.825	-283930
2015	133.085	380.487	-247.402
2014	128.234	331.779	-203.545
2013	112.849	306.712	-193.864
2012	90.897	272.007	-181.11
2011	72.043	228.449	-156.405
2010	50.058	169.891	-119.834
2009	38.878	134.691	-95.813
2008	36.106	105.936	-69.83
2007	28.586	79.515	-50.929
2006	21.946	67.847	-45.901
2005	18.032	51.902	-33.87
2004	15.57	42.104	-26.534
2003	12.822	36.847	-24.025
2002	11.647	36.117	-24.47
2001	9.509	26.332	-16.823
2000	7.907	19.095	-11.188

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (2017)*

To cover the yearly budget deficits in Xinjiang, which in 2010 amounted to 22 percent of the region's GDP (Fischer, 2014), the central government has been providing financial support in various forms. Between 1950 and 2001, Beijing invested over 266.22 billion yuan in some 90,000 projects to support construction and economic development in Xinjiang. From 1955 to 2000, the total fiscal subsidies provided by the central government reached 87.74 billion yuan. Since 1996, the central government has been increasing financial aid to Xinjiang through all kinds of "fiscal transfer payments,"⁵ "pairing-up support,"⁶ as well as inflow of human resources and technology into the region (China.com. 2003). In any year, about two-thirds of Xinjiang's budget is covered by the central government (Becquelin, 2004).

Similarly, Tibet's government has also faced large budget deficits as far back as 1959 (see Table 4-2). According to official data, the central government has been providing large amounts of fiscal subsidies to Tibet by various channels. Between 1952 and 2013, the central government's financial subsidies (cumulatively 542.343 billion yuan) accounted for 91.45 percent of Tibet's revenues (cumulatively 593.06 billion yuan), and 92.36 percent of its expenditures (Jin, 2015). While the average annual growth rate of Tibet's financial revenues between 1952 and 2013 was 14.69 percent (from 2.582 million yuan to 11.042 billion yuan), the annual growth rate of Beijing's financial subsidies was 16.02 percent (from 10.466 million to 90.249 billion yuan) (Jin, 2015). Obviously, the central government's already huge subsidies to Tibet are growing faster than Tibet's piteously low revenues.

Table 4.2
Budget Deficits and Fiscal Subsidies from the Central Government to Tibet (million Yuan)

Year	Local Fiscal Incomes	Total Expenditures	Budget Deficits	National Fiscal Subsidies
2016	20674.85	164452.1	-143777.3	137194.8
2015	17583.07	142481.6	-124898.5	133117.4

2014	16475.36	124027.1	-107552	103486.8
2013	11042.34	104906.5	-93864.1	90248.88
2012	9562.85	93397.13	-83834.3	80429.75
2011	6452.7	77568.27	-71115.6	71425.41
2010	4246.79	56258.34	-52011.6	53099.8
2009	3091.08	47112.88	-44021.8	47094.65
2008	2858.72	38401.73	-35543	35785.59
2007	2314.37	27936.31	-25621.9	28041.27
2006	1726.82	20230.24	-18503.4	20078.6
2005	1433.3	18916.12	-17482.8	19153.4
2004	1198.99	13606.9	-12407.9	13596.55
2003	1003.42	14819.66	-13816.2	12875.64
2002	873.25	13989.04	-13115.8	13114.7
2001	737.9	10620.67	-9882.77	9447.76
2000	632.65	6161.08	-5528.43	6359.57
1995	215	3487.49	-3272.49	3134.4
1990	18.1	1292.42	-1274.32	1266.6
1985	-60.37	1029.41	-1089.78	1057.72
1980	-59.73	466.02	-525.75	601.04
1978	-15.58	457.34	-472.92	486.2
1970	-21.42	106.13	-127.55	183.45
1965	22.39	113.13	-90.74	118.05
1959	21.9	70.1	-48.2	111.12

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Tibet Autonomous Region (2017)*

Beyond financial aid, the central government has also provided assistance to Tibet for various projects since the 1980s (See Table 4-3). To attract businesses to locate in the region, corporate and income taxes in Tibet are kept much lower than that of the national average (Rabinovitch 2013).

