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**Workshop Report:
“Placating Credible Rebels:
Explaining Chinese Policies
Toward Religious and
Non-Religious Minorities”**

by

(b)(6)

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following is a workshop report for (b)(6) *Placating Credible Rebels: Explaining Chinese Policies Toward Religious and Non-Religious Minorities* (LTSG, April 2007).

Placating Credible Rebels argues that two main factors explain the Chinese state's fluctuating policy towards ethnic minorities in the reform era, the Communist Party's evaluation of its own strategic vulnerability and the relative cost of suppression.

- In the case of the latter, the state refrained from wiping out ethnic and religious identities mainly because it was occupied elsewhere or found it too costly to do so.
- In the case of the former, the CCP leadership updated its threat perception of various minority groups, informed by these groups' capacity for collective action in the face of the increasingly powerful state, selectively directing funds toward the greatest perceived threats.

This workshop report takes a somewhat different approach to the topic, reflecting the feedback received from workshop participants and an evolving sense of the complex relationship between the Chinese state and ethnic minorities. In this report, Shih argues that Beijing's fiscal transfers to minority regions constitute one part of a broader strategy for maintaining a balance of power among People's Liberation Army officers, local minority representatives, and Han bureaucrats.

II. REPORT

During the workshop, I received three general kinds of comments and suggestions in response to the monograph *Placating Credible Rebels: Explaining Chinese Policies Toward Religious and Non-Religious Minorities*. First, there were comments on my conceptualizations of identities and religion. Second, there were comments on my main argument. Third, there were suggestions on how I can measure my variables and test my arguments better. In the discussion below, I will summarize all three kinds of comments in turn. I then discuss how these comments have changed my way of thinking about this project. Finally, I give a sketch of a new theoretical framework along with information I will require to test this new framework.

In this new framework, I depart from the unitary-player assumption for the Chinese government and instead adopt an interest group/faction perspective on the Chinese government. Minority policy is viewed as an arena in which various interest groups and political leaders, including Mao himself, competed to gain advantages. The Chinese civil-military relationship is perhaps the key to untangling seemingly contradictory minority policies. With the exception of a few brief periods when the People's Republic of China (PRC) faced a serious threat from minority unrest, minority policies were used by the civilian leadership to monitor and constrain military power. An important implication of this framework is that the relationship between the top civilian leaders and the military is a main predictor of the repressiveness of minority policies.

IDENTITIES AND RELIGIOSITY

In the *Placating Credible Rebels* monograph, I was careful to focus on CCP perceptions of minority characteristics to explain variation in CCP policies toward various minority groups. Nonetheless, at the workshop, I wanted to explore minority characteristics and whether there are objective characteristics of various minority groups that triggered various state responses and also whether the religiosity of groups mattered in terms of their own action and in terms of eliciting state responses. This generated a heated discussion. Most attendees seemed to agree that minority identities emerged as the product of the interaction between minorities and the Han state. Obviously, the interaction differed among different minority groups and even in different localities within the same group. For example, repression and acts of discrimination likely solidified minority identities, which in turn triggered a subsequent round of repressive state reaction. This was the dynamic that took hold in Yunnan in the 19th century.

There was a lot of caution about distinguishing minority groups based on religion per se, especially when doing so seems to put undue emphasis on Muslims. (b)(6) made convincing arguments that the Yunnan Dai, which is predominantly Buddhist, should be considered a religious minority. Dai Buddhism resuscitated fairly quickly after the Cultural Revolution and established dense trans-national links in short order. Furthermore, the Dai's have historical ties with ethnic Dai groups in Burma and Thailand (they are not Thai, but related to highland minorities in both Thailand and Burma). Some Dais in Thailand further believed that Xishuangbana in Yunnan Province is the historical homeland of the Dais, which gave rise to a thriving tourist trade with visiting Thais. Thus, Dai Buddhism recovered pretty quickly as many young Dai men moved to Thailand to learn about Buddhism. There was simultaneously an

influx of monks from Burma, Laos, and Thailand to establish temples. Historically, the Dai's were independent and were anti-Han state. Dai's also organized collectively to engage the state. In recent years, there were monk-led faith-based initiatives to stem the spread of HIV/AIDS supported by UNICEF and a Thailand-based Buddhist organization.

Unlike state responses to Xinjiang Uyghurs or the Tibetan Buddhists, there is strong local state support for Dai religiosity. Dai's are also fairly well integrated in the local governments. Despite the high level of transnational religious exchanges in the border areas, the state does not repress or halt such exchanges. Minority pilgrims and clerics who crossed the border at will are not shot at, which contrasts sharply with the treatment of Tibetan pilgrims and clerics. Unlike in Xinjiang, where transnational religious exchanges are closely monitored and "illegal religious activities" are strictly forbidden, there seems to be little concern of these same phenomena in Yunnan among the Dai's.

The participants then engaged in some discussion on the cause of this variation. The issue is obviously very complex, and the observed difference in outcome is the product of complex interaction between perceptions, realities, framing by all the actors involved. First, Dai's generally consider themselves as both Chinese and Dai Buddhists. One manifestation of this accommodationist self-identity is that monks generally act as intermediaries between the people and the government. When there were resource conflicts between the Dai's and the Han Chinese, the monks did not organize against the government, but sought to mediate through official channels. While the Chinese government tries to cultivate exactly this sort of accommodationist attitude among Islamic clerics, despite some success with nurturing "patriotic" imams, a sizable share of Islamic clerics continues to operate outside of official framework.

