



A Historical Review of Interactions, Exchanges, and Integration in Xinjiang and Reflections on Paths Toward Comprehensive Embedding

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Abstract: Since 2012, China has placed significant emphasis on reinforcing common ground among all peoples at home, introducing new requirements to promote communication, exchange, and integration among the Chinese people. This paper examines the historical development of these processes from three perspectives: historical context, current significance, and future prospects. It explores the value and importance of communication, exchange, and integration within this region. Guided by the province's governance policies in the new era, the paper investigates practical strategies to enhance these processes across five key areas: spatial integration, cultural exchange, economic cooperation, social cohesion, and psychological identification. This analysis aims to provide theoretical insights to support ongoing efforts to strengthen national unity in China.

Keywords: interaction; exchange; historical review; path exploration

I. Introduction

The People's Republic of China constitutes a unified multi-ethnic civilization-state, where ethnic interaction, exchange, and integration have historically served as fundamental mechanisms for national consolidation, social advancement, and territorial integrity. As a pivotal region in China's western frontier, Xinjiang has maintained an organic connection with the Central Plains civilization since the Western Han Dynasty (206 BCE–25 CE). The CPC Central Committee, under the leadership of Comrade Xi Jinping, has innovatively developed Marxist ethnic theories through the integration of Marxist principles with China's contemporary ethnic realities, thereby establishing a new paradigm for ethnic governance in the 21st century.

This theoretical innovation finds particular expression in Xi Jinping's seminal proposition: "Forging a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation must serve as the central task in ethnic affairs, continuously strengthening the great unity of all Chinese ethnic groups." [1] However, current ethnic integration efforts face substantial challenges. Empirical evidence reveals that hostile forces, both domestic and international, particularly the "three evil forces" (terrorism, separatism, and extremism), have systematically engaged in ideological infiltration through sophisticated strategies that exploit ethnic, religious, and human rights discourses. These destabilizing forces seek to sever Xinjiang's cultural ties with Chinese civilization through historical nihilism and discourse manipulation, thereby negating the historical consensus that Xinjiang has been an inseparable part of China's unified multi-ethnic structure.

In response to these challenges, this study constructs a three-dimensional analytical framework (historical review, value connotation, path exploration) to examine ethnic integration processes in Xinjiang. The research objectives are threefold: (1) to implement the guiding principles of the 20th CPC National Congress; (2) to operationalize the Party's governance strategies for Xinjiang in the new era; and (3) to develop practical mechanisms for maintaining social stability, promoting economic development, enhancing cultural identity, and ultimately consolidating the consciousness of the Chinese national community. Through this multidimensional investigation, the paper contributes to both theoretical advancement and policy formulation in ethnic governance.

II. Historical Review of Ethnic Interaction, Exchange, and Integration in Xinjiang

Prior to its official designation as "Xinjiang," the region was historically known as the "Western Regions" (Xiyu). Archival records indicate that after the Qing dynasty consolidated governance over the northern and southern territories of the Tianshan Mountains, the term "Xinjiang" (New Frontier) or "Xiyu Xinjiang" (Western New Frontier) gradually emerged. However, the exclusive use of "Xinjiang" as the standardized toponym for the region was not fully established until the mid-19th century [2]. As early as 2,000 years ago, Xinjiang was incorporated into the centralized administrative system of China, experiencing five major phases of political unification under successive central dynasties: the Han, Wei-Jin and Northern-Southern Dynasties, Sui-Tang, Yuan, and Ming-Qing periods.

Strategically located along the ancient Silk Road, Xinjiang occupies a pivotal geopolitical position in northwestern China and the Eurasian continental heartland. Bordering eight nations, including Russia and Kyrgyzstan, the region is home to 56 ethnic groups, including the Han, Uyghur, and Hui. As President Xi Jinping emphasized during the Third Central



Symposium on Xinjiang Affairs: "Xinjiang has been a multi-ethnic region since antiquity, where all ethnic groups constitute inseparable members of the Chinese national family through shared bloodlines. It is imperative to advance research on the historical consciousness of the Chinese national community and the paradigm of unity in diversity" [3].

Historical analysis corroborates a cyclical governance pattern: effective central administration consistently correlates with regional stability, economic prosperity, and cultural syncretism. As articulated in Historical Issues Concerning Xinjiang: "When central dynasties maintained robust governance over Xinjiang, cultural exchanges between the region and the Central Plains flourished, fostering economic vitality and the progressive integration of diverse cultures, thereby advancing the development of local ethnic civilizations" [4].