Table 4.3
Central Government's Programs in Support of Tibet, 1984-2014

Year	Implementation under the	Number of projects	Total (billion yuan)
1984	Second Tibet Work Symposium	43	0.48
1991-1995	Eighth Five Year Plan Rivers Project	1	2.189
1994	Third Tibet Work Symposium	62	4.86
2001	Fourth Tibet Work Symposium	117	32
2005	40th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)	24	6.42
2001-2005	10th Five Year Plan (excluding TAR's 40 th anniversary year projects)	7	4.136
2006-2010	11th Five Year Plan	188	137.8
2011-2015	12th Five Year Plan	236	419.2
Total		678	607.085

Source: calculated from Jin 2015, p. 2.

We observe from Proposition 2 that, compared with the Han in Xinjiang and Tibet, the agricultural populations of the local ethnic minorities are significantly higher and their industrial workforce significantly lower. The tertiary workforce in the two autonomous regions is comparable to

that of the national average, but consists mostly of employment as cadres or functionaries in government positions or social services. We also observe from Propositions 3A and 3B that there exists a marked income gap between the poorer, more rural ethnic minorities, and the wealthier, more urban Han, in Xinjiang and Tibet.

It would be tempting at this point to join the Internal Colonialism advocates in blaming economic underdevelopment or income inequality in Xinjiang and Tibet on the Chinese authorities for neglect of or prejudice against the interests of the local ethnicities. However, Proposition 4 demonstrates that the central government has been investing large amounts of monetary and human resources to achieve economic modernization in Tibet and Xinjiang, and both regions have been heavily relying on the central government's fiscal aid to cover their budgetary deficits. With Tibet, which has few marketable raw materials or scarce resources, it would be more convincing to argue that the central government intends to modernize the economy through centralized economic planning rather than to exploit it. However, since Xinjiang contains important oil and natural gas deposits and is a major producer of cotton for the PRC, what can be tested here is the thesis of economic exploitation: How mono-cultural and complementary is the region's economy to the center (Proposition 5), to whom does the region's natural resources go (Proposition 6), and to what extent is the region's trade dominated by state-owned enterprises (Proposition 7).

Proposition 5: Xinjiang's production of oil and cotton account for a significant share of the country's total production.

Since the mid-1990s, while primary industries as a percentage of Xinjiang's GDP has significantly decreased from 30 to 17 and the percentage of tertiary industries has increased from 36 to 45, the percentage of secondary industries has remained around the range of 40-50 (see Table 5-1). Evidently, the secondary sector, which is closely related to oil and gas production, is a key component of Xinjiang's economy.

Table 5.1

The Three Industrial Sectors as Percentages of the Total GDP of Xinjiang

Year	Primary Industries	Secondary Industries	Tertiary Industries
2016	17%	38%	45%
2015	17%	39%	45%
2014	17%	43%	41%
2013	17%	42%	41%
2012	17%	44%	38%
2011	17%	49%	34%
2010	20%	48%	32%
2009	18%	45%	37%
2008	17%	50%	34%
2007	18%	47%	35%
2006	17%	48%	35%
2005	20%	45%	36%
2004	20%	41%	38%
2003	22%	38%	40%
2002	19%	37%	44%
2001	19%	38%	42%
2000	21%	39%	39%
1999	23%	36%	41%
1998	26%	36%	38%
1997	27%	37%	36%
1996	28%	35%	38%
1995	30%	35%	36%

Note: percentages were calculated based on data from the *Statistical Yearbook of Xinjiang Uyghur*

Autonomous Region (2011-2017).

With rapid economic development, China has turned into one of the world's biggest energy consumers, becoming a net importer of petroleum products since 1993 and of crude oil since 1996. Xinjiang's central Tarim Basin is the country's fourth largest oil producing area with capacity of 20 million tons per year (Becquelin, 2004). With construction starting in 2002, the "West-to-East Gas Pipeline" has transported natural gas supplied by the Tarim Basin fields to China's coastal areas, including Shanghai, Guangdong and Fujian. This pipeline is also connected to the Kazakhstan-China Gas Pipeline at Khorgos on the Kazakhstan-Xinjiang border (People's Daily, 2008). Xinjiang, therefore, weighs heavily on China's energy plans.

