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Autonomy in Autocracy:

Explaining Ethnic Policies in Post-1949 China

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

by

Chao-yo Cheng

2019

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Autonomy in Autocracy:

Explaining Ethnic Policies in Post-1949 China

by

Chao-yo Cheng

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

University of California, Los Angeles, 2019

Professor Michael F. Thies, Chair

I develop and test a new political logic of ethnic local autonomy (*minzu quyu zizhi*) to explain how the designation of ethnic autonomous territories (EATs) shapes the governance of non-Han groups and sustains the Chinese Communist Party's rule in post-1949 China. Building on the literatures on authoritarianism, decentralization, and ethnic politics, I argue that the strategic granting of ethnic local autonomy allows the central leader to establish his supremacy over subnational political elites while countering his rivals within the central leadership. Through statistical analysis, elite interviews, and archival research, I demonstrate that ethnic local autonomy is not simply introduced to defuse potential mobilization from non-Han groups. Instead, central leaders designate ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties to constrain the power of recalcitrant provincial elites when they face strong rivals within the Politburo.

In a broad vein, my dissertation contributes to the literature on authoritarian power sharing and co-optation by moving the analytical focus beyond the central inner circle. By examining central-local relations in non-democratic states, I show that the most credible anti-regime threats are not necessarily the primary targets of the sharing institutions. Moreover, co-optation can serve as the autocrat's strategic attempt to address the dilemma of delegation. Furthermore, my dissertation speaks to the literature on ethnic politics, which has largely overlooked the governance of ethnic diversity in non-democratic states and the

impact of ethnic cleavages on autocratic survival. My dissertation explores not only the mechanisms through which the granting of ethnic local autonomy takes place but also how such institutional configuration affects regime stability. While most studies have examined how ethnic local autonomy can resolve or prevent ethnic conflicts, I demonstrate that ethnic local autonomy can also protect a regime from collapse by managing agency loss and power struggles within the dominant ethnic group. Unpacking the political dynamics that drive the introduction of ethnic local autonomy will be an important step to clarify how decentralization defuses or exacerbates conflicts.

The dissertation of Chao-yo Cheng is approved.

Barbara Geddes

Susan L. Shirk

Michael F. Thies, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2019

To those who believe in me.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

2005–2006	Exchange Student, International Asian Studies Programme, Chinese University of Hong Kong.
2007	Visiting Student in Political Science and Sociology, National University of Ireland, Galway.
2008	B.A. (Journalism) and B.A. (Political Science), National Chengchi University (Taipei).
2008–2009	Seaman Apprentice of Political Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan) Navy.
2010–2011	Graduate Assistant, Columbia Business School.
2011	M.A. (Political Science), Columbia University in the City of New York.
2011–2012	Research Assistant, Institute of Political Science, Academia Sinica (Taipei).
2013–2017	Teaching Assistant, Political Science Department, UCLA.
2017	Visiting Researcher, Political Science Department, Tsinghua University (Beijing).

PUBLICATIONS

"Social Acceptance of New Energy Technology in Developing Countries: A Framing Experiment in Rural India." *Energy Policy 113*: 466-477 (with Michael Aklin and Johannes Urpelainen), February 2018.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 The Puzzle: Ethnic Local Autonomy in Post-1949 China

In 2011, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the ruling party of the current Chinese government, celebrated its 90th Anniversary.[1] In the keynote speech at the celebration, President Hu Jintao praised ethnic local autonomy (*minzu quyu zizhi*) as one of the three "fundamental political institutions" (*jiben zhengzhi zhidu*) in post-1949 China. Along with community self-government, as well as multi-party cooperation and political consultation, President Hu highlighted that

> "(*[T]he fundamental political institutions)* keep the Party and country full of vitality
> and fully tap the enthusiasm, initiative, and creativity of the people and all sectors of
> society. They serve to free and develop the productive forces and promote all-around
> economic and social development. They uphold and promote fairness and justice and
> aim to bring prosperity to all. They make it possible to pool resources to undertake
> major national initiatives, and they can effectively defuse risks and meet challenges on
> our road ahead. They serve to maintain ethnic solidarity, social stability, and national

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[1]As the ruling party of the current Chinese government, the Chinese Communist Party was founded in Shanghai in 1921. In 1949, the Party successfully defeated Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Party (KMT) in the Chinese Civil War, leading to the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. I use both "CCP" and "the Party" interchangeably to refer to the Chinese Communist Party.

unity."[2]

The CCP has a long history of acknowledging ethnic diversity in China. Before its rise to power in 1949, the Party began designating ethnic autonomous territories (EATs) across the country. During the Long March (1934-1936), the Party built the first autonomous government for the Tibetans in Sichuan as Mao Zedong and his fellow cadres traveled across Southwestern China to evade the capture of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Army (Xinjiang Party History Research Center, 2000). After reaching Yan'an in October 1936, Mao assembled a group of cadres to formulate the Party's policies toward non-Han ethnic groups in the country and confirmed ethnic local autonomy as the core of its ethnic policies at the beginning the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945).[3] Between 1936 and 1949, the Party created more than twenty EATs for the Hui, the Mongols, and non-Han ethnic groups in today's Hainan (Gladney, 1998; Dillon, 1999; Tian, 2010).

After 1949, the CCP reaffirmed the policies formulated in the late 1930s. The new Chinese government recognized the existence of ethnic divisions in the country and launched a nationwide campaign in 1953 to identify various non-Han nationalities (Mullaney, 2011) and grant them local autonomy. The granted local autonomy permitted officially identified non-Han nationalities to enjoy titular group leadership and representation in local government and legislature, to use indigenous languages for public services and school curricula, and to maintain their socioeconomic and religious traditions through local legislation (Dreyer, 1976; Ghai, 2000; Mackerras, 2003). However, from the late 1950s, Beijing revoked the initial offer of ethnic local autonomy, arguing that any institutional and policy privileges to non-Han groups would encourage "local nationalism" in the newly unified Chinese nation-state. The suspension of ethnic local autonomy led to widespread purges of non-Han cadres and a series of repressive assimilation attempts, which resulted in the complete abolition of ethnic local autonomy during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1978). It was not until the late

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[2]See "Hu Jintao's Speech at CCP Anniversary Gathering," `http://www.china.org.cn/china/CPC_90_anniversary/2011-07/01/content_22901507.htm` (Accessed December 20, 2018).

[3]The team included Zhou Enlai, who later became the Premier after 1949, and Li Weihan, who was appointed as the first Director for the State Ethnic Affairs Commission (SEAC).

1970s that Beijing decided to revive ethnic local autonomy; in 1984, the National People's Congress passed the Law on Ethnic Local Autonomy (LELA). As stipulated by Beijing, the EATs, some of which are designated to multiple non-Han groups, are indeed under the nominal titular leadership, particularly with their executive heads from the respective non-Han groups. Most subprovincial EATs, meanwhile, have formulated or even have finished revising their autonomous regulations (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: Ethnic autonomous territories with and without autonomous regulations (2016).
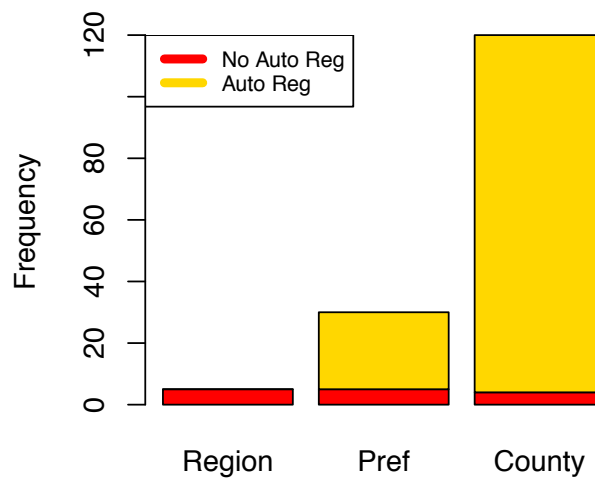
Since 1949, the Chinese government has recognized 55 "minority nationalities" (*shaoshu minzu*) along with the dominant Han group. In history, the Chinese government has designated more than 200 EATs for more than 40 non-Han nationalities. At present, there are five ethnic autonomous regions, 30 ethnic autonomous prefectures, and 120 ethnic autonomous counties across the country. According to the 2011 census, EATs cover more than 60% of the entire Chinese territory and govern nearly 15% of the total population, including the Han people residing in ethnic autonomous jurisdictions. Figure 1.2 shows the counties currently governed by ethnic autonomous territories.