2.1. Cultural Mutual Learning and Integration from the Han to Ming-Qing Dynasties

The advancement of political and economic systems invariably catalyzes cultural prosperity, while cultural developments reciprocally shape contemporaneous socio-political landscapes. Over two millennia, ethnic interactions in Xinjiang have manifested most vividly through cultural exchange.

From the Han to Ming-Qing periods, sustained cultural symbiosis occurred between the Central Plains and Western Regions civilizations. Archaeological evidence from the Yinxu tombs in Anyang, Henan, reveals over 700 nephrite artifacts originating from Xinjiang, underscoring early material exchange [2]. During the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE–25 CE), Princess Xijun, a native of the Chu region, introduced Central Plains musical traditions to the Wusun Kingdom through her performances of Chu melodies and zither music. This cultural transmission prompted reciprocal engagement, as documented by the Wusun princess's subsequent journey to Chang'an for advanced musical training.

Eastern Han (25–220 CE) records describe thriving commercial and cultural connectivity: "Couriers raced tirelessly between post stations, while merchants from Western Regions daily converged at frontier markets." Grassroots cultural assimilation is evidenced by burial artifacts from the Eastern Han tombs in Minfeng County, Hotan. Textile remnants bear inscriptions such as "May All Wishes Be Fulfilled" and "Longevity and Prosperity for Descendants." Notably, a 1995 excavation at the Niya site yielded a Han-era brocade armguard embroidered with the cosmological prophecy "Five Stars Rise in the East, Benefiting China"—a tangible testament to interethnic integration dating back two millennia.

Manuscripts recovered from the Loulan and Niya sites further corroborate cultural synthesis. These include Han bamboo slips containing arithmetic treatises (e.g., the "Nine-Nine Multiplication Table"), Jin-dynasty transcriptions of Chronicles of the Han States, and bilingual administrative documents. The Tang poet Cen Shen notably observed: "The Yehe chieftains fluently converse in Chinese" [4].

Following the mid-16th century ascendancy of Islam in southern Xinjiang, the Qing dynasty implemented a policy of religious pluralism upon unifying the region. This framework guaranteed Islamic religious freedoms, permitted the continued use of the Hijri calendar, facilitated mosque reconstruction, exempted Islamic clergy from corvée labor, and granted specific communal privileges [5].

Throughout these dynastic periods, cultural interactions in the Western Regions exhibited three defining characteristics:

- Multidirectional assimilation spanning material and spiritual domains
- Elite-grassroots permeability in cultural transmission
- Syncretic innovation through the integration of diverse traditions

2.2. The Triumph of Ethnic United Front During Revolutionary Construction

Following the collapse of the Qing dynasty, China descended into domestic political upheaval and foreign imperialist encroachment, severely constraining interethnic interactions in Xinjiang. However, the brutality of wartime conflicts catalyzed a collective awakening among ethnic groups, fostering recognition of the Chinese nation as a unified community. Under the Communist Party's united front strategy, Xinjiang's ethnic groups united to eliminate adversaries, achieve peaceful liberation, and secure monumental victories in the New Democratic Revolution, Socialist Revolution, and subsequent nation-building efforts.

The 1911 Xinhai Revolution, led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, not only overthrew feudal rule but also marked a paradigm shift in ethnic relations. This pivotal event transformed Xinjiang's interethnic interactions from spontaneous exchanges to conscious integration. Burhan Shahidi, reflecting on the 1911–1912 Hami Uyghur serf uprising, noted: "Oppressed peoples across ethnicities united against their exploiters, demonstrating cross-ethnic solidarity against common adversaries" [2]. These actions signified the emergence of modern national consciousness, particularly through enhanced ethnic identity.

During the Anti-Japanese War (1937–1945), ethno-national consciousness intensified. Grassroots patriotism manifested in extraordinary acts: Eysa, a destitute Uyghur farmer from Hotan, pledged his 18-year-old son Yusuf to frontline service, declaring, "Though impoverished, I offer my son to resist Japanese invaders and defend our nation" [6]. Concurrently, Dr. Grinken, a Russian physician in Tacheng, donated medical supplies worth 100,000 taels, while Kazakh widow Jiayike contributed a 50-tael silver ingot to wartime fundraising [6]. These acts epitomized pan-ethnic solidarity and crystallized national identity through shared sacrifice.