Under the state's "black and white" (oil and cotton) development strategy, the production of cotton has, together with oil, become an industry of fundamental importance in Xinjiang. Xinjiang contributes greatly to the total output of cotton in China, reaching a high of 68 percent in 2016 (see Table 5-2), but large-scale commercial production of Xinjiang's cotton is principally undertaken on farms run by the Bingtuan. Although oil production has significantly contributed to Xinjiang's GDP, it only took up 17 percent of total oil production in China (See Table 5-2). Xinjiang's economic dependence on the "black and white" sectors, and the degree to which the production and export of oil and cotton are tied-up with market and state demands in the rest of China, demonstrates how much of an economic appendage Xinjiang is to China as a whole.

Table 5.2

Percentage of Xinjiang's Cotton and Oil Productions as Total Production of China

Year	Cotton Production	Oil Production
2016	68%	17%
2015	62.5%	13%
2014	60%	14%
2013	56%	13%
2012	52%	13%
2011	44%	13%
2010	42%	13%
2009	40%	13%
2008	40%	14%
2007	40%	14%
2006	39%	13%
2005	33%	13%
2004	28%	13%
2003	33%	13%
2002	30%	12%
2001	27%	12%
2000	33%	11%
1999	35%	11%
1998	31%	10%

Note: percentages were calculated based on data from the *Statistical Yearbook of China (2017)*.

Proposition 6: Profits for oil and gas production in Xinjiang accrue to the central government rather than to the regional government.

According to PRC taxation policies, 75 percent of value-added tax from natural-resources-based heavy industries must be submitted to the central government. Consequently, as Xinjiang is a major hydrocarbon producer in China, 80 percent of the profits from industries related to oil and gas were transferred to the central government (Pei & Yang, 2007). However, since 2010, a reform on the resource tax, which was actually first carried out in Xinjiang, has allowed regional and provincial governments to retain more profits from the oil and gas production and related industries in their precincts (Gov.cn. 2010). The tax reform was a strategic undertaking by the central government to redistribute economic profits derived from natural resources to the localities from Beijing (Chen, 2010).

Nonetheless, it does not change the fact that a majority of the profits from oil and gas production in Xinjiang accrue to the central authorities, because most of the oil and gas exploitation and related pipeline construction projects are carried out by major national-level state-owned enterprises such as PetroChina and China National Petroleum Corporation. The biggest and most profitable energy project in China, the West-to-East Gas Pipeline from Xinjiang to the east coast, is developed by China National Oil and Gas Exploration and Development Corporation (CNODC), a joint venture of the above two giant hydrocarbon enterprises (Natural Gas Asia, 2014).

Proposition 7: Xinjiang’s foreign trade is dominated by state-owned and Han-Chinese enterprises

Despite the prominence of cash cropping and the prevalence of state-owned enterprises in petroleum production for Xinjiang’s economy, private companies have, in recent years, overtaken state-owned enterprises to become the biggest players in Xinjiang’s trade with foreign countries. According to official data, in 2011, state-owned and collective enterprises together comprised only about 30 percent of the total foreign trade volume of Xinjiang, while private enterprises constituted 67.5 percent. The percentage of state-owned and collective enterprises’ contribution to Xinjiang’s foreign trade has been continuously declining since then. By 2016, the percentage of the foreign trade volume represented by state-owned and collective enterprises dropped to 12.4 percent, while the share of private enterprises rose to 86 percent (see Table 7-1).

Table 7.1

Percentage of Foreign Trade Volume (in US dollar) of Different Types of Enterprises

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
State-owned Enterprises (%)	27.5	30.1	27.3	26.1	20.0	14.7%	12.4%
Collective Enterprises (%)	1.6	1.0	1.1	0.4	0.7	0.5%	0.5%
Private Enterprises (%)	68.9	67.5	70.6	72.6	78.5	83.4%	86.0%
Foreign-invested Enterprises (%)	2.1	1.5	1.0	0.9	0.4	1.3%	1.1%

Note: percentages were calculated based on data from the *Statistical Yearbook of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (2011-2017)*.