Despite its long history and widespread presence, ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China remains a black box. China scholars have conducted extensive fieldwork and survey studies to explore how village elections (e.g., Bernstein and Lu, 2003; Birney, 2007; Han, 2014; Martinez-Bravo et al., 2017) and the People's Congress (e.g., O'Brien, 2009;

Figure 1.2: Ethnic autonomous territories in China (2016).
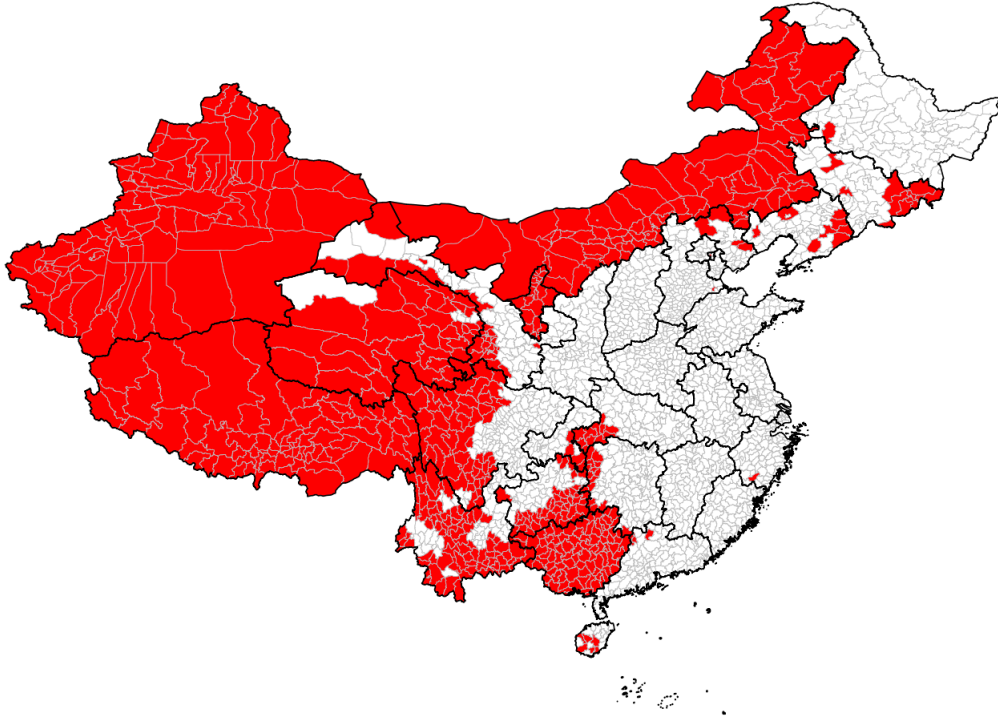
Truex, 2014; Manion, 2015; Zhang, 2017) shape market reform and state-society relations in Reform China. Researchers seek to understand how these institutions of "community self-government" and "multi-party cooperation and political consultation," two of the fundamental political institutions highlighted by Hu, incorporate a variety of voices into policy-making and implementation within and outside the central government.

In comparison, ethnic local autonomy has received scant attention, especially from political scientists, except a few studies that focus on the general history of government policies toward non-Han groups in post-1949 China (e.g., Dreyer, 1976), non-Han groups in selected regions (Solinger, 1977a; Kaup, 2000, 2002), and ethnic uprisings (e.g., Han, 2013). While much has been written about the general history of ethnic local autonomy, why the Mao-led CCP granted ethnic local autonomy remains poorly explained. Moreover, why did the central government repeal local autonomy and terminate the policies of ethnic accommodation in the late 1950s? After the Cultural Revolution, why did Beijing decide to restore ethnic local autonomy? More specifically, why did some non-Han groups receive local autonomy

before others? Why were some subnational jurisdictions (regions, prefectures, and counties) granted autonomous status earlier than others? More broadly, how do the introduction of ethnic local autonomy and EAT designations contribute to national integration and state building, which in turn pave the foundation of regime resilience, in post-1949 China?

I seek to answer these questions. These questions are by no means trivial. Historically, China has been a multiethnic regime (Dreyer, 1976; Shin, 2006). Ancient and contemporary Chinese political leaders repeatedly stressed the contrast between the Han, the dominant ethnic group that could trace its origin back to the Zhou Dynasty in 771 B.C., and the non-Han groups. The longstanding awareness of and an emphasis on ethnic and racial divisions rendered policies toward non-Han groups a crucial issue for every political leader in history. The post-1949 Chinese government is certainly no exception. It is very important to understand how the leaders of the post-1949 Chinese government overcome ethnic cleavages, which many studies have considered as a crucial obstacle of political stability and effective governance (e.g., Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Wilkinson, 2006; Habyarimana et al., 2009; Trounstine, 2016), and maintain the durability of the current Chinese regime. While many presume the Chinese government only rules non-Han ethnicities through repression, my dissertation provides a more nuanced picture about the governance of ethnic diversity in post-1949 China.

This topic is also relevant for non-China scholars. As nation-states have emerged as the key political entities in today's international system, many remain ethnically heterogeneous to this day (Hechter, 2000; Roeder, 2007). Current literature has largely excluded the governance of ethnic diversity in authoritarian regimes. Many researchers presume that autocrats, striving to consolidate and cling to their control over their subjects, usually dismiss ethnic differences and oppress racial and ethnic minorities (e.g., Ghai, 2000; Liu and Ricks, 2012). Nonetheless, history has witnessed autocrats accommodate ethnic minorities through varieties of policy and institutional configurations. Several authoritarian regimes in the 20th century, notably the former Soviet Union, introduced territorial autonomy and policies of affirmative action for ethnic minorities (Martin, 2001; Roeder, 2010).

Why do autocrats decide to grant local autonomy to "non-core" ethnic groups Mylonas

(2015), namely ethnic groups that are politically peripheral? I will focus on ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China and develop a theory to explain how it allows the Chinese leaders to achieve national integration, state building, and regime survival. I then use the theory to derive a set of hypotheses and illustrate these empirical implications with a variety of quantitative and qualitative evidence. In brief, I depart from existing studies by conceptualizing ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China as an institution of agent control.

1.2   Common Views

Previous studies have offered several explanations about the origin of ethnic local autonomy and its political implications in post-1949 China. In this section, I will review each of them in turn and explain why none of these explanations can fully account for the fluctuation of ethnic local autonomy in the country.

1.2.1   Imperial Legacy

Many existing studies have attributed Mao and the CCP's decision to offer ethnic local autonomy and the Chinese government's other policies toward non-Han ethnicities to Confucian teachings and the imperial legacies (see Dreyer, 1976). Many scholars trace back to Chinese history and study the imperial courts' policies toward ethnic minorities. In doing so, many suggest that ethnic local autonomy aligns with the dynastic traditions of maintaining a flexible definition of the "Han" and govern subordinate ethnic groups through indirect rule and various preferential policies (e.g., Guan, 2007). While I agree that the Chinese dynastic legacies can influence the Party leader's initial reception to the granting of ethnic local autonomy, they fail to elucidate the decline and suspension of ethnic local autonomy during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. These explanations also cannot speak to questions of timing even in those areas that do receive ethnic local autonomy.

1.2.2 Soviet Influence

Many have also highlighted the influence of the Leninist nationality policies in the former Soviet Union on the granting of ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China (e.g., Hoston, 1994; Ghai, 2000; Potter, 2010). While this explanation helps to illuminate the Party's early policies toward non-Han groups in the early 20th century (see **Chapter 2**), recent scholars have cautioned that Mao and the CCP adapted, instead of blindly duplicating, the Soviet nationality policies based on the "local conditions" in China. This explanation is incapable of explaining why Mao and the Party abandoned the federal system, which promised non-Han ethnicities' rights of self-determination and secession, and only granted these groups the rights of self-government through ethnic local autonomy in the late 1930s Liu (2004). Treating the introduction of ethnic local autonomy as Beijing's adherence to Leninist Communism is also problematic because it does not explain why the country decided to reinstate ethnic local autonomy just when Beijing began to distance China from Communist ideology and embrace the market economy in the early 1980s (Mackerras, 2003; Friberg, 2005).

1.2.3 Ethnic Uprisings and Secessionism

Many have also considered ethnic local autonomy from the perspective of ethnic conflicts, treating it as a vital institution for the Chinese government to appease and contain non-Han ethnic mobilization. Building on this premise, many scholars have focused on conflict-fraught provinces, including Tibet and Xinjiang, and question whether ethnic local autonomy has indeed helped the Chinese government resolve its tension with secession-prone non-Han groups (e.g., Schwartz, 1994; Castets, 2003; Henders, 2010; Wu, 2014; Hillman, 2016).