Post-1949 reconstruction demanded comprehensive socialist transformation. Under centralized Party leadership, Xinjiang implemented:

- Agrarian Reform: The 1950 Rent Reduction and Anti-Tyranny Campaign increased grain output by 37% within two years, liberating over 1.2 million serfs [4].
- Institutional Restructuring: In 1954, 105,000 PLA troops transitioned into the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, establishing 175 state farms and 13 industrial enterprises.

- Infrastructure Modernization: The 1961 completion of the Lanzhou-Xinjiang Railway (1,904 km) revolutionized regional connectivity, followed by operationalization of the Urumqi No.1 Coal Mine (annual capacity: 1.5 million tons) in 1968 and expansion of Urumqi International Airport (terminal area: 25,000 m²) in 1974.

The iconic narrative of Kurban Tulum—a Uyghur farmer born in 1883 who famously attempted to visit Mao Zedong on donkeyback—symbolized ethnic groups' political allegiance. These achievements, attained through interethnic collaboration, validated the Party's governance model in stabilizing frontier regions. Empirical data indicates that Xinjiang's GDP grew at an annualized rate of 8.2% from 1952 to 1978, outpacing national averages.

2.3 Rectifying Ethnic Policies and Advancing Interaction, Exchange, and Integration among Ethnic Groups in Xinjiang

Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the central government introduced a series of policies aimed at facilitating the development of ethnic minorities. However, the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) severely disrupted national political, economic, and cultural structures, and ethnic policies were no exception. Development-oriented support for Xinjiang was suspended, numerous outstanding ethnic minority cadres faced persecution, and interethnic relations in the region significantly deteriorated.

After the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the central leadership undertook a pragmatic reassessment of ethnic affairs and reinstated a series of rational and effective ethnic policies. The notion of “interaction, exchange, and integration among ethnic groups” began to emerge within the broader context of reform and opening-up, gradually becoming embedded in ethnic governance practices. This development marked the beginning of a new phase characterized by innovation and progress in managing ethnic relations in Xinjiang.

A pivotal moment came in 1979 with the convening of the National Border Defense Work Conference. At the meeting, Ulanhu, then a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of the United Front Work Department, underscored the importance of addressing ethnic issues in accordance with the real circumstances of minority populations. He stressed that ethnic issues should be acknowledged as a long-term concern and called for respect for ethnic equality and autonomy. Ulanhu further advocated for accelerated economic and cultural development in border and minority areas and emphasized the importance of implementing the Party's ethnic policies and the principle of equality among all ethnic groups. He reiterated the necessity of fully realizing the system of regional ethnic autonomy^[7].

In his report to the 12th National Congress of the CPC, Hu Yaobang declared that “ethnic unity, equality, and the common prosperity of all ethnic groups are matters of vital importance to the fate of our multiethnic nation”^[8]. During his inspection tour of Xinjiang in 1990, Jiang Zemin highlighted the need to foster interethnic affinity and learning, and to promote both economic and cultural exchanges as well as fraternal ties among ethnic groups^[10].

As a result of these policy initiatives and ideological shifts, interethnic interaction, exchange, and integration in Xinjiang witnessed significant progress. According to official statistics, by 1990, Xinjiang was home to 47 ethnic groups. This number increased to 55 in 2000, and by 2010, all 56 of China's officially recognized ethnic groups had a resident population in Xinjiang^[10].

In 2010, the CPC Central Committee introduced a critical principle for evaluating the effectiveness of ethnic governance—namely, whether such governance “facilitates ethnic interaction, exchange, and integration”^[11]. This scientific benchmark reinforced the importance of interethnic unity and the cultivation of mutual understanding, influence, and support among all ethnic groups. Its articulation enriched the CPC's ethnic policy framework during the reform era and laid both theoretical and practical foundations for the effective governance of ethnic relations in Xinjiang.

2.4 Deepening Interethnic Interaction, Exchange, and Integration in Xinjiang Since the 18th National Congress

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the Central Committee, with Xi Jinping as its core, has placed significant emphasis on the governance of ethnic affairs. Three Central Symposiums on Xinjiang Work and five Central Ethnic Work Symposiums have been held. General Secretary Xi Jinping has personally visited Xinjiang multiple times, where he implemented and refined strategic policies promoting interethnic interaction, exchange, and integration. At the third Central Symposium on Xinjiang Work, Xi Jinping articulated a comprehensive strategy for the governance of Xinjiang in the new era, thereby enriching the CPC's theoretical system concerning ethnic affairs and providing clear guidance for ethnic governance under socialism with Chinese characteristics.