Of course, any tendency to accommodate or to act within the official framework is influenced by past state policies. Added to the mix, both minority perception of the state and state perception of the minority are mediated by the framing of the behaviors of each other by the elite on both sides. Thus, one can see a three-way chicken-and-egg problem which indefinitely extends backward in time.

Some participants (b)(6) were willing to admit that there are organizational differences between different minority groups. The religious minorities are perhaps better organized for inter-regional collective action, but without the triggers, which stemmed from defensive and/or separatist identities and hostile state actions, the collective action of minority groups in no way threatens the state. The prime example is AIDS activism among Dai Buddhist monks. The government on its part fears religion as a "counter-hegemonic" project, which competes with the state's interpretation of the world. The state also fears institutions which can generate collective action. But this fear also applies to a whole range of Han operated organizations, such as the Falungong and various heterodox sects. Here, (b)(6) also chimed in about the plethora of Han assumptions and stereotypes of various minorities, which have enormous influence on official state and unofficial private interaction with minorities. Works by Dittkoter, Gladney, Johnston, and Herrera all speak on this issue in various contexts. (b)(6) appended a useful framework of Han stereotype of minorities. Han perceptions of minorities run along two axes: familiar-exotic and passive-restive. Of the four quadrants generated by these

two axes, the “best” (in terms of generating positive feelings among the average Han) is exotic and passive, while the “worst” is exotic-restive.

Further discussion arose on the distinction between the Chinese Muslim Hui and the Xinjiang Uyghurs. Most agreed that despite their shared religion, they are in fact quite different, and the state also treats them in very different manner. From the state’s perspective, the separatist aspirations of some Uyghurs make an enormous difference in terms of how Uyghurs are treated as opposed to the Hui. But it is an entirely different question as to whether the state’s perception of these two groups is justified by reality. Here, the key issue may well be separatist claims. There is no doubt that a larger share of Uyghurs has separatist aspirations than the share of Hui with the same aspirations. However, the share of Uyghurs with such aspiration may well be in the minority, and surely some Hui’s continue to harbor separatists aspirations (the sentiment was much stronger in the 19th century, especially in Yunnan). Historically, (b)(6) pointed out that the Hui’s in Yunnan were associated with large-scale unrests. (b)(6) pointed out that this outcome was not a product of religiosity, but the results of hostile ethnic relations between Han and Hui. (b)(6) also agreed that mutual perception between the state and minority groups can change. He raised the examples of the Pingyuanjue and Najiaying incidents in Yunnan in the 80s. These two events can be interpreted as two minor Hui uprisings since it involved violent collective action mainly involving Hui’s, some of whom were drug-traffickers. But the state framed these incidents as drug trafficking and criminal incidents and did not play up the ethnic dimension. (b)(6) added here that the Hui’s are quite assimilated in some cases, although they still self-identify as Hui’s.

In this discussion, another useful example was the Liangshan Yi’s. While the Yi’s in Liangshan, an area that covers three provinces, were historically resistant to Han rule, today there are few conflicts due to the low level of Han in-migration and thus little conflicts over resources. However, the Yis in recent years have taken over the heroine trade and have resisted law enforcement. The Chinese media, reflecting the views of the state, have interpreted these acts of resistance as criminal offence rather than an ethnic issue. Again, what becomes important in continuing dynamics between minority groups and the state is mutual perception and how each side frames the actions of one another.

Not all agreed with the dynamic view of identify construction. (b)(6) takes a less dynamic view and sees identity as more fixed, which then influences “everything that is done.” In order to clarify the importance of identity, (b)(6) argues that language differences and difference in social identities can be measured through textual analysis and interviews. (b)(6) seemed to agree with Carlson’s view of identity. He argued that religion became a symbol for setting Tibetans apart from the Han, although he did not specify whether he meant the Han as an ethnic group or the Han dominated CCP state.

My Reactions

In general, I found these comments extremely helpful for me to think about the issue of whether any inherent ethnic characteristics drove the relationship between the CCP and various minority groups. My conclusion, after some reflection, is that my main work should try to get around this issue rather than to delve too much into it. I am simply not equipped to explore this issue in a

meaningful way. I generally agree with the dynamic view of identity and inter-ethnic relationship. As my own work progresses, I will likely take the dynamic view as a given and instead focus my attention on interest groups within each group, including various minorities and in different groups in the CCP regime (PLA, nationality commission...etc.). As I will elaborate further below, my focus will be on how various interest groups within the CCP competed to frame the state's relationship with various minority groups in different light. Although I agree that there is some feedback effect in terms of how minority groups react to state policies, I think the feedback effect is generally trivial in an authoritarian context. For example, if the winning interest within the CCP is determined to paint the Uyghurs as evil separatists, the actual behavior of the Uyghurs would be of secondary importance relative to the framing and interpretation of the dominant interest within the CCP. Minor changes in behavior are interpreted as major shifts, while minor differences between ethnic groups are exaggerated by the dominant interests in the regime. This idea is by no means novel, but is the dominant thinking in much of the work on ethnic identity and nationalism.