In line with the literature on civil wars and ethnic conflicts, which discusses the origin and effect of ethnic local autonomy from a view of ethnic power-sharing and conflict resolution (e.g., Elkins and Sides, 2007; Roeder, 2010; Selway and Templeman, 2012; Horowitz, 2014; Cederman et al., 2015), this explanation can similarly be misleading to understand ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China, as it disregards the fact that the majority of EATs

covered non-Han groups that historically have never or rarely rebelled against Han dominance (see **Chapter 2**). Many non-Han groups which receive ethnic local autonomy from Beijing, such as the Korean (Olivier, 1993), the Zhuang (Kaup, 2000), the Mongols (Han, 2011), and the Manchus (Guan, 2007; Tian, 2010), have never mobilized any large-scale anti-government uprisings. Moreover, when Beijing restored ethnic local autonomy in the late 1970s, there were no exceptionally threatening ethnic uprisings. Most ethnic riots took place during the late 1950s as well as early 1960s and 1970s (Goldstein, 1997; Dillon, 1999; Bovingdon, 2010).

1.2.4 Window-dressing

Finally, several scholars consider ethnic local autonomy merely a facade that obscures the Chinese government's repression of non-Han ethnic groups. It thus has been a widespread view that ethnic local autonomy in China lacks any analytical importance (e.g., Ghai and Woodman, 2009). I argue that treating ethnic local autonomy as window dressing is problematic, as in the case of previous common explanations, because it ignores the nuances that appear across different levels of EATs. Taking local legislative autonomy as the example, Shen (2013) and others have highlighted that sub-provincial ethnic autonomous territories have taken advantage of the granted autonomy although ethnic autonomous regions — including Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Guangxi, Ningxia, and Tibet — have been unable to exercise their supposed autonomous powers.

<center>*   *   *</center>

The discussion above indicates that a new explanation is warranted — an alternative theory of ethnic local autonomy will have to explain both the timing of its granting by the central government in Beijing as well as several notable variations in its implementation, such as the designation of EATs as well as the differences in the use of local autonomy across different levels of EATs. In other words, a theory remains to be developed to understand both the conditions under which the central government introduces ethnic local autonomy as well as how it functions in China. This task requires us to move the focus from inter-ethnic conflicts to elite interactive dynamics within the Party.

1.3 Sketch of the Argument

Departing from prior studies, I consider the introduction of ethnic local autonomy as a puzzle of authoritarian delegation — a political process that is not only crucial but also risky for the autocrat's political survival in China and many other non-democratic states (e.g., Landry, 2008; Gregory, 2009; Sheng, 2010; Rundlett and Svolik, 2016).

While authoritarian leaders are usually more powerful than a democratic leader who faces the constraint of electoral accountability, an autocrat is not immune from various challenges to his authority within the ruling circle as well as the perils associated with delegation to lower levels of government. First, the autocrat faces the challenge of maintaining his control over the central leadership and achieving his desired policies. As discussed by existing studies, such as Magaloni (2006), Svolik (2012), and Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2018), a split within the ruling circle often can be the critical driving force for authoritarian breakdown. History has seen many dictators' toppled by those close to him.

Second, the autocrat's fate is contingent upon whether his local agents faithfully implement his policy decisions. Without effective control over his local agents, these agents can cause the dictator a huge loss either by failing to carry out the assigned duties or by concealing key information, which in turn gives the dictator a false impression about his policy achievements. These agents' defection can create large-scale economic crises and encourage popular protests, which can turn into a nationwide revolutionary endeavor and the dictator's downfall. It is also important to note that failing to exercise effective control over local agents can jeopardize the dictator's ruling position, as this situation can provide dictator's inner circle rivals the leverage to cultivate their own political alliances and overpower the dictator in the end.

The members of the autocrat's inner circle and his local agents thus present classical coalition-building and principal-agent problems. Since an authoritarian leader usually faces higher stakes in political survival than democratic leaders — losing office is often followed quickly by the loss of freedom or even life — it is crucial that the autocrat tackles both issues effectively.

Drawing from the literatures on decentralization, authoritarianism, and ethnic politics, I propose that offering ethnic local autonomy helps the Chinese central leaders establish his dominance over provincial co-ethnic leaders. First, the central leader designates EATs to constrain the power of local political elites who are likely to resist his commands. Through ethnic local autonomy, the central leader empowers sub-provincial non-Han cadres so that they can constrain the power of recalcitrant provincial elites. The central leader can exploit the ethnic boundary between the Han and non-Han groups to assure that offering local autonomy will not end up encouraging the collusion between provincial and sub-provincial cadres against Beijing. Second, the autocrat is more likely to designate ethnic autonomous territories when he faces strong rivals within the central leadership. In the presence of powerful inner-circle rivals, it becomes difficult for the central leader to replace uncooperative provincial leaders, as those local leaders may be allied with his rivals. Unable to appoint his preferred cadres to lead provinces, he then empowers sub-provincial ethnic elites with local autonomy.

In brief, as the central leader controls to power to designate EATs and oversees the appointments of non-Han local cadres, ethnic local autonomy helps the leader address the delegation dilemma as provincial elites cannot fully control these EATs and their ruling cadres. we should see the central leader actively grants ethnic local autonomy when other inner-circle members and provincial elites are likely to incur significant agency loss to him. In contrast, as the central leader manages to discipline his agents within and outside the Party center, which can be achieved through violent purges or institutionalized elite management, he will have the incentive to retract or downplay ethnic local autonomy, as we see in the 1960s and 1990s, respectively.

1.4   Overview of Empirical Strategy

My proposed theory yields several testable hypotheses. To test these hypotheses, I have collected a variety of original qualitative and quantitative data from China and other post-WWII authoritarian regimes. First, we should observe the introduction of ethnic local

autonomy under a divided or fragmented central leadership. In the context of China, it means that the central leader is more likely to grant ethnic local autonomy when the Party center — that is, the Politburo — is divided or fragmented because he is incapable of enjoying complete control over his inner inner-circle allies and his local agents, both of which can be allied together against him.

Next, the autocrat should be more likely to designate EATs — especially ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties — within provinces whose leaders hold the potential to challenge his dominance. This situation often takes place when the provincial leaders lack a strong connection with the central leader and when the provincial leaders can build a self-contained local elite network. Finally, to constrain a provincial leader's power, the presence of EATs in a province should reduce its leader's influence over the network of local officials within the province. Through the designation of subprovincial EATs, the central leader has the opportunity to influence the composition of prefectural and county officials in the province by appointing and overseeing titular-group leaders of EATs.

1.4.1 Archival Research

In 2016 and 2017, I visited different libraries and archives in the United States, Hong Kong, and Mainland China to collect and study various government documents and historical records on the Chinese government's ethnic policies. In Table 1.1, I list the libraries and archives that I have visited in addition to the Richard C. Rudolph East Asian Library at UCLA.[4]

During my visits, first, I focused on collecting various official documents from the State Council and the National People's Congress to understand the political contexts within which the notable changes in the government's policies towards non-Han ethnicities in the country took place. Also, whenever possible, I tried my best to access local government archives and other historical materials during my travels across different provinces. These

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[4]A special thank is due to Ms. Chen Su, the East Asian Studies Librarian and the Head of Richard C. Rudolph East Asian Library at UCLA, for writing me the introduction letters to the mainland Chinese libraries.

Table 1.1: Sites of archival research.

Location	Libraries and Archives
United States	The Hoover Institution Library & Archives East Asian Library, Stanford University C.V. Starr East Asian Library, UC Berkeley
Hong Kong	Universities Service Centre, the Chinese University of Hong Kong
Mainland China	Fudan University Library (Shanghai) The Minzu University of China (Beijing) The National Library of China (Beijing)

local materials often include local cadres' correspondences with Beijing as well as the details about the designation of EATs. In doing so, I have sought to trace the process through which a local jurisdiction becomes an ethnic autonomous territory to identify key players and their interactions in the process of EAT designation.

1.4.2 Elite Interviews

In Summer 2016, I traveled to Shanghai and Beijing, where I spoke to researchers at Minzu University of China and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. They provided many crucial details on ethnic local autonomy other than EAT designations, including local legislation and the appointment of ruling cadres in EATs.