At the Central Ethnic Work Conference, Xi Jinping stressed: “We must strengthen interaction, exchange, and integration among all ethnic groups, respect differences, embrace diversity, and foster a sense of mutual affection and mutual assistance within the big family of the Chinese nation”^[12].

A vivid example of interethnic solidarity occurred in July 2021, when several tourists from Hubei Province became stranded in muddy terrain in Xinjiang's Muji Township. As night approached and the situation grew dire, a local villager, Abudujapar Maimaiti, and his friends offered assistance. When the tourists attempted to compensate him, Maimaiti, hindered by the language barrier, pointed to the Party emblem on his chest and stated that “the 56 ethnic groups are one family,” refusing the offer. Over a year later, this “Uncle with the Party Badge” traveled more than 5,000 kilometers to Jiang'an in Wuhan, bringing traditional Xinjiang dairy products and dried apricots. He was warmly received by local residents, including Xinjiang natives living in Wuhan and the tourists he had once aided, who gifted him with regional specialties. Widely celebrated, this story reflects the enhanced interethnic relations and emotional ties nurtured under the leadership of the CPC.

In the report to the 20th National Congress of the CPC in 2022, Xi Jinping further emphasized: “We must unwaveringly follow the correct path of addressing ethnic issues with Chinese characteristics, adhere to and improve the system of regional ethnic autonomy, enhance and reform the Party's ethnic work, and comprehensively promote the cause of ethnic unity and progress”^[13]. These new directives not only represent an evolution and deepening of the CPC's approach to ethnic affairs in Xinjiang but also provide fundamental principles and strategic objectives for the nationwide advancement

of interethnic relations. They establish a theoretical and policy basis for constructing a new form of interethnic relations, rooted in mutual respect and collective progress, thereby inaugurating a new chapter in China's ethnic work under socialism with Chinese characteristics.

In conclusion, the increasingly robust interethnic interaction, mutual influence, and cultural integration observed in Xinjiang have contributed to a rich and diverse ethnic cultural landscape. This cultural convergence has played a vital role in sustaining the continuity and dynamism of Chinese civilization and has become an inseparable component of the Chinese nation and its cultural identity. Furthermore, it illustrates that the effective management of ethnic relations and the resolution of ethnic issues have long constituted a core priority for the CPC. In the contemporary era, the enhancement of the Party's ethnic governance and the promotion of interethnic integration in Xinjiang represent essential dimensions of national ethnic policy. These efforts not only embody the CPC's people-centered approach to governance but also reflect confidence in China's socialist path, theoretical system, institutional framework, and cultural foundations. Fundamentally, they exemplify the application of Marxist principles to the specific realities of China, thereby showcasing the profound ideological and practical significance of these developments.

III. The Value Connotations of Interethnic Interaction, Communication, and Integration in Xinjiang

The processes of interethnic interaction, communication, and integration in Xinjiang embody both profound theoretical significance and far-reaching practical implications. These dynamics reflect the effective application of Marxist ethnic theory within the Chinese context and represent a significant advancement in the Sinicization of Marxism. They thereby offer a robust theoretical foundation for upholding and enhancing Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. Furthermore, these processes exemplify the strategic planning of the CPC and the state regarding ethnic affairs, underpinning efforts to promote stability and development in Xinjiang, enhance cultural identity, and reinforce a shared consciousness of the Chinese national community.

3.1. A Contemporary Manifestation of Marxist Ethnic Theory

Marxist ethnic theory posits that ethnic groups are the product of social development at specific historical junctures. It firmly rejects any concept of ethnic superiority, affirming that while ethnic groups may vary in their developmental trajectories, they are fundamentally equal in status. Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the Party has steadfastly adhered to Marxism as the guiding ideology in the realm of ethnic affairs. It has emphasized the application of dialectical and historical materialism, tailored to the specific realities of ethnic groups and oriented toward national rejuvenation in the context of global transformations unseen in a century.

The Party's evolving ethnic strategies in Xinjiang have advanced the localization and modernization of Marxist ethnic theory. As one scholar has noted, "The Sinicization of Marxist ethnic theory is a process that integrates national rejuvenation with the resolution of ethnic issues in China. It involves the contextualization of core theoretical principles, modernization of ideological content, localization of discourse, popularization of its spiritual essence, practical realization of its truth, and embodiment of its historical role" [14].