PROBLEMS WITH THE ARGUMENT

In the paper, I argue that two key factors explain the over time variation in the mix of CCP minority policies: the CCP's evaluation of its own strategic vulnerability and the relative cost of suppression. Given that the Chinese regime mainly aimed for the realization of a socialist society where ethnicity and religion played a minimal role in influencing people's thinking, it refrained from wiping out ethnic and religious identities mainly because it was occupied elsewhere or found it too costly to do so. A grave strategic threat elsewhere—either international or domestic-- or constraints on military or political resources decreased the feasibility of forceful assimilative policies because the eradication of the social structure and identity of an ethnic group required a substantial amount of resources. The main explanation for the reinstatement of affirmative action policies in the reform era is that the CCP regime could no longer create an intense ideological atmosphere and to mobilize the army for civilian suppression at low costs.

The first set of questions, raised by (b)(6) concerns the causal validity of this argument. That is, how does one establish that threats caused the CCP to change policies? Perhaps shifts in minority policies gave rise to the threats in the first place. In the case of internal threats, perhaps another set of policies led to both internal threats in minority areas and changes in CCP minority policies at the same time, leading to omitted variable bias. This certainly seemed the case in the aftermath of the Anti-rightist Movement in the late 50s. After reading more documents on the issue, it seems that the Anti-rightist goal of eradicating remnant feudal forces led to the radicalization of CCP policies toward traditional minority elite, which triggered uprisings, which in turn justified even harsher policies toward minority elite. This example echoes (b)(6) comment that perhaps minority policies were simply reflection of the prevailing ideology of the time.

Others challenged my assumption that the end goal of CCP minority policies is assimilation of ethnic minorities. Instead, (b)(6) and others argued that the likely goal is perhaps acceptance of the CCP's domination in the political sphere and to a lesser extent in the cultural sphere. Beyond domination, (b)(6) argued that another important goal is gaining legitimacy. In an email she wrote to me after the workshop, she elaborated her point:

In democracies, if they are consolidated and well-established, elected officials possess procedural legitimacy. Procedural legitimacy can make it easier (though not easy) for politicians to implement unpopular policies; people might not like the policies, but they accept the rightfulness of officials' authority and power to make laws. Obviously, too many unpopular policies can undermine any leader, but procedural (or other forms of) legitimacy buys time and good will from the voters. Think Tony Blair and the Iraq War (his example demonstrates both these scenarios). Authoritarian rulers, unless they want to simply use force and coercion (which are expensive and alienating) must find non-procedural means to win the people over. (b)(6)

Thus, there is a balance between political control and legitimacy, which lowers the costs of governance even in authoritarian regimes.

Furthermore, CCP minority policies also may be driven by international pressure rather than purely domestic concerns, especially in the aftermath of the Cold War. The IR group among the discussants then brought up the possibility that minority policies reflected Beijing's obsession with sovereignty and territory. Fravel argued that the paper lacks a strategic perspective. Given that most of China's minorities live fairly close to boundaries, minority policies were intertwined with border security. Territorial integrity, unity, and stability have always been some of the top goals for Beijing, which explains why the CCP is obsessed with any separatist claims. (b)(6) and (b)(6) then engaged in a discussion on the trade-off between physical territory and jurisdiction, which is the right to rule over people and assets in a territory. For (b)(6) and also for (b)(6) the jurisdictional issue is key, and the Chinese government has shown little willingness to compromise on them (well, except for Tibet for much of the 50s?). Land can be given up to serve the greater good, but on jurisdictional issues—the right to rule over a people—there is no room for compromise. In Chinese military writings, economic development is often seen as a means to stability and unification. Ethnic unrests, which threatened jurisdictional claims, led to a willingness to give up territory. For example, the Shanghai Cooperative began on the basis of territorial concession in exchange for Central Asian states' help with Xinjiang stability. Porous borders in the 60s caused a problem for jurisdictional claims in the early 80s when transnational linkages were re-established. In general, the Chinese military was very worried about rear area support in the event of war due to minority unrests.

(b)(6) then cited the writings of Ma Dazheng, a researcher at Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, as evidence of the importance of jurisdictional claims. In his book *The State Above All*, Ma argued that after the Cold War the global interpretation on sovereignty underwent a paradigm shift as the number of self determination movements multiplied, especially in the former Soviet Union. The West also encouraged self determination, and the next target of the West's self determination push is in China. (b)(6) argued that perhaps this interpretation of world events led to more defensive action by the Chinese government. For example, beginning in the mid-90s, the Chinese government began to see human rights as a legitimate area of discussion in diplomatic dialogues precisely because it felt besieged by Western claims of self-determination. Ma's writing also illustrates the impact of global sovereignty discourse on Chinese actions both abroad and domestically.

(b)(6) comments also indicated another challenge to the argument. The paper makes a distinction between repressive and assimilative policies and affirmative action policies. (b)(6) raised the point that even when policies were more accommodating, the party's coercive hands were never far away. In analyzing the various versions of China's constitution between 1975 and 2001, (b)(6) noted that an increasing number of provisions were devoted toward protecting minority rights, especially in regards to the authorities of the autonomous regions. Nonetheless, (b)(6) noted that all laws passed by provincial level autonomous regions (ARs) must be approved by the National People's Congress (NPC), and laws passed by lower level ARs must be approved by congresses at higher level. The NPC directly intervened numerous times to change the laws of Tibetan and Zhuang Autonomous Regions since the reform. Inside the governments of ARs, key positions are all controlled by the Han Chinese, especially positions related to law enforcement and the armed forces. There continues to be remarkable degree of Han chauvinism which affects the framing of minority policies. The Han Chinese further exploits divisions among Tibetan elite to govern them. For example, supporters of Ngnapoi Ngawang Jimei, former chairman of the Tibetan AR, used to control eastern Tibet. Now, the Chamdo group dominates. The Chinese government is only willing to grant autonomy in name only because it believes that de facto autonomy is a slippery slope that would lead to independence.