I returned to Beijing in Fall 2017 as a postgraduate visiting researcher at Tsinghua University. During my 2017 stay, I built personal contacts with local governments through Tsinghua and other friends, which allowed me to travel to several EATs and ethnic townships across the country. In each EAT and ethnic township, I would do my best to interview multiple local elites who are familiar with the histories of their jurisdictions as well as the implementation of ethnic local autonomy there. First, I interviewed scholars at local colleges and universities as they have conducted extensive research on the implementation of ethnic local autonomy in their EATs. Legal scholars provide tremendous help with explaining changes in the power relationship between Beijing and different levels of subnational jurisdictions following the granting of ethnic local autonomy. I also tried to speak to retired cadres,

as many of them personally observed the granting of ethnic local autonomy. They provided first-hand information that is not included in official documents and published historical narratives. Finally, I spoke with several current officials, especially those working in the local People's Congress and the local Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference — officials in the local People's Congress are responsible for local legislation in the EATs while those in the local Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference lead the compilation of various unofficial historical records in the EATs. I provide the outline of my elite interviews with local officials in **Appendix I**. For each interview, I started with these questions.

Elite interviews are valuable for two reasons. First, local officials and scholars shed light on how to interpret several key details mentioned in the official documents. For instance, they encouraged me to pay particular attention to any border changes following an incident of EAT designation, as any border changes indicate that it was the central leader who single-handedly imposed the naming of EATs while ignoring the provincial leaders' protests. Many interviewees also pointed out that the post-designation population census usually signals the lack of strong grassroots demand for local autonomy prior to the official EAT designation.

Second, local officials and scholars discussed different anecdotes of elites interactions that took place in EAT designations and the implementation of local autonomy through local legislation and official appointments. One thing that many highlighted, for example, is that provincial leaders usually resent any EAT designations and the formulation of autonomous regulations because they are concerned that the presence of EATs — like a set of independent kingdoms within the provinces — will undermine their governing power over these jurisdictions.

1.4.3 Statistical Analysis

A major part of my dissertation project involves the construction of new measures of elite connectedness as well as the collection and merge of various datasets on local administrative divisions, local legislative records, and local socioeconomic and demographic data in post-1949 China.

First, after developing a unique framework based on different statistical methods in supervised machine learning and network sciences, I create a set of innovative measures that allow us to study the degree to which the Politburo is divided as well the degree to which central and provincial leaders are connected. The measure of elite connectedness is based on the official biographical records of central and local (province, district, and county) Chinese officials. I then apply the new measures of elite connectedness to test the set of hypotheses based on the proposed theory of ethnic local autonomy. The data on EATs are retrieved from a variety of sources, including scholarly research, local gazettes and statistical yearbooks, and official records of administrative divisions from the Ministry of Civil Affairs. I also build a unique dataset of legislative activities in EATs and use them to study the timing of EATs' legislative endeavors.

To explore whether my theory can be applied beyond post-1949 China, I assemble a cross-national dataset that indicates the variation in the introduction of institutional ethnic accommodation along with a variety of political and socioeconomic variables. The dataset includes a new index of authoritarian personalism constructed by (Wright, 2017), based on which I build a variable that indicates the degree of power dispersion in the autocrat's ruling circle.

1.5 Theoretical and Policy Contributions

My dissertation speaks to several topics in both Chinese and comparative politics. Here, I discuss each contribution in turn.

1.5.1 On Contemporary Chinese Politics

Current scholarship on Chinese politics has largely neglected the role of ethnic local autonomy in the building of the post-1949 Chinese regime's durability. One of the most important implications of my dissertation says ethnic local autonomy has contributed to agent control and political centralization for post-1949 Chinese central leaders. Existing first- or second-

hand historical and ethnographic studies usually focus on individual non-Han groups or localities without a clear explanation for the introduction of ethnic local autonomy.[5] I provide a new theory to explain how ethnic divisions and ethnic local autonomy help the central leader addresses the agency loss and sustains the Chinese Communist regime's durability.

Furthermore, a study of the ebb and flow of ethnic local autonomy will add to the research on the origin and impact of fiscal and administrative decentralization in contemporary China. Prior studies, while having explored how the central government experiences and resolves the problem of agency loss under decentralization (e.g., Zhan, 2006; Landry, 2008; Sheng, 2010), often view decentralization as a means to achieve efficiency in grassroots economic growth (e.g., Oi, 1999). Shirk (1993) presents one of few exceptions to explain the political implications of decentralization. To account for the success of post-1980 market reform, Shirk (1993) argues that the devolution of fiscal authority was a crucial strategy to strengthen the central leader's market reform initiatives. Through decentralization, the central leaders managed to form a coalition with provincial elites in the Central Committee and thus overcame political and bureaucratic anti-reform forces. In this study, I extend her logic to examine the case of ethnic local autonomy, which took place even before the commonly-researched decentralization attempts in the late 1950s (Li, 2010), and covers the nuances of decentralization *below* the provinces in post-1949 China.

I examine the interplay of informal elite ties and formal state institutions in post-1949 China. Many have considered the importance of *informal* politics — facilitated by interpersonal connections between political elites (e.g., Tsou, 1976; Pye, 1981; Dittmer, 2002). The introduction of ethnic local autonomy, as well as its suspension and revival, show how elite ties can shape the development of formal political institutions in China as the central leader seeks to address the dilemma of delegation and agency loss. Building on the sociological literature on *guangxi* in Chinese society (e.g., Hwang, 1987), more crucially, I reconceptualize elite connectedness — the degree to which a pair of political elites is tied together — as a

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[5]Solinger (1977a) focuses on minority groups in Yunnan. Kaup (2000) studies the Zhuang in Guangxi. Han (2013) focuses on minority groups' different responses to the Chinese government's ethnic policies. Finally, Wu (2009) focuses on the creation of ethnic autonomous regions.

continuous measure. The previous studies of Chinese elite politics have largely considered elite ties as the dichotomous variable (e.g., Shih, Adolph, and Liu, 2012).

Lastly, I consider elite ties in view of principal-agent relationships — I study how the strength of connection between the principal and his agents can impact the size of agency loss for the central leader and prompts the corresponding changes in the formal political institutions, presumably because a higher level of connectedness means smoother communication between them and the monitoring of agents. In this vein, I also depart from existing studies that only consider elite ties from the perspective of patron-client relationships, which treats elite ties as the channel for the exchanges of political rents (e.g., Keller, 2016; Zeng and Yang, 2017; Jiang, 2018).

1.5.2 On Comparative Politics

My study also contributes to several comparative politics literatures. First, through the examination of ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China, I demonstrate how political institutions can lead to the political inclusion of the marginalized social groups without these segments being the most credible anti-regime threats. Political co-optation, moreover, does not necessarily involve the sharing of the autocrat's power. In the case of post-1949 Chinese ethnic local autonomy, the institutional co-optation only dilutes the power of the autocrat's most threatening agents within and outside the central ruling circle. Existing studies have been relatively unclear about the difference between institutional co-optation and power-sharing as well as the relationship between them in authoritarian regimes (e.g., Magaloni, 2006; Gandhi, 2007; Svolik, 2012).

Through the incorporation of marginalized social segments, the autocrat expands his pool of agents and constrain the power of those agents that impose the most significant threats to his dominance. In this vein, my study adds to the literature on the politics of delegation. Delegation has been extensively studied by researchers on democratic governments (e.g., McCubbins and Schwartz, 1984; Kiewiet and McCubbins, 1991; Thies, 2001; Miller, 2005; Martin and Vanberg, 2011; Gailmard, 2016). My theory contributes to a large stream of

research by examining how ethnicities play a role in helping the autocrat — the primary principal in the non-democratic context — to overcome the challenge of colluding inner-circle rivals and local agents in a multilevel organization, in which decentralization becomes a viable strategy of agent control.

My study speaks to the literature on ethnic politics, which has overlooked the governance of ethnic diversity in authoritarian regimes and the impact of ethnic cleavages on authoritarian survival. While many studies have debated the merit of ethnic local autonomy for the sake of conflict prevention and reconciliation (e.g., Lijphart, 1977; Lustick, 1979; McGarry and O'Leary, 2006; Elkins and Sides, 2007; Brancati, 2009; Roeder, 2010; Selway and Templeman, 2012; Horowitz, 2014; Bakke, 2015; Cederman et al., 2015), I seek to explore not only the mechanisms through which the granting of ethnic local autonomy takes place but also how such institution successfully leads to regime stability. While most studies have focused on exploring how ethnic local autonomy can prevent and resolve violent conflicts between ethnic groups, my study suggests that local autonomy can also protect a multiethnic state from dysfunction by managing power struggle *within* the dominant ethnic group. Unpacking the political dynamics that drive the introduction of ethnic local autonomy will also help to clarify the mechanisms through which decentralization defuses or exacerbates inter-group conflicts.