During his inspection of Xinjiang in July 2022, President Xi Jinping remarked: "We have creatively integrated Marxist ethnic theory with China's specific ethnic conditions, formulating theories and policies that emphasize ethnic equality, unity, regional ethnic autonomy, and the common development of all ethnic groups. Under socialism, all ethnic groups have achieved genuine equality, unity, and progress" [15]. Guided by this theoretical framework, the Party and the state have worked to eliminate ethnic divisions, foster consensus, and promote common prosperity and unity among all ethnic groups in the new era.

3.2. A Major Contribution to Xinjiang's Development and Stability

At the third Central Symposium on Work Related to Xinjiang in 2020, President Xi Jinping articulated the strategic roadmap for governing Xinjiang in the new era. He emphasized the need to "adhere to the general goal of Xinjiang work, govern Xinjiang according to law, unite and stabilize Xinjiang, enrich it through culture, develop it for the people, and build it in the long term... with the consciousness of the Chinese national community at its core, constantly consolidating the unity of all ethnic groups" [16].

3.2.1 Promoting Economic Growth in Xinjiang

President Xi stressed that "development is the foundation for lasting stability in Xinjiang" [16]. Historically a key hub along the ancient Silk Road, Xinjiang holds a pivotal position in the Belt and Road Initiative. From 2014 to 2018, the region's total foreign trade volume reached RMB 683.8 billion, driving significant regional economic growth. More than 10,000 development projects were implemented through the national "aid to Xinjiang" program. According to official statistics, Xinjiang's GDP increased from RMB 741.183 billion in 2012 to RMB 1.774134 trillion in 2022. Over the same period, general public budget revenue grew from RMB 90.897 billion to RMB 188.917 billion, and per capita disposable income rose from RMB 12,200 to RMB 27,100. By the end of 2020, 3.0649 million residents had been lifted out of poverty. Interethnic cooperation and interaction have enabled all ethnic groups to contribute to and benefit from this economic development.

3.2.2 Enhancing Social Security in Xinjiang

Since 2012, the central government has allocated over RMB 2 trillion in transfer payments to Xinjiang. Nineteen provinces and municipalities have provided sustained support, spurring industrial development and infrastructure construction. The "Fanghuiju" initiative—Visiting the People, Benefiting the People, and Gaining Public Support—was launched in 2014, complemented by campaigns such as "Ethnic Unity as One Family" and "Ethnic Unity and Progress Year," fostering interethnic harmony. Over two million housing units were constructed under rural settlement programs, improving living conditions for more than ten million residents. Educational and healthcare deficits have been

substantially addressed, with school dropout rates due to poverty eradicated, universal health checkups implemented, and standardized healthcare services available at township and village levels. The basic medical insurance coverage rate has reached 99.7% ^[16]. These achievements, driven by interethnic cooperation, provide a solid foundation for social security in the region.

3.2.3 Ensuring Security and Stability in Xinjiang

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China mandates a system of regional ethnic autonomy in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities, ensuring the protection of religious freedom and cultural practices. In support of this constitutional framework, the government has implemented relevant legislation, including the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy, the National Security Law, the Implementation Measures for the Counterterrorism Law in Xinjiang, and the Xinjiang Regulation on De-Extremization. A series of white papers—such as *The Guarantee of Equal Rights for All Ethnic Groups in Xinjiang*, *Historical Matters Concerning Xinjiang*, and *The Fight Against Terrorism and Extremism and the Protection of Human Rights in Xinjiang*—have further elaborated these policies. On the ground, village-level and community-based initiatives have promoted grassroots engagement, ethnic integration, and collaborative security efforts, particularly in border areas.

Under the leadership of the CPC, the sustained promotion of interethnic interaction, communication, and integration in Xinjiang represents not only theoretical innovation but also the accumulation of valuable practical experience. This approach aligns with historical trends, respects the interests of the people, and resonates with the broader trajectory of national development. It plays an indispensable role in ensuring the region's stability and prosperity, strengthening cultural identity, and fostering a unified sense of national belonging across all ethnic groups in China.

IV. Pathways to Advancing Interethnic Interaction, Communication, and Integration in Xinjiang

On July 15, 2021, during an inspection tour in Xinjiang, President Xi Jinping emphasized the need to "promote the comprehensive integration of all ethnic groups in terms of space, culture, economy, society, and psychology, encouraging all ethnic groups to unite like pomegranate seeds" ^[17]. Based on this directive, this section explores practical pathways for fostering interaction, communication, and integration among ethnic groups in Xinjiang across these five dimensions.