The much larger foreign trade volume for private enterprises can be attributed to its mode of conduct between Xinjiang and foreign countries. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of China’s formal state-to-state trade relations with its neighboring Central Asian ‘soviet socialist republics’, small-scale trade undertaken at the individual and private levels between Xinjiang and Central Asian countries became possible, and have since the late 1990s been encouraged by Beijing to boost economic development in Xinjiang. Many trading firms in Xinjiang have been expanding their businesses with Central Asian countries (Wu & Ida, 2018), particularly Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, in the wake of their recent rapid economic growth, through “petty trade in border areas” (HKTD, 2016). While this trade as a proportion of Xinjiang’s total foreign trade volume was only 0.5 percent in 1987 (Wang, 2010), official figures indicated that, between 2010 and 2016, more than half of the region’s foreign trade was conducted on a small-scale by private enterprises across international borders (see Table 7-2).

Table 7.2

Percentage of Foreign Trade Volume (in US dollar) in Different Types of Trade

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Ordinary Trade (%)	21.2	28.4	33.6	34.5	39.8	42.6%	31.9%
Processing Trade (%)	1.9	1.2	1.0	1.9	1.6	1.3%	0.4%
Small-scale Border Trade (%)	58.6	56.2	51.7	52.1	51.4	48.9%	61.5%
Other Trade (%)	18.2	14.2	13.7	11.5	7.2	7.2%	7.2%

Note: percentages were calculated based on data from the *Statistical Yearbook of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (2011-2017)*.

A number of Uyghur businesses in Xinjiang are involved in cross-border import-export trade, of mainly cotton/textile products, agricultural items and processed foods, as well as consumer and industrial goods, sometimes sourced from other provinces of China. However, most such enterprises are operated by the Han-Chinese, and comparatively speaking, the majority of Uyghur-owned businesses are small (Harlan, 2016). Competition from better-financed and more experienced Han companies limit Uyghur companies and entrepreneurs to rely primarily on customers of their own

ethnic group, co-ethnic workers and management staff, and with few political networks to obtain government funds, fellow Uyghurs for capital (Harlan, 2016). Thus, even with private enterprises, indigenous non-Han businesses are marginalized in Xinjiang.

Recapping Propositions 5 to 7, we are reminded that exploitation colonies are targets of a state-coordinated project to extract profits from native labor and natural resources. In Tibet, however, there are no plantations, few industrial enterprises and little extractive activities, on account of its small market and high labor and transport costs (Sautman, 2006). Instead, the central government has been investing tremendous financial and human capital in Tibet, including expanding its road and rail infrastructure, which far outweigh profits (if any) to be made from the region, to try and eliminate dissatisfaction by improving the material livelihood of Tibetans.

Unlike Tibet, Xinjiang has plentiful arable farmland, is rich in oil, natural gas and other natural resources, and provides resources below international market rates at Beijing's disposal for use in other parts of China. Aside from large amounts of financial aid, in the name of defending the national border and helping Uyghurs to cultivate Xinjiang, the Bingtuan and several waves of Han cadre personnel were sent to its cities and towns, particularly in the resource-rich parts of Xinjiang. Given that there has always been clear intention by Beijing to integrate Xinjiang into the nation's overall economic planning, Xinjiang's economic development is therefore made dependent on the metropolitan market and complementary to the national economy. Such a type of production relations does seem to demonstrate features of Internal Colonialism, with industrial development in the peripheries taking the form of narrow product specialization and high spatial concentration (Murray, 1994), destruction of the original mode of (intra-regional) production and distribution (Casanova, 1965), and confinement of domestic control over the periphery economy to small businesses (Blauner, 1968). While the Chinese government believes it is promoting the economic interests of Xinjiang and Tibet, many indigenous peoples see its involvement as little more than economic exploitation of their homelands.

C. Socio-Cultural Marginalization

According to the theory of internal colonialism, in dominating the periphery politically and exploiting it materially, the core also incorporates the periphery through the spread of education and ideologies. In the name of executing a civilizing mission or being a progressive force, the core exports its own values, knowledge and organizational system, which dissolve indigenous norms and trivialize the native cultures of the periphery (Petersen, 1995). Socio-cultural assimilation or marginalization is therefore another key feature of internal colonialism. Given the fundamental differences in ethnicity, religion, and language between the Han and the Uyghurs and Tibetans, the CCP government has been severely criticized by many Uyghur and Tibetan diaspora groups and human right activists for imposing "sinicization" on the ethnic minorities of Xinjiang and Tibet through its social programs or cultural policies. The following propositions will assess the validity of the social and cultural marginalization argument.

