

MASTER'S THESIS

Governing China's border regions: the impact of ethnic minority policy on ethnic Uighurs and Koreans

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**Governing China's Border Regions -
The Impact of Ethnic Minority Policy on Ethnic Uighurs
and Koreans**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Philosophy**

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Abstract

This thesis examines the impact of China's ethnic minority policy on ethnic Koreans and Uighurs, beginning with an examination of the sources of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) current attitudes towards China's ethnic minorities. It then examines the reality of Koreans' and Uighurs' political participation to clarify the inequitable distribution of power in China's border regions. The role of religion in China's ethnic policies is also examined, as are the interactions between China's foreign relations and the internationalization of the issue of China's ethnic minorities. Traditional Chinese policies regarding ethnic minorities and Soviet thinking about ethnic minorities are still affecting the CCP's current policies in China's border regions. Globalization and China's remarkable transformation into a pluralistic society have led the Chinese Government into a crisis in its government of ethnic minority areas. The current system of regional ethnic autonomy is controversial, having produced serious ethnic tensions and disputes. More widespread political participation by ethnic minorities could improve the current inequitable distribution of power in ethnic regions. The major means of improvement are decentralizing power and enlarging local democratic institutions such as peasants' self-governance in ethnic areas. Religious identity has become an essential part of the ethnic identities of Koreans and Uighurs respectively. This thesis examines the role of a particular religion, i.e., Islam, in the formation of ethnic politics in China. For instance, it observes that Uighur extremists might employ Muslim fundamentalism to fight against Chinese rule. Any terrorism with religious overtones has provided an excuse for the Chinese Government to impose strict control over ethnic minorities in the border region, with the global "war on terror" providing cover. This thesis also explores how China's ideas of "non-interference diplomacy" and "the integrity of sovereignty" allow the CCP to easily fend off demands for external inspection and foreign criticism of China's treatment of ethnic minorities. Even though there are defects in contemporary China's ethnic policies, the existing ethnic harmony augurs well for the welfare of the people and the well-being of the nation. This has been true throughout China's history, and still rings true today.

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