4.1 Promoting Spatial Integration Among Ethnic Groups in Xinjiang

The ethnic composition of Xinjiang exhibits a pattern of "extensive mixing with localized concentrations." In the process of promoting interethnic interaction and integration, spatial factors should be fully considered, with efforts directed at expanding, utilizing, and optimizing spatial environments to construct embedded community structures.

4.1.1 Expanding Spatial Mobility

With the advancement of urbanization, interactions among ethnic groups in Xinjiang have broadened beyond the regional level, with increasing interprovincial mobility. This is particularly evident in education, employment, business, labor migration, and intermarriage. Statistics show that between 2010 and 2015, over 30,000 individuals from Xinjiang traveled to inland provinces for educational exchanges and training. In 2017 alone, more than 20,000 minority students pursued education in areas with better educational resources. Additionally, as a major cotton-producing region, Xinjiang attracts large numbers of seasonal laborers from other provinces between September and November each year. This cross-regional flow of resources and labor has simultaneously enhanced employment and promoted interethnic contact. Therefore, policies should support and encourage such mobility as a means to foster economic development and deepen interethnic integration through spatial embedding.

4.1.2 Utilizing Public Spaces

Promoting interethnic interaction at the village and township levels can be challenging, especially in areas with high ethnic homogeneity. For example, in Kumusilike Township, Shule County, Kashi Prefecture, Uyghurs account for over 99% of the population, while other ethnic groups make up less than 1%. In such contexts, leveraging public space becomes essential to fostering interaction and integration. Public venues such as village activity centers, small plazas, open street spaces, bazaars, schools, and police stations should be utilized for organizing shared events and displaying bilingual (Mandarin and minority language) signage. Holiday celebrations and communal gatherings in these shared spaces can serve as effective means of promoting interethnic communication and mutual understanding.

4.1.3 Optimizing Cyberspace

In the digital age, online platforms are deeply embedded in daily life. However, misinformation and subjective assumptions can sometimes fuel harmful discourse that undermines ethnic unity. As previously mentioned in cases such as "Uncle Kurban Visits Beijing" and "Uncle with the Party Badge," stories of genuine interethnic interaction vividly illustrate the success of integration efforts. Therefore, online spaces should be actively curated to promote positive narratives. Sharing aspects of ethnic cultures—such as clothing, cuisine, customs, and daily life—through texts, images, and videos can disseminate authentic voices, celebrate interethnic harmony, and foster an inclusive online environment conducive to deeper interaction and integration.

4.2 Promoting Cultural Integration Among Ethnic Groups in Xinjiang

Xinjiang is a region characterized by significant ethnic diversity, particularly in southern rural areas where mono-ethnic communities persist and traditional lifestyles dominate. These cultural differences pose challenges to fostering a shared national identity. As such, cultural strategies play a crucial role in advancing interethnic integration.

4.2.1 Strengthening Instruction in the National Common Language

In communities with high concentrations of ethnic minorities, some groups maintain limited language proficiency beyond their native tongue, hindering interethnic communication. While the state has actively promoted Mandarin (the national common language), field interviews reveal that some middle-aged individuals still require translation during

conversations. Language is a critical vehicle of culture and an essential foundation for interethnic communication and identity. Continued investment in national language education is therefore imperative to bridging communication gaps and enhancing cultural cohesion.

4.2.2 Preserving and Promoting Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage reflects the historical evolution of ethnic groups and constitutes the crystallization of shared histories. However, some local authorities have inappropriately labeled certain regionally shared heritage as the exclusive tradition of a single ethnic group. This practice should be corrected. Efforts to protect both tangible and intangible cultural heritage—such as historical monuments, architectural complexes, manuscripts, handicrafts, festivals, and performing arts—are vital for maintaining ethnic identity, cultivating cultural confidence, and fostering social cohesion. As noted in official guidance, the preservation and use of Xinjiang’s diverse heritage play a critical role in extending historical continuity, strengthening cultural identity, and promoting mutual learning between civilizations ^[18].

4.2.3 Enhancing Cultural and Civic Education

In the strategic vision for governing Xinjiang in the new era, President Xi Jinping proposed the “Cultural Enrichment of Xinjiang” initiative. Educational institutions at all levels should integrate patriotism and the promotion of a shared national identity into the national education system. Classroom instruction should serve as the main channel for ideological and political education. It is essential to guide all ethnic groups toward a correct understanding of history, the nation, ethnicity, culture, and religion. Embedding all ethnic cultures within the broader context of Chinese civilization and nurturing a shared sense of national community are foundational for fostering ethnic unity and long-term social stability.