Beyond these main threads, other interesting questions were raised about my argument. For example, (b)(6) raised the question of why unrests were so important in shaping Chinese policies. What about unrests in Han areas? How were unrests in Han and minority areas interpreted differently, and is this important? The question of local implementation of central policies was also raised. It is well known in China studies that local governments routinely ignored or reshaped central policies. How did that affect the dynamic of ethnic relations in China? What were some incentives that drove differentiations in local interpretation of national minority policies? (b)(6) further suggested that the dynamic between the government and minorities may be a variation of the Schelling's deterrence and assurance game, where the Chinese government wanted to use a mix of strategy to deter separatism, but also to assure minorities of their ability to assert some autonomy. Finally, (b)(6) also suggested that Yunnan represented a special case since it is highly multi-ethnic, so anything happening there must be interpreted in the context of its multi-ethnic environment.

My Reactions

These comments were very helpful in pushing me to think more about my arguments. As I outline below, I will abandon the existing framework and delve into a more complex framework. First, I agree with the assessment that domination rather than assimilation was the consistent goal of CCP policies. While individual groups or leaders saw assimilation as a goal, the CCP as a whole only demanded political domination as a consistent goal. Nonetheless, there are several points raised by the discussants with which I disagree. First, although I appreciate the importance of legitimacy, I still think that it plays a smaller role in authoritarian regimes than in democracies. The starting point of this disagreement is that empirically few authoritarian regimes are ever overthrown by "the people" (Svolik 2005). Instead, historically, most autocrats were either assassinated or driven out by someone within the regime or by a hostile foreign force. Most dictators know this and thus spend a lot of resources buying off a loyal support base among the elite in the regime (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). The welfare and satisfaction of

the people per se are much less important to most autocrats. Granted, some regimes, such as many communist regimes, had acquired some added “technologies”—namely ideology—to increase compliance level among people, but ideology is an added bonus to dictators, not a minimum requirement.

The history of the PRC since 1949 paints a bloody picture where tens of millions were starved to death and millions more died from political campaigns. Even today, millions die every year from an inadequate legal system and crumbling social security and health system. Thus, to the extent that the CCP relied on legitimacy to maintain power, it did not mainly seek legitimacy through improving the objective conditions of the Chinese people, at least not until after the 90s. Instead, it relied on propaganda and campaigns to maintain legitimacy. Even then, the regime always knew that legitimacy was not the most important ingredient of maintaining power. Rather, the key was always control over the military.

My reaction to the sovereignty-jurisdiction discussion is similar. Although I think that maintaining jurisdictional control over most of Chinese territory remains an important goal of the regime, it is not the primary mission of the regime. Instead, the primary mission was and is survival. When there were credible threats from powerful hostile forces adjacent to China's border, the top leaders' attention focused on these threats and devised whatever policies necessary to minimize or neutralize these threats. Otherwise, when there is no genuine threat of an invasion, the CCP leadership tended to respond to infringements on its sovereignty with tough rhetoric, but ultimately fairly flexible diplomacy. PRC unwillingness to invade Taiwan, over which it has strong jurisdictional claims, is a case in point. Much of the time, accusations of hostile international forces merely served the interests of specific leaders and interest groups in the regime, something that senior Chinese leaders were well aware of this most of. When outside observers notice a torrent of defensive discourse on sovereignty, they are often observing domestic interest groups (such as the Border Research Center of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) taking advantage of particular events to forward their own agenda, which tended to be larger budgets and more leadership attention. In-depth research of the Chinese leadership suggests that top leaders carefully consider a wide range of policies to promote a narrow range of goals, the chief among them are regime and personal survival (e.g., MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006). I especially disagree with the position that international discourse on sovereignty drove substantial changes in CCP policies. The regime may shift rhetoric when it interacts with other countries and may even engage in dialogues on human rights, but substantively, that may amount to very little. This discussion, however, alerted me to the extent to which various interest groups in the regime were willing to make a wide variety of arguments to forward their own interests.

This leads me to agree with (b)(6) skepticism about claims of granting autonomy and minority rights in the PRC. I still think there is a substantive difference between repression and affirmative action policies because these policies served different interest groups. However, when either repressive or lenient policies jeopardized regime or personal survival, senior leaders undertook whatever actions necessary to neutralize these threats. Thus, one observes relatively lenient policies in some localities when generally repressive policies were applied elsewhere and relatively repressive policies when lenient policies prevailed.

In essence, my paper views the regime as a unitary entity, but as I will discuss below, that portrayal is far too simple and demands much more thorough investigation.

MEASUREMENT AND TESTING

Finally, there were many valuable comments on measuring the key variables and testing the hypotheses put forth in the paper. Given that the key independent variables include external and internal threats, (b)(6) challenged me to find ways to measure them independently of each other and independently of the outcome variable: minority policies. Related, how would I operationalize strategic vulnerability and relative costs of suppression independently of the often unstable outcomes of minority policies? One suggestion was to measure the number of military personnel mobilized for other domestic disturbances, like pacifying red guards, as a measure of the relative cost of suppression. The idea is that if the army was already mobilized to suppress civilian elsewhere, it would be less costly to mobilize it to repress minorities. On the level of international threat, one can also measure hostile troop level across the border, or the level of border troop deployment. However, (b)(6) thought this would be difficult to implement. (b)(6) was also skeptical about whether my periodization of CCP minority policies was justifiable given the continuity of CCP minority policies in reality.