Proposition 8: Han-Chinese immigration into Xinjiang and Tibet, and out-migration of ethnic minorities from these two regions, are government-sponsored.

Immigration of the core nationality into the periphery regions of the country is a defining characteristic of internal colonialism, especially if it is organized by a government that represents the ethnicity and interests of that core for the purpose of controlling the territories and peoples of the periphery. Han-Chinese immigration has been considered a key factor leading to demographic changes in Xinjiang and Tibet, to the detriment of Uyghurs and Tibetans, although it has not always been organized or compelled by the government. Indeed, large-scale rioting by Tibetans in 1987 to 1989, and 2008, were directed against the policy of Han immigration into Tibet, and similar disturbances by Uyghurs in 1990 to 1996, and 2009, took aim at businesses owned or operated by ethnic Han in some major cities of Xinjiang.

From the early 1950s to the mid-1970s, spearheaded by the Bingtuan, a large number of Han immigrants had settled down in Xinjiang under the government's plans to develop that region and safeguard its borders. Although many Han migrated out from Xinjiang for better living conditions in the eastern coastal cities or returned to their hometowns after retirement during the 1980s, immigration of Han to Xinjiang for economic opportunities in Xinjiang, this time very much voluntarily, has been increasing since the 1990s (Mzb.com.cn., 2010). This was the main reason for the dent in the ratio of Uyghur to Han between 1990 and 2002, which has otherwise been steadily rising since 1978 (see Table 8-1).

For work and other purposes, Uyghurs have also migrated from Xinjiang to other provinces and regions of China, voluntarily and usually through the recruitment efforts or exchange programs of work units. According to data from the fifth (2000) and sixth (2010) national census, the number of

out-migrants are still very much lower than the number of immigrants into Xinjiang. In 2000, the out-migrant population from Xinjiang was 156,263, far less than the immigrant population of 1,411,086 into Xinjiang that year (National Statistical Bureau, 2000). In 2010, although the out-migrant population from Xinjiang almost doubled to 297,261, this was still far smaller than the immigrant population of 1,791,642 into Xinjiang (National Statistical Bureau, 2010). This means that the increase in the population ratio between the Uyghur and the Han must have been accounted for by the higher natural birth rate of the former. However, since most out-migrants from Xinjiang are Uyghurs and most immigrants into Xinjiang are Han, and the one-child policy imposed on Han families from 1979 was removed in 2015, short-term fluctuations notwithstanding, these factors are likely to change the demographic ratio between the Uyghurs and the Han in Xinjiang, in the latter's favor.

Table 8.1

Total Population of Uyghurs and Han in Xinjiang (Million) and ratio

Year	Uyghurs	Han	Uyghur to Han ratio
2016	11.45	8.27	1.385
2015	11.30	8.61	1.312
2014	11.27	8.60	1.310
2013	10.74	8.60	1.249
2012	10.53	8.47	1.243
2011	10.37	8.44	1.229
2010	10.17	8.32	1.222
2009	10.02	8.42	1.190
2008	9.83	8.36	1.176
2007	9.65	8.24	1.171
2006	9.41	8.12	1.159
2005	9.24	7.96	1.161
2004	8.98	7.80	1.151
2003	8.82	7.71	1.144
2002	8.69	7.60	1.143
2001	8.61	7.42	1.160
2000	8.52	7.25	1.175
1995	7.80	6.32	1.234
1990	7.25	5.75	1.261
1985	6.29	5.35	1.176
1978	5.56	5.13	1.084

Source: Columns 2 and 3 from *the Statistical Yearbook of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (2017)*. Column 4 computed from Columns 2 and 3.