4.3 Promoting Interethnic Interaction, Communication, and Integration in Xinjiang Through Economic Development

In 2020, China achieved a decisive victory in its battle against poverty and is now vigorously advancing the rural revitalization strategy. At present, the state is making unprecedented efforts to promote economic development in Xinjiang. Given these advantages, greater emphasis should be placed on driving economic growth among all ethnic groups in the region. As the desire for a better life grows among the people, so too will the opportunities for interethnic interaction, communication, and integration.

4.3.1. Fully Leverage Xinjiang’s Role as a Strategic Hub

As a central hub linking Central Asia and Europe, Xinjiang holds a strategic geographical position. As of March 2023, Xinjiang’s total economic output reached RMB 1.3798 trillion, ranking 23rd nationally. Notably, in the first two months of 2023, Xinjiang led the nation in foreign trade exports, with a total value of RMB 44.39 billion ^[19]. To harness this advantage, it is essential to enhance Xinjiang’s role as the core area of the Silk Road Economic Belt. Key border ports such as Khorgos, Alashankou, Hongqi Lafu, and Torugart should be utilized to facilitate integration between the domestic economy and international markets. These “golden corridors” must be transformed into “golden opportunities.”

4.3.2. Effectively Utilize the Domestic Market

China possesses a vibrant and dynamic market economy. Xinjiang is rich in mineral resources and cultural heritage and is a focal point of national support policies. The region should capitalize on its geographical advantages to attract investment while combining outbound initiatives with domestic attraction strategies. Xinjiang must further develop dual economic models—both online and offline—through e-commerce platforms to energize market actors. Government financial support and counterpart assistance programs should be effectively implemented to ensure favorable policies take root in the region. In this way, a diversified market structure can be established, driven by supply-side structural reforms and supported by dual domestic-international circulation.

4.3.3. Innovate Economic Development Models

Xinjiang’s rich cultural heritage, unique climate, and fertile oasis soils provide ample opportunity to diversify trade methods. The region must leverage its ethnic strengths and ecological advantages to enhance employment conditions in agriculture, animal husbandry, tourism, and other sectors. Multidimensional measures should be adopted to optimize product structures, establish ethnic brands, and foster distinctive market competitiveness. This will promote high-quality economic development in Xinjiang, enhance the sense of well-being among all ethnic groups, and advance interethnic interaction, communication, and integration through shared development.

4.4 Promoting Interethnic Interaction, Communication, and Integration in Xinjiang Through Social Development

Promoting interethnic interaction, communication, and integration at the societal level is a comprehensive social project. It requires strong guidance from the central government as well as collaboration from various social sectors. Strengthening social-level initiatives is thus critical to fostering integration among all ethnic groups in Xinjiang.

4.4.1. Safeguard Ethnic Unity Through the Rule of Law

In relatively underdeveloped areas, some ethnic minority residents still follow traditional local customs and lack familiarity with national laws, leading to weak legal awareness [M. Rong, “Upholding our core principles, remaining grounded, adjusting strategies, and implementing pragmatic reforms—An interpretation of the Central Ethnic Work Conference,” Qinghai Ethnic Studies, vol. 2015, no. 4]. President Xi Jinping has emphasized: “We must uphold the principle of equality before the law for all ethnic groups, use the law to protect ethnic unity, and raise legal awareness among the people of all ethnicities; we must resolutely oppose Han chauvinism and narrow-minded nationalism and consciously safeguard the overarching national interests and ethnic unity” ^[21]. Furthermore, “it is imperative to safeguard the legal rights and interests of all ethnic groups in accordance with the law, handle cases involving ethnic factors properly, and crack down on illegal and criminal activities in accordance with the law” ^[22]. Therefore, the governance of ethnic affairs must be guided by Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law to ensure legal equality for all citizens.

4.4.2. Cultivate Competent Cadres for Ethnic Minority Regions

Personnel are the key to successful ethnic work. In practice, it is crucial “to pay close attention to training and employing competent cadres from ethnic minority backgrounds. Those who are politically reliable and willing to shoulder responsibilities must be fully trusted and assigned key positions. Moreover, efforts should be made to strengthen grassroots governance in ethnic regions and consolidate the foundation so that the Party’s ethnic theories and policies are well understood and implemented at the local level” [22]. Only by cultivating such leadership can these cadres serve as vanguards and role models in promoting interethnic interaction, communication, and integration in Xinjiang.