1.6 Plan of the Dissertation

My dissertation proceeds as follows. In Chapter 2, I review the relevant literatures to develop a new political logic of ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China, which focuses on the central leader's incentives to address the delegation dilemma both within the central ruling circle and with the top local elites. Departing from existing studies that discuss the introduction of ethnic local autonomy from the perspective of inter-ethnic conflicts, I explain how the strategic designation of EATs helps the Chinese central leader consolidate his inner-circle dominance while maintaining his grips over local elites. The proposed theory also informs us how ethnic local autonomy contributes to nation-building by creating a dual system of

official identity in post-1949 China.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I consult archived historical records to study how the designation of EATs has varied over time and across different parts of the country. I have also interviewed retired and current non-Han cadres in Beijing and other provinces to trace the process through which Beijing names an ethnic autonomous territory. I find that non-Han mobilization is usually not the primary concern that prompts the offer of ethnic local autonomy. Instead, the naming of EATs usually takes place when the Politburo is divided between the central leader and his rivals. I also find that Beijing preemptively mobilizes local non-Han elites to "request" local autonomy through their respective provincial jurisdictions. By creating ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties, Beijing manages to build a set of enclaves in which provincial leaders have limited discretion over personnel and administrative matters.

In Chapter 5, building on different statistical tools from network science and supervised machine learning, I develop a unified framework to construct innovative quantitative measures of post-1949 Chinese elite connectedness. Drawing from original biographical datasets of central and local political elites in post-1949 China, I create three indices to evaluate the degree to which the Politburo is divided (*central leadership fragmentation*), as well as the degree to which provincial leaders enjoy an embedded power base that insulates themselves from Beijing (*local leadership embeddedness*) and the degree to which provincial leaders are tied to the central leader (*central-local connectedness*).

In Chapter 6, I deploy these new measures of elite connectedness to study the factors that drove the designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties between 1949 and 2003. After accounting for different demographic and socioeconomic confounding variables, I find that Beijing is more likely to name EATs in a province when the central leader faces a divided Politburo. I also observe a higher likelihood of EAT designation when the provincial Party secretary holds a strong tie to the governor, which indicates a relatively high level of local leadership embeddedness. In contrast, a province is unlikely to see the designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties when the provincial Party secretary has a close tie to the Party head. Furthermore, using an original dataset of district and county cadres, I demonstrate that sub-provincial EATs are more likely to see their Party heads appointed

from the local communities. Those appointed to lead ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties, compared to their colleagues in other non-EAT jurisdictions, are also less likely to have worked with the provincial Party secretary. These findings align with the notion that EATs can serve as enclaves within which provincial leaders face constraints on their governing power, as Beijing not only controls the designation of EATs but also oversees the appointments of local non-Han officials.

In Chapter 7, I extend my discussion to Imperial and Republican China. In both periods, the central leaders carried out similar decentralization reforms to accomplish political centralization. One example occurred in the early Han Dynasty (BC 202-AD 8) when the imperial court sought to build a centralized empire. Likewise, in the early 1930s, Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Party introduced a county-level self-rule movement to dilute the power of provincial warlords. By examining the history of multi-level decentralization in China, I explain how the Chinese central state has overcome the challenges imposed by diverse, powerful subnational political forces and reached political centralization. In the same chapter, I assemble different existing cross-national datasets of ethnic conflicts, political institutions, and regime types to study the introduction of ethnic local autonomy in post-WWII authoritarian regimes. Drawing from a newly constructed index of power concentration in dictatorships, I find that autocrats are more likely to introduce regional autonomy to ethnic minorities when their ruling power is challenged in the inner circle.

In Chapter 8, I summarize the theory as well as the primary findings of my dissertation. I then discuss how I plan to expand the current dissertation project in the future. Future research focuses on exploring the dynamics of multilevel delegation, national integration, and state building beyond post-1949 China.

1.7 Appendix I: Notes on Elite Interviews

I have interviewed more than 40 retired and current cadres in Beijing and ethnic autonomous territories in other provinces in Fall 2016 and 2017. In Beijing, most of my interviewees were researchers on the Chinese government's policies toward non-Han ethnic groups in Minzu University of China and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The local cadres I interviewed come from different local Party and government offices, such as those working for the local Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission and the General Office of the local People's Government, and the Culture and History Commission of the local Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Throughout my dissertation, I will not reveal their identities to protect their privacy. I will only discuss our conversations to illustrate my argument.

Interview Questions for Local Cadres

- Who proposed to make [LOCATION NAME] an ethnic autonomous territory (EAT)? Did any upper-level jurisdictions (e.g., provincial or central governments?) try to push or hinder the designation of [LOCATION NAME] autonomous prefecture or county?

- What were the requirements for the designation of EATs? Was there a specific threshold for the percentage of non-Han people in the local population? Was it necessary to obtain sufficient popular support before a district or county requests to be an EAT through its provincial superiors?

- Do you know any districts or counties in this province that sought to become EATs but did not make it? If yes, do you recall why those districts or counties failed to become EATs?

- After the State Council named [LOCATION NAME] an EAT, it took it several months before it officially became one. What were the tasks that [LOCATION NAME] has to accomplish before it held the founding convention?

- Which level of government jurisdictions (e.g., provincial and central governments) is

responsible for the selection, training and promotion of ethnic cadres in your EAT? In general, are there any differences between EAT and non-EATs in this regard? If yes, could you explain these differences?

- How long did it take for [LOCATION NAME] to draft and pass its autonomous regulation? What were the roles of provincial and central governments in the making of the autonomous regulations? Compared with other EATs, how easy was it for [LOCATION NAME] to pass (and revise) its autonomous regulation?

- For you, what does ethnic local autonomy entail? What are the examples that can show [LOCATION NAME] is using its granted autonomous powers?

- In general, do you think [LOCATION NAME] is a "typical" EAT compared with other EATs?

1.8 Appendix II: Notes on Terminology

- Throughout the dissertation, all maps only include mainland China. The maps do not show Hong Kong and Macau – now both the Special Administration Regions (SARs) of the People's Republic of China – and Taiwan.

- For all Chinese names in my dissertation, I place the family name before the given name (e.g., Mao Zedong and Chiang Kai-shek).

- Contrary to Kaup (2000) and others, I have decided to use "ethnic local autonomy" rather than "ethnic regional autonomy" as the English translation for *minzu quyu zizhi*. Because the Chinese government names provincial ethnic autonomous territories (EATs) as "ethnic autonomous regions" (*minzu zizhiqu*), the use of "ethnic regional autonomy" can confuse the readers.

- I use "officials" and "cadres" interchangeably to refer to the Party and government employees in China. Those in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) are not included. I also do not include those working for the commissions for discipline inspection, the People's Court, and the People's Procuratorate. For more discussion about the definition of "cadres," please see Bo (2004b) and Ang (2012).

- I use "municipality" rather than "city" to refer to all *shi* jurisdictions in China. I treat municipality as an administrative unit and city as an urban human settlement.

- I use "district" to refer to the local jurisdictions at the level right below the provinces and directly-governed municipalities. A district-level unit, if not a district (*diqu*), can be a district-level municipality (*dijishi*) or an ethnic autonomous prefecture (*minzu zizhi zhou*).

CHAPTER 2

The Political Logic of Ethnic Local Autonomy in

Post-1949 China

In this chapter, I develop a new theory of ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China. First, I review the existing literatures on authoritarian co-optation and power-sharing, decentralization, and ethnic conflicts and civil wars to explain the need of a new theory to account for some notable, yet unexplained, variations in the granting of ethnic local autonomy in the country. Ethnic local autonomy in China co-opts local non-Han elites into the formal Party-state system through the designation of ethnic autonomous territories (EATs) with titular non-Han leadership and representation in the local government (the local People's Government) and legislature (the local People's Congress). However, it remains unclear why the majority of EATs are present at the district and county levels and why these subprovincial EATs have been the most active jurisdictions in the use of granted autonomous powers. Ethnic local autonomy has also been largely focusing on non-secession-prone non-Han ethnic groups.