On my statistical work, many suggested that I should include the Dai's as a religious minority. Others pointed out that simply using census data does not capture the religiosity of minorities. Other measures should supplement the census data. We discussed various possibilities, including using data on religious venues to supplement the census data. Others suggested that I control for total population since some public goods have economies of scale, which may be driving the results in sparsely populated minority areas. (b)(6) suggested that if possible, it would be good to compare central transfers to Han religious areas with transfers to religious minority areas to see if the same logic held in Han areas as well. (b)(6) also suggested that I add a dummy for border counties and interact it with religious minorities. He believed that adjacency to border should have its own effect on transfers.

Many also provided useful suggestions on primary sources. (b)(6) suggested that I look into the Xinjiang Provincial Gazette since its public security volume contains a thorough account of unrests in the province. He suggested PLA handbooks which dealt with insurgency suppression. (b)(6) suggested that I read *Insurgence Identity*.

My Reactions

In general, I thought all of these suggestions were great. Even with the new version of my argument, I suspect I will still have to measure the level of external and internal threat independently of outcome variables. Thus, I will need to develop various measures. First, I will try to construct a rough measure of PLA domestic deployment through PLA historical texts. (b)(6) and I discussed several possibilities. Second, I will try to develop some indicator of hostile forces deployed adjacent to China as an indicator of overall international threat. This will not be precise. Nonetheless, I suspect that it fluctuates greatly at crucial junctures, and I will mainly focus on these breakpoints.

As robust are my statistical findings, I will have to think much more about interpreting the results. Why did the CCP channel more money to counties with a denser concentration of religious minorities in the 90s? Whose interest did such a deliberate policy serve? I also agree with the suggestion that I need to supplement the census data with data on religious venues as well as the suggestion to include the Dai's as religious minority. I plan on collecting religious venue data on an up-coming trip to Hong Kong. I will also control for total population and add border county dummies.

RESTRUCTURING THE ARGUMENT

As I hinted previously, I now think that the original framework presented in the paper is far too simple to explain minority policy outcomes in the PRC. When confronted with limited information, political scientists often make unitary actor arguments, which often depart from reality quite a bit. With these comments and with additional research on the issue, I am more prepared to make a more complex argument. I am still not sure what shape the final argument will take, but I will outline two important pieces of the puzzle, followed by some conjectures.

First, although the CCP is among the most hierarchical and unitary organizations in the world, it nonetheless suffers from principal-agent and information asymmetry problems that plague all organizations. That is, lower level leaders often have interests that are at odds with senior leaders of the regime, and local leaders have better local knowledge than senior leaders. This problem is compounded by the existence of elite factions that compete with each other for ultimate power. Even if factions only compete implicitly, the competitive dynamics compel the incumbent leader to constantly worry about maintaining power. Given such a set up, the first assumption I make in the new framework is that different interest groups and factions in the regime have an interest in different types of minority policies, ranging from extremely repressive and assimilative policies to generous autonomy policies. The source of different policy preference is material rather than ideational. Instead of being motivated by ideas of ethnic equality or Han chauvinism, Chinese leaders tend to support policies that benefit their particular bureaucratic grouping (*xitong*) or faction (Lieberthal 2004).

In thinking about the nature of authoritarian power, controlling the military is likely to loom large in the leaders' mind at all time. Without any credible constitution or popular will, the army in theory can drive their tanks to Zhongnanhai and take power at any time. In fact, most dictatorships are toppled in precisely this manner. Furthermore, nowhere is the principal-agent problem a graver threat to the regime than in the armed and security forces. False information about a security threat may lead to a surprise attack or an over-reaction, both of which can potentially topple the regime. The CCP deploys a series of technologies to control and monitor the military, including the political commissar system, rotations of commanders, and dividing the army into military regions. Yet, even then, one gets a sense that the balance of power between the party and the military remains a challenge for the civilian leadership. Even in the reform era, we find many examples of policies seemingly unrelated to the military, which were in fact designed to control or to appease the military. Prime examples included the initiation of the special economic zones and fiscal contracting, which were aimed at appeasing powerful military figures from Guangdong. In the 90s, the civilian leadership used a wide array of tools in an attempt to weaken the power of the military vis-a-vis the civilians, including anti corruption

probes, divesting military businesses, and anti-smuggling operations. Thus, it is possible that the main purpose of minority policies for the regime and its top leaders had little to do with minorities per se. Rather, these policies were another tool to control and monitor the military. Again, I am still unsure of the exact mechanisms, but below I present a sketch of some conjectures.

First, I still think that my original puzzle is valid. Why did the CCP maintain such an extensive policy framework for minorities representing less than 8% of the population, none of which over 0.5% of the population? With the exception of the early 50s, the PLA could have easily crushed all rebellions. In 1959, the PLA quickly suppressed the uprising in Tibet, although sporadic guerilla action continued for some years afterward. Likewise, the violent upsurge in riots and assassination in Xinjiang after the issuance of Document 7 in 1996 was ended fairly quickly. The situation in China is quite different than that in India or in the former Soviet Union, where minorities are either concentrated in a few key groups or make up a sizable share of the population. Why not just rely on the military to suppress minority uprisings in those rare instances when they solved the collective action problem enough to launch large scale collective action? Under normal circumstances, the regular civilian bureaucracy (e.g. police, courts, propaganda department) can handle the other goals of the state in minority areas, including assimilation, education, etc. Why invent a separate bureaucracy reaching to the top of the regime to handle this problem?