Compared with Xinjiang, population mobility for Tibet has been on a far smaller scale. Since the 1950s, in the name of assisting Tibetans, Han cadre personnel and migrants were encouraged – through temporary job assignments in the urban public sector or employment opportunities created by financial subsidies – to work in Tibet by the central government. Unlike Xinjiang, however, there has not been any organized wave of long-term settlement of Han in Tibet, probably on account of their inability to adapt to its cold, mountainous climate. Rather, the proportion of Han actually decreased between the 1990 and 2000 censuses (Sautman, 2005), and the Tibetan population in the autonomous region has registered increments since the early 1960s (Yan, 2000). However, triggered by infrastructure development and encouraged by very low business taxes in Tibet, the number of non-Tibetans residing in Tibet and operating small businesses there has been on the rise over the last decade. Still, Han immigration into Tibet is predominantly temporary and seasonal, marked by the summer months with economic activities associated with tourism (Fischer, 2008). Tibetans remain very much the demographically dominant ethnic group in the Tibet Autonomous Region, constituting more than 90 percent of its total population (National Statistical Bureau, 2014).

Proposition 9: Educational financing in Xinjiang and Tibet are lower than that of China’s average.

According to official data, government expenditures for education in all five provincial-level ethnic autonomous regions of China have increased, but unevenly. While educational expenditures for each student in Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia have been generally higher than the national average, corresponding educational expenditures in Guangxi and Ningxia have been lower. Average expenditures in all educational levels – primary, secondary and tertiary - have been always highest in Tibet, followed by Xinjiang and then the other autonomous regions (See Table 9-1).

To combat the highest illiteracy rates possessed by Tibet in China, educational expenditures there were on average twice as high as that of the national average, much higher than some economically advanced provinces like Guangdong, and right behind several metropolitan areas with rich educational resources such as Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin (China Educational Finance). Most recently, Tibet became the first province-wide unit in China to mandate compulsory free education for 15 years from primary to high school level (China Daily, 2015).

Table 9.1
Average Financial Expenditures for Each Student in Tibet and Xinjiang (2000-2013)

Year	National Average			Tibet			Xinjiang		
	Primary Education	Secondary Education	College Education	Primary Education	Secondary Education	College Education	Primary Education	Secondary Education	College Education
2013	8400.93	11941.82	25434.44	16612.2	16092.35	36836.72	11539.24	16650.54	21918.30
2011	6117.49	8749.89	24040.83	11623.62	11263.49	31036.85	8477.30	12297.18	19749.19
2010	4560.31	4347.74	19952.96	8713.40	6349.02	22837.49	6489.27	6766.29	18224.41
2009	3842.26	6019.71	18149.52	7136.97	7802.51	19939.91	5475.92	8178.72	12578.04
2008	3410.09	5047.94	17256.89	6454.90	7075.38	23755.83	4628.54	6566.09	11127.16
2007	2751.43	4070.31	15493.48	4982.78	7068.87	23079.96	3631.16	4903.67	10025.51
2006	2121.18	3323.52	15332.8	3343.09	4622.02	26480.26	2881.32	4017.30	10933.70
2005	1822.76	2896.71	15025.47	3095.76	5268.13	33857.71	2418.05	3194.35	10626.61
2004	1561.42	2482.22	14928.92	2814.21	5158.43	20588.92	2071.77	2587.70	8986.68
2003	1295.39	2163.31	14962.77	2577.95	4542.15	22278.95	1741.17	2478.86	9541.67
2002	1154.94	1980.06	15119.56	2178.54	3550.73	21611.14	1594.33	2444.86	11274.40
2001	971.47	1740.00	15445.23	1764.61	4448.34	18447.91	1363.76	2045.83	11462.64
2000	792.36	1528.84	15974.32	1254.53	3657.61	18579.65	1010.57	1595.02	10924.00

Note: data in 2012 is not available.

Source: *China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook (2001-2014)*.