I examine the question of ethnic local autonomy from the perspective of authoritarian delegation. Departing from the common views, I argue that post-1949 Chinese ethnic local autonomy serves as an agent control institution. Holding the power to define the substance of ethnic local autonomy, which includes the scope of local legislative power in EATs and the appointments of their ruling cadres, the central leader can curb the agency loss caused by the inner-circle rivals and defiant provincial elites. The central leader will have the incentive to designate ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties strategically to constrain the power

of potentially unruly provincial leaders. The presence of sub-provincial EATs creates a set of enclaves in a province such that the province's ruling elites, including the governor and the provincial Party secretary, have limited control, as some of their subordinates are no longer their perfect agents.

My theory yields several testable hypotheses about EAT designations as well as the intensity of legislative activities and the appointments of ruling cadres in EATs. First, I expect to observe the introduction of ethnic local autonomy when the central leader's dominance is compromised in the Party center. Next, we should see the designation of EATs and their legislative endeavors, especially the making of the autonomous regulations, in the provinces controlled by potentially unruly provincial ruling elites. These tend to be provincial cadres who manage to build an entrenched local elite network while being weakly connected with the central leader. Finally, the empirical analysis should help us discern at least two important differences between the ruling cadres in sub-provincial EATs and those in the non-autonomous counterparts. First, if EATs serve as an institution of agent control, ruling non-Han cadres in ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties, compared with their colleagues in non-autonomous jurisdictions, should be less likely to have connections with their respective provincial leaders before being promoted to the current position. Second, compared with their colleagues in non-EAT jurisdictions, the non-Han ruling elites are also more likely coming from local communities. I will test these hypotheses with original qualitative and quantitative data from post-1949 China, which includes an innovative index of political elite connectedness, as well as a cross-national dataset of inner-circle power dispersion and institutional ethnic accommodation in post-WWII authoritarian regimes.

The theory highlights the distinction between political co-optation and power-sharing in authoritarian regimes. In post-1949 China, ethnic local autonomy co-opts local non-Han elites, but it in fact does not involve the sharing of the central leader's power. If anything, power-sharing takes place at the provincial level. Through EAT designations, which lead to local legislation in EATs and appointments of ruling non-Han cadres, ethnic local autonomy dilutes the power of provincial leaders over their subordinates.

The theory also suggests an under-studied aspect of decentralization. While existing

studies mostly perceive decentralization as the central leader's voluntary decision to give up some of his power, my argument provides more nuances by focusing on the *level* at which decentralization takes place. I find that decentralization can be seen an attempt of the central leader to reorganize the principal-agent relationships between different levels of local jurisdictions.[1] Through ethnic local autonomy, decentralization allows the central leader to complicate the delegation chain at the subnational level, create a group of local agents out of the provincial leader's reach, and undermine the discretion of top local leaders. In this vein, decentralization as an institution of agent control can be seen as a tactic of fire alarm oversight (McCubbins and Schwartz, 1984). The newly empowered non-Han elites have a set of local interests different than their provincial superiors.

My argument echoes Barkan and Chege (1989), who argue that Daniel arap Moi's decentralization through the 1982 reform of "District Focus" in Kenya dismantled his predecessor Jomo Kenyatta's patronage network at the provincial level. Scholars have also noted similar grassroots decentralization that bypasses first-tier subnational jurisdictions in democratic countries (e.g., Pepinsky and Wihardja, 2011; Bohlken, 2016). Moreover, previous studies have identified similar dynamics in which the political leaders delegate to centralize their power in different institutional contexts. Sinclair (1981), in her discussion about various changes in the U.S. House of Representatives during the 1970s, highlights the granting of autonomy to subcommittees from their respective parent committees as one of the key changes that increased the Speaker's leverage.[2] Studies of coalition governments in parliamentary democracies have shown that parties in the ruling coalition can curb the defection of each other by strategically placing their members in the posts of junior ministers and prolonging the legislative review process (Thies, 2001; Martin and Vanberg, 2011). To elucidate the

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[1] Filippov, Ordeshook, and Shvetsova (2004) discuss the interactive dynamics among different levels of subnational jurisdictions in a federal system, but they do not discuss it from the perspective of delegation and multilevel principal-agent relationships in a unitary state like China.

[2] According to the Subcommittee Bill of Rights in 1973, committee members would bid in order of seniority for vacant subcommittee slots and for subcommittee chairmanships, rather than leave them to appointment by the committee chairman. Each subcommittee would have a specified jurisdiction based on which the bills are sent to. Every subcommittee was guaranteed an adequate budget, and the subcommittee chairperson would be able to select all of the committee's staff. See Rohde (1991) for more details.

historical origin of the separation of exectuvie and legislative powers in the United States, Gailmard (2016) posits that the British Empire permitted elected legislatures, which became the founding principle of the Constitution, to check the power of colonial governors, who had grown to defy the throne.[3]

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows. In Section 2.1, I review the relevant literatures to motivate a new theory of ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China, which considers ethnic local autonomy as an institution of agent control via co-opting decentralization. Before I present the full theory in Section 2.3, I explain why delegation and the resulting agency loss can become a serious threat to autocratic survival. In Section 2.4, I outline the plan of empirical analysis in the following chapters.

2.1 Three Faces of Ethnic Local Autonomy

Ethnic local autonomy has attracted immense attention from many different research avenues in comparative politics and international relations. Following from previous studies of authoritarian governance, decentralization, and civil wars, one can characterize ethnic local autonomy in dictatorships as an institution of authoritarian co-optation, an institution of decentralization, or an institution of conflict resolution. In this section, I discuss these three perspectives in turn and explain why ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China warrants a new theory.

2.1.1 Authoritarian Co-optation and Power-sharing

In post-1949 China, ethnic local autonomy empowers local non-Han elites, many of which were long marginalized in the Imperial and Republican Chinese political systems. The designation of ethnic autonomous territories incorporates many non-core ethnic groups into the formal Party-state machine. One can consider ethnic local autonomy an institution of

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[3]In particular, the British empire sought to prevent these colonial governors from stealing and over-reaping political rents, as it would deter financial investment and economic production and even incite riots.

political co-optation.

Political co-optation is prevalent in authoritarian regimes. Although the Soviet demise in the early 1990s once let many expect democratic regimes to dominate the world (Carothers, 2002), authoritarian regimes still account for a significant number of the independent states. In the past decade, researchers have begun to appreciate the fact that many autocrats introduce various political institutions that are common in democratic countries – such as elections, political parties, and representative legislatures (Levitsky and Way, 2002; Gandhi, 2007; Legace and Gandhi, 2015). The presence of these institutions in authoritarian regimes has prompted scholars to understand the factors that drive their introduction and the mechanisms through which they influence authoritarian stability. As shown by Figure 2.1, which is based on the ratings of the Polity IV Project, the post-Cold War Era has seen the rise of anocratic states, which refer to political regimes that combine the democratic and authoritarian institutions.

Figure 2.1: Autocracy and democracy in the world, 1950-2015. Source: Polity IV Project.
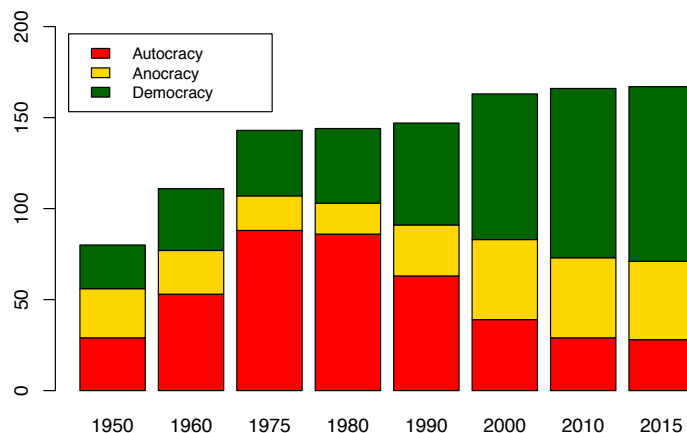
Existing studies have demonstrated many ways through which political institutions sustain an authoritarian regime. Some institutions focus on political co-optation and incorporate previously neglected social segments into the autocrat's ruling coalition. Some focus on power-sharing and reduce the autocrat's absolute control over the power. The institutions of co-optation, such as elections, sustain authoritarian regimes as they prevent protests and the rise of opposition forces while helping to coordinate the distributive allocations of state pa-

tronage among the regime's insiders, including co-opted citizens.(Lust-Okar, 2006; Magaloni, 2006; Gandhi, 2007; Blaydes, 2011).[4] The institutions of authoritarian power-sharing reduce the transaction costs among inner-circle elites and facilitates collective action within the autocrat's ruling circle, thus helping to prevent coups and succession crises (Rosberg, 1995; Magaloni, 2008; Boix and Svolik, 2013).[5] Institutions of co-optation and power-sharing play key roles in authoritarian resilience in the post-Cold War Era (Legace and Gandhi, 2015). Although political co-optation and power-sharing are not equivalent, prior research based on individual regimes or cross-national comparisons has concluded that political institutions that relinquish the autocrat's absolute power and change the composition of the regime's insiders serve to secure their rule.