The answer, it seems, is that the civilian leadership did not want to rely solely on the military to control minorities, to the extent that they needed to be controlled. First, the civilian leadership knew that the military generally had an interest in exaggerating threats to the regime because it could receive more resources. The “minority threat” narrative in the PRC may largely be an invention of the army and security forces. Worse, the military may have had an interest to intentionally nurture ethnic conflict in order to increase the civilian leadership’s dependence on the military. The suggestion that interest groups intentionally foster conflicts is by no means novel and is behind a wide variety of scholarship on war and on nationalism (Brass 1997; Chandra 2004; Snyder 1991; Snyder 2000). By forming an extensive affirmative action policy apparatus, the civilian leadership created a rival organization to monitor and also to compete against the military’s actions in minority policies, thus constraining the military’s manipulation of the minority issue for its own benefit.

The minority policy apparatus, composed of a mix of veteran revolutionary cadres and minority cadres, had an interest to expand its own influence and resources. For the veteran revolutionaries, they saw minority policies as a way of regaining the limelight. For minority cadres, they had highly complex motivation which ranged from pure opportunism to idealistic aspirations of gaining independence for their respective minority group through the affirmative policy framework. Unlike the military, bureaucrats in the minority apparatus had an interest to foster cooperation and to prevent violent outbreaks to minimize military intervention. At the same time, however, the minority bureaucracy did not want to see total assimilation and the complete absence of tension since these conditions would eliminate its *raison d’être*. Thus, the minority bureaucracy engaged in a wide range of seemingly contradictory activities including fostering ties with minority elite, lobbying for central subsidies, nurturing ethnic differences, and exaggerating ethnic tension.

A main prediction of this framework is that the civilian leadership's confidence in its ability to control the military is positively correlated with the repressiveness of minority policies. That is, the more confidence, the more repressive. In the context of Maoist China, the civilian leadership itself was split deeply between leaders like Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi, who had little control over the military and wanted to use the minority policy apparatus to check the military, and Chairman Mao, who came to see rival civilian leaders as a bigger threat to his standing than the military. Thus, beginning in the late 50s and especially into the Cultural Revolution, Mao gradually dismantled the minority policy apparatus in favor of radical assimilative policies. First, given his increasing confidence over his control over the military through Lin Biao, he did not see the need for minority policy apparatus. Second, he realized that the more such bureaucracies existed, the more power devolved from his hands because experts in various bureaucratic groupings would make decisions beyond his direct control. In contrast, the more policies were simplified to a few offices, such as the central military commission and the central office of the central committee, the more he was able to control every aspects of the regime.

After Lin Biao's defection from Mao, however, even Mao realized that the military was in fact the most dangerous force in the regime. Thus, the reinstatement of minority policies began not in 1978 but in 1973 after Deng's rehabilitation. The process was far from complete at the time since the army was still loyal to Mao and controlled nearly all provincial leadership positions. Thus, we witnessed events like the Shadian massacre. In the reform period, however, Deng and Hu, who were far less charismatic than Mao, undertook to dismantle the military's influence on all aspects of governance, including minority policies. Beyond removing the military from local government positions, the rehabilitation of the extensive minority framework was also an integral part of demilitarization. On a whole, the civilian leadership continued to avoid using the military, favoring instead either cooptation, economic subsidies, or police action. However, once in a while, the civilian leadership confronted a "blow back" dilemma in which its rhetoric against separatism provided the military with strong arguments about using force (Snyder 1991). Thus, we witnessed the deployment of massive military might against what otherwise could have been framed as criminal activities or civil unrests. Where the separatist "blow back" effect was absent, the regime sought to frame organized minority violence as criminal activities or the nebulous category of "armed struggled" (xiedou), such as the Pingyuanjie Incident in Yunnan and the Xiji Incident in Ningxia.

In this elite-centric framework of minority policies, small differences between ethnic groups are exaggerated by the various interest groups to promote their respective interests. This also applies to various events, including acts of violent collective action. Again, the starting point is that unless the state weakened considerably or unless there was an invasion, minority unrests hardly constitute a grave national security threat or political challenge in China. Minority groups do react to state policies, but even then these reactions are twisted by various government interests. The most benign action, such as publishing an article or releasing a statement, would be interpreted as a "splittist" act by the security forces. Thus, with the exception of extraordinary circumstances mainly in the 50s, this new framework does not put too much causal weight on the actions—hostile or not—of minority groups per se.

Thus, one can see the rise of the minority apparatus as the creation of an organization and an issue space with which the civilian leadership could monitor and constrain military power in the

regime. How do I know that this complex multi-actor framework is better than the unitary actor framework I previously proposed? Beside historical accuracy (I think), at first glance it seems the single actor framework has just as much explanatory power as the multi-actor framework. When there are serious external security threats, the regime would want to increase affirmative action policies in both frameworks. In the unitary actor case, the regime faces strategic vulnerability and would want to minimize it by appeasing restive minorities. In the multi-actor framework, external threats increase the regime's dependence on the military, and the civilian leadership would want to counteract that dependence with heightened affirmative action policies to ensure that the military is not also involved in domestic pacification.