4.4.3. Strengthen Grassroots Social Research

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the central leadership has placed great emphasis on research and investigation. A recent document, *Guidelines for Strengthening Research Work Across the Party*, underscores the importance of research as the foundation for sound policymaking. Promoting interethnic interaction, communication, and integration in Xinjiang is a vital step toward Chinese-style modernization and must be grounded in thorough grassroots research. By engaging directly with government departments, townships, communities, and enterprises, researchers can better understand public needs and resolve local concerns. Strengthening grassroots investigation and public services will foster interethnic unity and create a harmonious atmosphere of shared living and neighborly friendship among all ethnic groups.

4.5 Promoting Interethnic Interaction, Exchange, and Integration at the Psychological Level

In the process of nation-building, the development of ethnic psychology is of particular importance. It plays a critical role in fostering cultural identity, ethnic identity, and national identity, and in solidifying the collective consciousness of the Chinese nation. “The common prosperity of all ethnic groups is both a principle and a goal in managing ethnic relations in China” [24]. Thus, promoting interaction, exchange, and integration among ethnic groups in Xinjiang at the psychological level must begin with fostering an internal belief in ethnic unity.

4.5.1. Enhancing Interethnic Communication and Dialogue

Conflicts between individuals in social interactions often stem from segregation and a lack of communication. This principle applies equally to interethnic relations. If ethnic groups remain isolated from one another, psychological barriers are likely to emerge. Interethnic marriage, for instance, is one of the most persuasive means of overcoming psychological opposition between ethnic groups. To facilitate such breakthroughs, efforts must be made through policy support, economic development, cultural promotion, educational guidance, and social coordination. Only by opening channels for dialogue can harmonious interethnic relations be achieved.

4.5.2. Aligning with Historical Trends of Development

In remote and underdeveloped regions, some farmers and herders rarely watch television or access political information, leaving them vulnerable to manipulation by illegal and extremist forces. This manipulation can foster a psychological gap between certain ethnic groups and the rest of society, posing threats to social stability and ethnic unity. Therefore, it is vital to foster an awareness of historical trends in development, acknowledge existing developmental disparities, and strengthen the psychological foundation of ethnic solidarity. Only by safeguarding the developmental interests of all ethnic groups and addressing ethnic tensions can national unity and ethnic integration be effectively promoted.

4.5.3. Raising Awareness of Ethnic Unity

At its core, psychological integration among ethnic groups requires guiding individuals to understand the relationships between individuals and their ethnic groups, among different ethnic groups, and between ethnic groups and the state. Among these three interrelated dimensions, ethnic unity serves as the prerequisite and foundation. When individuals internalize the value of ethnic unity, they can build a sense of cultural identity and national community consciousness. It is essential to enhance public awareness, national identity, and ethnic unity education. A clear stance must be taken against ethnic separatism, with an unwavering commitment to safeguarding national unity and the interests of the Chinese nation. Only by ensuring that all ethnic groups feel the warmth of the national family can deeper interethnic integration be achieved.

Promoting interethnic interaction, exchange, and integration in Xinjiang requires the concerted effort of all ethnic groups. Efforts should be directed not only at broadening economic and cultural exchanges, but also at aligning everyday lifestyles and emotional bonds, and most importantly, at deepening cultural and ethnic identity. Through this process, a stronger sense of national unity and cohesion can be cultivated.

In conclusion, the effective management of ethnic issues and the implementation of sound ethnic policies are critical to national unity, border security, ethnic solidarity, and long-term political stability and prosperity in China [25]. The process of interaction, exchange, and integration among ethnic groups in Xinjiang is fundamentally a process of fostering a shared cultural identity. As the external manifestation of the consciousness of the Chinese national community, this cultural identity reflects its core values. Through interethnic engagement, common values and the spirit of collective destiny—“sharing weal and woe, honor and disgrace, life and death, and a common future”—can be nurtured among citizens. Strengthening cultural identity must be grounded in the inheritance of China’s outstanding traditional culture. Ethnic cultures should grow within the soil of Chinese civilization, respecting and appreciating each other, thus fostering mutual development and cultural innovation. Ultimately, this contributes to the realization of a culturally harmonious society, aligned with the ideal of “a world of shared beauty and harmony.”

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