With large educational expenditures on school infrastructures, teachers and libraries, enrollments of students in both Xinjiang and Tibet have greatly improved, while illiteracy rates have dropped significantly over the past three decades (Gladney, 2004; Wang 2006). To address the inequality between students of ethnic minority and Han origin, the central government also offers ethnic minority students from autonomous regions preferential policies in entering colleges nationwide by giving them extra points in college entrance examinations. To provide further education opportunities for poor Uyghur and Tibet youth, the central government has established so-called “Inland Xinjiang Classes” and “Inland Tibetan Classes” in which Uyghur and Tibetan middle and high school students are funded to study at boarding schools in the large cities of China proper (Grose, 2010). These special classes were set up with the intention of benefitting Uyghur and Tibetan students by allowing them to cultivate intimate association with local Han students, polish their Chinese Putonghua language skills, and compete with the Han for jobs. For schools joining the program, ethnic cafeterias were built and ethnic chefs hired to respect the culture and customs of ethnic minorities, while ethnic festivals were also celebrated. These classes are welcomed by some minority students and their parents, but also been criticized as tools by the authorities to propagate a pro-government curriculum and instill ideas of ethnic unity and patriotism on ethnic minorities (Grose, 2010). Paradoxically, these classes were also found to have intensified students’ ethnic pride, in keeping to themselves in class and speaking almost exclusively with their co-ethnics in their own languages after school (Hann, 2014).

Summary and Conclusion

Diffusion, the anti-thesis to Internal Colonialism, posits a natural and inexorable process of industrialization, urbanization and commercialization spreading from the developed and modern parts of the country to its less developed and more traditional regions. The problem with the applicability of this diffusion concept to China is that the process of development and modernity in its ethnic minority areas has been very much designed, implemented and managed by the CCP since the birth of the PRC. If so, is Internal Colonialism then the appropriate model to understand the PRC's rule over Tibet and Xinjiang?

The Internal Colonialism argument rests on three aspects: political domination, economic exploitation and socio-cultural marginalization. In terms of political domination, it is true that the most powerful party position in the PRC's autonomous regions is almost without exception filled by a Han-Chinese, and there has never been a Tibetan or Uyghur voting member of the CCP Politburo. However, ethnic minority cadres do occupy commanding party and government positions at the prefectural/municipal levels and below in Tibet and Xinjiang, with Tibetans taking up a larger proportion of the more powerful party posts than their Uyghur counterparts, which allows them to negotiate to some degree the interests of their own ethnicities with the regional and even the central government.

With regards to economic exploitation, the fact that the tertiary sectors in Xinjiang and Tibet are comparable to the national average reflects serious efforts on the part of the Chinese government to employ Tibetans and Uyghurs in government positions or social services. However, there exists a sizeable income gap between the poorer, more rural ethnic minorities and the wealthier, more urban Han in the two autonomous regions. To rectify this imbalance, the central government has been investing large amounts of monetary and human resources to achieve economic modernization in Tibet and Xinjiang, and both regions have benefited tremendously from the central government's fiscal transfers to cover their perennial budgetary deficits. Internal Colonialism advocates would argue that a major purpose of the core would be to keep the periphery dependent on it for financial and human capital, technologies and markets. Indeed, Tibet's GDP growth since the mid-1990s have come largely from state subsidies, primarily for administrative expansion in the tertiary sector, but also for the building of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway and public housing (Yeh, 2013); for which the CCP party-state expects recognition, gratitude, and loyalty (Yeh, 2013). Still, it would be hard to imagine how truly independent Tibet can be economically and still develop above the subsistence level. In Xinjiang, at Beijing's request, cotton, oil and natural gas are mainly produced by Bingtuan farms and state-owned companies to supply other parts of China below world market rates, while small businesses and small farms are left in the hands of local ethnicities. This would seem to fit the Internal Colonialism paradigm, except that material comforts on the whole have been improving in the region.

Considering the socio-cultural marginalization argument, government-sponsored Han-Chinese immigration into Tibet was, aside from party-state functionaries and military personnel, unsubstantial. However, in the case of Xinjiang, such "colonization" efforts were consequential in changing the population composition. As for educational financing in Xinjiang and Tibet, they are higher than that of China's average, but primary and secondary education is provided exclusively or mostly in the Chinese language.⁷ Uyghurs who are deemed to be ultra-religious by the authorities have been packed off to "vocational training centers" for Chinese language classes and political reeducation, if not skills training as well (Gan, 2018). Overall, therefore, while the Internal Colonialism thesis may be more compelling in the case of Xinjiang, there is insufficient evidence to refute it with respect to Tibet, certainly not with the official data from the Chinese government that this study relied on.