The unitary-actor framework, however, has difficulties explaining some regime shifts. For example, why did the regime pursue such assimilative policies even at a time when the threat from the Soviet Union loomed so large in the late 60s? During the Cultural Revolution, the CCP pursued the harshest policies against minorities along the border which had the most direct access to Beijing: Inner Mongolia. The multi-actor framework suggests that the key was Mao's complete trust of the military at that time through Lin Biao. This confidence was shattered after Lin Biao's fall, and the multi-actor framework predicts a significant rehabilitation of minority policies at that juncture. It would also provide a less ad hoc explanation of the rehabilitation of minority policies in the reform era. Instead of thinking that Hu Yaobang preferred more affirmative action or that intense ideological atmosphere had been lifted, this framework predicts more lenient policies because Deng and Hu Yaobang had less confidence in their ability to control the military. This is an assertion that can be tested through analyzing the biographies of PLA generals. Perhaps most importantly, the multi-actor framework does a good job explaining the continual health of the minority policy apparatus despite the disappearance of most strategic threats near China's borders. With the elimination of border threats and relatively peaceful relations with minorities in the past few years, why doesn't the CCP dismantle minority policies? In a sense, China is aggressively pursuing economic assimilation, but enormous efforts are still spent on maintaining a minority policy framework. One explanation is that its role as a check against the military and security forces' tendency to heighten ethnic conflict continues to be valid.

The framework is far from complete, and I may yet revamp it completely, but I think I am roughly on the right track. In order to further flesh out the framework, I plan to conduct much more in-depth research on the actions of the military in minority areas, especially during the crucial junctures of the late 50s, the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, the fall of Lin Biao, and the on-set of economic reform. Preliminary analysis suggests that the picture was even more complicated than the one suggested by the multi-actor framework since various army factions favored different minority policies. While some commanders favored harsh repression, others adhered to the policies of the central government. But this finding suggests that on the margin, the military sought to undermine civilian control over minority policies. Since the main theoretical focus is turning toward civil-military relations, I would have to conduct more in-depth readings on the issue. I suspect that one important issue my research will raise is the need for over-lapping institutions to check the military, similar to redundant institutional checks against the predatory tendency of the central government in the federalism literature (Bednar 2005; Bednar, Eskridge Jr., and Ferejohn 2001).

Finally, where does the new framework leave my statistical analysis? I still think the set-up of the statistical test is valid for this new framework. That is, where minorities are perceived to be the most restive, the civilian leadership has an interest to bolster transfers in order to minimize the threat of unrests, which can be exploited by the military. The challenge is to find a way to uniquely test the multi-actor framework with the data. One idea is to add a year dummy variable recording the years before and during a party congress because the military presumably has more power in those crucial periods. The civilian government may want to give even more to religious minority areas in those years because it knows that minor differences between ethnic groups would be exploited by the military and security apparatus to bargain for more power and resources in those crucial periods.

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IV. APPENDIX 1: WORKSHOP PAPER DISTRIBUTED IN ADVANCE, PLACATING CREDIBLE REBELS: EXPLAINING CHINESE POLICIES TOWARD RELIGIOUS AND NON-RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

Executive Summary

From a strictly theoretical perspective, the seemingly generous Chinese policies toward ethnic minorities make little sense. First and foremost, China is governed by an authoritarian regime whose leaders are not chosen in popular elections, but are instead selected by a narrow group of political elite (Shirk 1993). As such, unlike leaders in democracies, they have no need to directly earn the support of the majority in order to remain in power, much less the non-elite minority.¹ Furthermore, even if the threat of a successful uprising motivates dictators to redistribute resources to the disaffected group (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006), ethnic minorities in China make up less than 8% of the population – less than 6% if one subtracts highly assimilated Manchus and Zhuang. Furthermore, Table 1 reveals that no single minority group constituted greater than 1.5% of the population according to the 1990 census. As such, unless the state finds itself in an extremely weak position – as was the case from the collapse of the Qing to 1949 – the central government has a near absolute chance of crushing any uprising or rebellion staged by any given ethnic minority. Indeed, the post-1949 record confirms the state's ability to suppress any sign of uprisings. Given the overwhelming might of the majority-dominated state, two interesting questions emerge. First, given the over-whelming might of the state, why did the state – especially an ideological one that saw nationalities as a transitory phenomenon – refrain from repressive assimilative policies? What drove the great variation – both over time and across nationalities – in the mix of tactics the Chinese state deployed toward ethnic minorities? Second, how do some ethnic minorities – those whose identities are based on religious traditions – seem to credibly demonstrate their threat of staging uprisings in the face of near-certain failure?