As cautioned by Pepinsky (2014), researchers have to explain why some autocrats have introduced these institutions while others have not. The literature has identified the presence of a credible threat – rebellion or coup – as the primary factor that compels authoritarian power-sharing and co-optation. More specifically, it has been argued that dictators, to stay in power, will have the incentive to "share" power with those who represent the greatest threat against them. By giving the disgruntled social segments access to government decision-making, power-sharing and co-optation serve to appease threats that can lie either within the autocrat's inner circle or civil society (Gandhi, 2007; Svolik, 2009).[6]

With ethnic local autonomy as a form of institution co-optation in authoritarian regimes, existing accounts fall short of explaining why autocrats introduce local autonomy to ethnic

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[4]Lust-Okar (2006) reckons that elections in Jordan sustain the monarchy as leaders use them to facilitate institutionalized contestation for state patronage among elites. Similarly, Magaloni (2006) suggests that competitive elections in Mexico contribute to the PRI hegemony as electoral victory allowed the PRI to construct the image of invincibility while coordinating intra-party succession and resource allocations. Gandhi (2007) proposes that authoritarian co-optation helps the dictator induce cooperation and compliance from his elite allies and subjects. In Egypt, as argued by Blaydes (2011), "competitive electoral authoritarianism" stabilizes the Mubarak regime as parliamentary elections provided a focal point around which political elites and citizens were able to gain access to state spoils.

[5]Rosberg (1995) argues that Mubarak decided to introduce some judicial independence during his early reign as he sought to uncover the wrongdoings of his allies in the ruling group and detect any plots against him.

[6]Other research on regime transition also maintains a similar view by indicating the threat of popular mobilization as the driving force behind franchise extension and democratization (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2000, 2006; Aidt and Jensen, 2014).

minorities. While many have seen the granting of ethnic local autonomy as the Chinese Communist Party's strategic effort to prevent ethnic uprisings and protect the Chinese nation-state against separatism (e.g., Guan, 2007; Wu, 2014), the majority of EATs in post-1949 are for non-Han groups that have rarely caused any trouble for the Party and the Chinese government in pursuit of independence and secession. Why does the autocrat decide to co-opt non-threatening segments in society? How does the co-optation of these segments alter the power dynamics within the inner circle, which includes the autocrat and other ruling elites in the authoritarian regime?

2.1.2 Decentralization

One can also view the introduction of ethnic local autonomy as an act of decentralization, as it involves the designation of special subnational jurisdictions that enjoy some autonomous powers as defined by the autocrat.

Since the 1980s, decentralization has received a lot of scholarly scrutiny. The World Bank and other international donors have advocated decentralization as a means to invigorate political participation, improve government transparency, bolster policy-making efficiency, and encourage official accountability in developing democracies (e.g. Olken, 2007; Faguet, 2012). Early researchers largely focused on studying and explaining the size of expenditure and fiscal revenues commanded by subnational jurisdictions (Oates, 1999). Later scholars expanded the analytical scope by identifying other varieties of decentralization. In addition to fiscal decentralization, researchers have characterized administrative (or policy) decentralization and political decentralization (Treisman, 2002; Schneider, 2003; Rodden, 2004).

As one of the most popular institutional reforms in recent decades, decentralization has puzzled scholars and policymakers. Some scholars have discussed whether or not decentralization indeed provides all the promised benefits (Treisman, 2007). The acknowledgment of other varieties of decentralization not only urges scholars to clarify their research focus but also encourages more consideration of the "process" of decentralization. In a comparative study of four Latin American states, Falleti (2010) divides decentralization into three inter-

related processes: Administrative, fiscal, and political. She finds that the order to different sorts of decentralization can determine the resulting power balance between central and local governments. Furthermore, when theorizing about the impact of decentralization on aggregate welfare and administrative efficiency, recent work also begins to take the local political process into account. In the end, many are cautioned by the possibilities of rent-seeking and elite capture (Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2006), and the credit-claiming competition between the central and subnational partisan politicians (Nunes, 2014).

As researchers examine the processes and consequences of different varieties of decentralization, many studies ask why political leaders make such decisions to transfer some ruling power to subnational jurisdictions. Many scholars argue that decentralization takes place when the central leader seeks to increase his control over local political forces. Boone (2003) treats decentralization as a state-building strategy for urban-based African politicians to incorporate the countryside into the newly independent post-colonial state. She suggests that the central government will favor decentralization when rural communities are controlled by traditional leaders with autonomous economic resources. Viewing decentralization in a broad vein of indirect rule, Gerring et al. (2011) suggest that the central state will have the incentive to decentralize when "state-like" local political entities command solid leadership and bureaucratic organization at the grassroots level. By imposing indirect rule, the central leader can save the cost of establishing a new state ruling apparatus.

My research on post-1949 Chinese ethnic local autonomy aligns with the second tradition of decentralization literature, as I also seek to understand why the autocrat has the incentive to devolve through ethnic local autonomy. Nonetheless, ethnic local autonomy also presents some notable puzzles. First, existing studies have focused on how the combination of different "types" of decentralization – fiscal, policy, and political – leads to different governance outcomes as well as different interactive dynamics between the central leader and subnational government jurisdictions. Existing studies have also mostly focused on the interaction between the central government and its immediate subordinate local jurisdictions (e.g., the provinces in China, the states in the United States, or the states and union territories in India). Few pay attention to the *level* of subnational jurisdictions at which decentralization

takes place. Ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China raises some important questions in this regard, as the Chinese central leaders have allowed most significant autonomous powers by ethnic autonomous territories *below* the provinces (Shen, 2013). The Post-1949 Chinese ethnic local autonomy is not a unique instance in which the central government focuses most of its decentralization endeavors *below* the first-tier subnational government administration. As highlighted, in the name of "District Focus," Daniel arap Moi in Kenya launched a nationwide decentralization reform below the provinces (Barkan and Chege, 1989). A similar decentralization approach can be found in Indonesia, which took place following the country's democratic transition (Pepinsky and Wihardja, 2011). Why does the central leader decide to target lower-level local jurisdictions? What is the underlying political logic?

Ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China poses another interesting puzzle. As I will show in Chapter 4, under most circumstances, the designation of ethnic autonomous territories took place without a clear demand from local non-Han communities. Eaton (2004) and Smith (2008) hint that the central leader's devolution decision is not always driven by subnational demand. Instead, decentralization can be a deliberate decision for central politicians to overcome the ministerial opposition and other partisan rivals in the central government when they seek to implement their desired policies. Framing political decentralization as "local democratization," Bohlken (2016) argues that community-level elections in India and other developing countries strengthen national and state leaders. These elections help to build local mobilizational networks in small constituencies to collect crucial information about voters' policy preferences.[7] I will extend these studies to the context of authoritarian regimes with the focus on post-1949 China. I will formulate my theory from the view of "providers" of

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[7]Bohlken's (2016) argument counters the conventional wisdom that presumes that local democratization will increase the "autonomy" of political actors at the local level. More importantly, her argument echoes many studies of local elections. Seeking to understand the extension of suffrage in Great Britain back in the 19th century, Lizzeri and Persico (2004) point that political elites in England decided to include local elections as part of political reform because they sought to detect grassroots officials who performed poorly. In the context of Reform China, both Bernstein and Lu (2003) and Birney (2007) study how the introduction of "local democracy" at the village level helps Beijing evaluate the performance of grassroots cadres to improve their performance and prevent their wrongdoings from inciting any collective actions among the villagers. In a recent study of the local people's congress, Manion (2015) stresses the importance of their presence and argues that the members of these local legislatures, other than those placed by the Party to reward and induce the loyal citizens, play an essential role in informing Beijing and upper-level officials of different varieties of local information.

ethnic local autonomy and explain how the designation of ethnic autonomous territories help the central leader secure his power.