Some people consider the term 'internal colonialism' to be loaded, and prefer an expression such as 'state integration'. Whichever phrase is articulated would not invalidate the propositions or findings here, and what is important is to explain the occurrences of discontent and restiveness in China's autonomous regions of Tibet and Xinjiang. As referred to in the first paragraph of this paper, some scholars have argued that the "colonial" appearances of Xinjiang and Tibet are unintended results of inappropriate policies driven by the material-oriented modernization goals of the Chinese central government (Cliff, 2016; Hessler, 1999). This observation is insightful but incomplete. "Material-oriented modernization," to satisfy the economic desires of the Chinese people, is rather the chief means by which the CCP, bereft of its Marxist ideological moorings, fulfills its most salient goal – that of maintaining a monopoly of power through the exercise of absolute political control over the entire country. The leaders of China certainly believe a monopoly of control by them is necessary for the development, stability and unity of China. Many Chinese, while appreciating the improvements made in their livelihoods under the CCP/PRC leadership, do begrudge the Chinese authorities for a lack of political responsiveness and accountability, unbalanced economic development, growing disparities in the citizenry's social status, income and wealth, and restrictions on personal freedoms such as the right to freely assemble, organize, speak or proselytize religious beliefs. Many Tibetan and Uyghurs,

however, do not merely perceive the strong arms of a very authoritarian party-state. They feel as though they are living under the oppressive thumbs of a very authoritarian party-state that is very much dominated by the Han-Chinese, an altogether different ethnic group of people who came from elsewhere to dominate their homelands politically, restructure their lives economically, monitor their movements tightly, and neuter their cultural identities and religious beliefs out of all organizational and mobilizational content for ethnic empowerment activities. As such, the government's affirmative policies and actions, whether they are reserved university places or government jobs, leniency in treatment for committing crimes, exemption from the one-child policy, or fiscal transfers to their ethnic regions, are regarded by minorities as attempts by the Han authorities to buy their quietude and acquiescence to its state integration project (Tang & He, 2010), without yielding or even sharing power. These minorities (and their sympathizers) believe that they have been forced to trade their besieged identities and major loss of control over their own lands, lives and destinies for small compensations. It is in this context that, to the extent that any aspect of this theory is at all defensible with some plausible evidence, the debate on "internal colonialism" in Tibet and Xinjiang will continue.

For further research, it is suggested to look into elite bargains for the governance of Xinjiang and Tibet (Bag, 2017). The stability and development of the two regions are likely to be influenced by the degree of inclusiveness of indigenous influential cultural or religious figures in political participation, for their incorporation would enhance the legitimacy of CCP and Chinese central government rule over the regions, while exclusion would make them leaders in local insurgent activities.

NOTES

¹ See Article 16 in Chapter III of the *Civil Servant Law of the PRC*.

² By 2014, the CCP membership in Tibet reached 0.307 million, of which 0.25 million were minority ethnicities (mostly Tibetans), taking up 81.5% of the total number. See Chinanews.com, 2015. "Xizang zhonggong dangyuan yu 30 wanren, yu bacheng wei shaoshu minzun" (Over 0.3 Million CCP Members in Tibet, Over 80% Being Minority Ethnicities), 1 July, <http://www.chinanews.com/gn/2015/07-01/7377042.shtml>. Accessed on April 16, 2016.

³ To curb "manifestations" of Islamist extremism, Xinjiang's legislature passed region-wide legislation in March 2017 to ban the wearing of long beards and face-covering veils, with local leaders to be held responsible for their enforcement. See Nectar Gan, "Bans on beards and veils – China's Xinjiang passes law to curb 'Islamic extremism'," *South China Morning Post*, 30 March 2017, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2083479/ban-beards-and-veils-chinas-xinjiang-passes-regulation>.

⁴ However, a 2008 survey showed that recent self-initiated Han migrants were not necessarily more competitive in Xinjiang's labor market than younger and more educated Uyghurs. See Howell & Fan 2011

⁵ This refers to the transfer of funds by the central government to sub-national governments for expenditure.

⁶ This is a specific way in which developed provinces and municipalities in China are made responsible for providing economic support (finance, skilled workers and finished projects) to poorer and less developed areas with which they are paired. See Jin 2015.

⁷ For a comparative case study of the education of Kurds in Turkey, see Aydin & Ozfidan 2014

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