Although this paper delves somewhat into the second question, particularly on the evolution of state perceptions of religiously oriented ethnic minorities, its main focus is on the first question, the deployment of various types of policies toward minorities over time and across minority groups with different characteristics. The main findings are twofold. First, over time, two main factors explain the policy seesaws that fluctuated between suppression and forceful assimilation on the one hand and autonomy and cooptation on the other hand. The two main factors that explain the over time variation in the mix of CCP minority policies include the CCP's evaluation

¹ A common finding in research on authoritarianism is that they are often overthrown by members of the elite rather than by a popular uprising. There are very few cases of a true uprising. See Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Silversson, and James D. Morrow. 2003. *The logic of political survival*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, Svolik. 2005. *A theory of leadership dynamics in authoritarian regimes*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, Urbana.

of its own strategic vulnerability and the relative cost of suppression. That is, given that the Chinese regime mainly aimed for the realization of a socialist society where ethnicity and religion played a minimal role in influencing people's thinking, it refrained from wiping out ethnic and religious identities mainly because it was occupied elsewhere or found it too costly to do so. A grave strategic threat elsewhere – either international or domestic – or limited military or political resources decreased the feasibility of forceful assimilative policies because the eradication of the social structure and identity of an ethnic group required a substantial amount of resources.²

Second, over time, the CCP leadership updated its threat perception of various minority groups, informed by these groups' capacity to organize collective action in the face of the increasingly powerful state. After the series of minority uprisings in the late 50s and after witnessing the speed with which different minorities recovered their social structures after the Cultural Revolution, the CCP came to see some minority groups – namely the religious minorities – as much more threatening to general stability than other minorities. This paper offers evidence that in the reform era Chinese fiscal transfers systematically targeted religious minorities and neglected non-religious minorities despite official rhetoric that all groups were treated equally. This empirical finding provides strong evidence that the CCP regime selectively directed funds toward where it perceived the greatest threat – for both cooptation and suppression. Thus, although CCP minority policies were to a great extent inspired by the “affirmative action empire” model of the USSR, they nonetheless underwent dynamic evolution throughout the history of the PRC (Martin 2001).³ Although contemporary Chinese minority policies inherited the language and overall framework of the Soviet-inspired policies of the 50s, in reality they operate very differently than their forbearers.

² Fravel (2005) makes a similar argument that when faced with domestic threats, the CCP exhibited much greater willingness to make territorial concessions in border areas. See Fravel, M. Taylor. 2005. Regime insecurity and international cooperation: explaining China's compromises in territorial disputes. *International Security* 30 (2):46-83.

³ According to Martin, Soviet affirmative action policies included the granting of regional autonomy, the promotion of ethnic cadres to senior positions, and the protection of indigenous languages and cultures. They were designed to placate the surprising eruption of nationalist sentiment in various regions after the collapse of the Czarist regime. See Martin, Terry. 2001. *The affirmative action empire: nations and nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939, The Wilder House series in politics, history, and culture*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Ten Most Populous Official Minority Groups in 1990⁴

Minority group	Share of 1990 Population	Number of Counties with at least 5% Population from the Minority ⁵	Religious
Zhuang	1.50%	77	No
Manchu	0.80%	101	No
Hui	0.70%	104	Yes
Miao	0.60%	111	No
Uygur	0.60%	63	Yes
Yi	0.50%	108	No
Tujia	0.40%	38	No
Mongol	0.40%	86	Yes
Tibetan	0.40%	150	Yes
Buyi	0.20%	30	No

⁴ Source: China Data Center. 2006. *China Historical County Population Census Data with GIS Maps (1953, 1964, 1982, 1990, 2000)* China Data Center, 2005 [cited 2006].

⁵ The total number of counties in 1990 was roughly 2300.

V. APPENDIX 2: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following discussion questions were distributed beforehand:

1. What Drove the Evolution of CCP Minority Policies? How Successful Were CCP Minority Policies in Different Periods?

Was the characterization of CCP minority policies throughout the various periods in the paper more or less correct?

How important was leadership change in the trajectory of CCP minority policies?

What was the relationship between ideological movement and minority policies? The paper posits an effect that has much to do with techniques introduced by ideological movement, but how else did ideological movements affect minority policies?

Why did the CCP restore the focus on autonomy and cooperation after nearly two decades of assimilative policies? Was it just the death of Mao and the rise of Deng?

In the reform era, what determines the mix of policies the CCP uses (autonomy, cooptation, subsidies, nationalist education, repression)?

What are the aims of CCP minority policies? By their own standards, how successful were these policies?

2. Religiosity and Minority Collective Action – Are There Any Links?

Does the CCP indeed separate religion and non-religious minorities, as the paper posits?

If so, is the CCP reasonable in doing so, or has the Party erroneously focused on religion as a factor facilitating collective action?

Given the constructed nature of ethnic groups in China, can a researcher even break ethnic groups down between religious and non-religious?

Are there objective grounds for believing that some minority groups have much greater capacities to organize collectively than others, especially after the Cultural Revolution?

If so, what accounts for the success of those who can organize collectively, and what accounts for the inability of some minorities to organize collectively, especially against the state?

The CCP seems to pay little attention to the Southwest minorities today. Is that an accurate characterization? If so, why? Does it have anything to do with their inability to resist the state? Why aren't Southwest minorities seen as more troublesome?

What are the effects of Han migration into formerly minority-dominated areas such as Xinjiang and Tibet? Are the effects different depending on time horizon (short, medium, long term)?

3. Minority Policies – The Territorial Dimension

Do you agree that maintaining sovereignty over territory remains a primary goal of minority policy? Is it the utmost goal of minority policy, or are there other goals as well?

When does the CCP become concerned with the sovereignty threat of a minority group?

Are minority policies an integral part of China's border defense policy, or are the two separable?

Are some minority groups really more prone to making separatist claims? If so, why?

Does the CCP only deal with separatists through violent means?

Can and does the international community exert any effect on separatist activities and/or constrain how the CCP can deal with separatists?

VI. APPENDIX 3: WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE LIST

(b)(6)