2.1.3 Ethnic Conflict Resolution

Many studies have also explored ethnic local autonomy from the perspectives of ethnic conflicts and civil wars, treating ethnic local autonomy as an institution of conflict resolution. In particular, the literature on consociational democracy has discussed the merits of subnational self-rule – usually realized in the form of ethnic local autonomy – and other institutional configurations for defusing ethnic and communal conflicts in highly divided societies in Western Europe (e.g., Lijphart, 1977; Lustick, 1979; McGarry and O'Leary, 2006).[8] Along with power-sharing, proportional representation, and mutual veto, (Lijphart, 1999) includes ethnic local autonomy as one of the fundamental principles of democratic constitutional engineering in ethnically divided societies.

Despite its appeal, many researchers have questioned whether the consociational model can truly encourage cross-group cooperation and preempt conflicts (Horowitz, 1993; Weller and Wolff, 2005). Roeder (2010) contends that ethno-federations and other territorial autonomous institutions can be "self-defeating" because these institutions force political endeavors to be operated based on ethnic cleavages and thereby intensify rather than appease conflicts. Focusing on sub-Saharan Africa, where many central leaders have to decide whether they should include actors from rival ethnic groups in the national government, Roessler (2016) characterizes the strategic trade-off created by any general attempts of power-sharing between different ethnic groups – by sharing power with his rivals from other ethnic groups, the central leader reduces the threats of civil wars. In doing so, the central leader simultaneously increases the risk of coups, as having his ethnic rivals by his side strengthens their political and military clout. The same line of inquiry pushes studies to explore the conditional effectiveness of ethnic local autonomy. Brancati (2009) argues that decentraliza-

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[8]Several studies have also explored the potentials of consociationalism in non-democratic states, especially Malaysia (Mauzy, 1983, 1993).

tion does not necessarily escalate existing ethnic tension. By studying several post-Soviet democracies in Eastern Europe, she concludes that whether this is the case depends on the presence of regional ethnic parties. Using a new cross-national dataset, Cederman et al. (2015) demonstrate that autonomous territories can only reduce conflicts effectively when they were introduced before the conflicts erupt.

I challenge the conventional view that treats ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China solely as an institution that helps to tackle existing and potential tension between the Han and non-Han ethnic groups. As I have stressed, the connection between inter-group tension and the introduction of ethnic local autonomy is shaky in China. The prevalent view is perhaps only based on a few extreme cases, such as Xinjiang and Tibet, which only account for a tiny portion of EATs. Moreover, recent studies also indicate that ethnic local autonomy is often not an ideal means for conflict resolution, as very often its granting can trigger dormant ethnic cleavages and exacerbate current conflicts. To gain a full picture, it is crucial to ask why political leaders, including the autocrats, decide to grant ethnic local autonomy when it is often not the optimal strategy for conflict resolution and national integration, or even do so in the absence of explicit threats of ethnic uprisings.

Classical work on modern state building has discussed why political leaders, aspiring to establish a centralized nation-state, decide to accommodate ethnic cleavages through different varieties of "anti-state institutions" such as self-government, indirect rule, and other special subnational institutions (Tilly, 1975). These "anti-state" institutions tend to appear when "constitutional rupture" – such as the aftermath of armed conflicts and regime change – takes place. Under conditions of great uncertainty and turbulence, the central government is forced to grant special territorial status arrangements as a concession to maintain state integrity. My dissertation seeks to elaborate the notion of "constitutional rupture" by providing a clear explanation for the introduction of ethnic local autonomy under dictatorships – how exactly does "constitutional rupture" prompt the decision to grant autonomy? How can central politicians manage to reach national cohesion and state integrity through ethnic local autonomy?

*   *   *

I have discussed three different views of ethnic local autonomy in the existing literatures and explain why ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China does not completely correspond to any of them. The designation of Chinese ethnic autonomous territories involves the political co-optation of subordinate ethnic groups without an obvious secessionist demand. Moreover, sub-provincial EATs have been the main jurisdictions to exercise the granted local autonomy. Below I will develop a new logic of ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China that helps to explain the questions that remain unexplained by existing theoretical explanations. The corollary of my argument is that the co-optation of subordinate ethnic groups through ethnic local autonomy can help the autocrat combat the dilemma of delegation and agency loss. For this purpose, I will discuss the origin of delegation dilemma and why it can threaten the autocrat's rule in the next section.

2.2   The Autocrat's Dilemma of Delegation

Existing studies of authoritarian governance have highlighted various domestic challenges to the autocrat's survival, such as coups, political succession, economic crises, and mass protests (Herz, 1952; Tullock, 1987). In a broad vein, I argue that the rise of these different challenges and their impact on autocratic survival both pertains to the autocrat's dilemma of delegation.

Delegation is ubiquitous in political and economic organizations. In an organization, the leader can select a group of agents and assign each responsibilities that exploit their expertise while focusing the leader's own attention on other important matters (Kiewiet and McCubbins, 1991; Miller, 2005; Gailmard, 2009). Delegation often acts as a crucial strategy that allows the leader to optimize the organization's performance and sustains its survival. To gain efficiency, larger organizations with a longer lists of objectives often contain more complicated delegation relationships between the organization head – the principal – and the agents.

Autocrats cannot rule their authoritarian regimes alone. Despite his overwhelming dominance and the control over the security forces, autocrats need a group of loyal and competent agents by their sides in the central inner circle to share the burden of policy making. Once policies are made, the autocrats also depend on local agents to implement the policies and other important political decisions, such as political purges and going to wars with other countries.

With delegation an essential instrument of efficient governance, the autocrat suffers the common pitfalls of any delegation relationships between the principal and his agents. When delegating to his agents, in particular, the autocrat is usually at informational disadvantage relative to his agents. When selecting his agents, the autocrat may not have the complete understandings of their agents to infer their future behaviors accurately. Once the agents are dispatched, the autocrat once again faces the challenge of monitoring his agents, who often have the incentive to shirk their assigned duties. The loss caused by the agents' defection is known as *agency loss*. While the same issues can trouble the leaders of democratic states, the delegation dilemma can be exceptionally acute here because authoritarian regimes are usually fraught with an opaque information environment (Wintrobe, 1998). Delegation thus creates a dilemma for the autocrats. If left unattended, agency loss can grow to hinder effective governance severely and threatens the autocrat's political survival.

In general, the autocrat encounters two types of agents. The first group of agents are those who constitute the regime's ruling circle with him. While the exact size of the inner circle varies by the types of authoritarian regimes,[9] those who are present in the circle along with the autocrat are critical, as they are the autocrat's most immediate threats. The autocrat has to attempt all possible means to prevent these other inner-circle members from staging coups to replace him. In non-personalist authoritarian regimes, others in the ruling circle

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[9]The group "inner circle" here is very similar to the concept of "winning coalition" formulated by Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2002). The only difference here is the winning coalition does not include the autocrat himself. Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2002) develop a formal model that identifies the difference between the selectorate and winning coalition in the population. The selectorate is the population segment that contains everyone that has a say in selecting the autocrat while the winning coalition includes those whose support is essential for the autocrat's survival. Their model sheds light on how the distributive allocation of a variety of public and private goods, which depends on the relative sizes of selectorate and winning coalition, maintains the autocrat's hold over his winning coalition.

are also the autocrat's crucial allies because ruling requires the autocrat to form a relatively collaborative relationships with them. Very often, the autocrat has to put each inner-circle member in charge of a specific policy or political task (Gregory, 2009; Egorov and Sonin, 2011), thus turning these inner-circle members into the autocrat's agents.[10] The autocrat has to overcome his informational disadvantage, searching for effective means to stay informed about these inner-circle agents' behaviors. In the context of China, the principal-agent relationship between the central leader and other Politburo members can be exemplified by the fact that Politburo members are often in charge of some important departments and ministries in the Party and the State Council. Several ministries and offices in the State Council then directly control their subnational counterparts without going through the provincial governments (Mertha, 2005).

Outside the inner circle, the autocrat needs a group of agents on the ground to implement his policy and political decisions. He thus once again faces the similar challenges of monitoring these local agents, who play a critical role as their success or failure to comply with the autocrat's commands can influence the autocrat's ruling position. Existing studies of Chinese political economy have noted the disasters brought by the central government's failure. The most classic example is the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962), during which many died of hunger as local cadres, especially those aspiring for political promotions (Kung and Chen, 2011), submitted false information about crop yields to Beijing. In Reform China, researchers have discussed a variety of means through which the central government seeks to monitor and discipline local officials while giving them some discretion to carry out the market reform and other policy initiates (e.g., Zhan, 2006; Birney, 2007; Landry, 2008; Sheng, 2010). Under policy and fiscal decentralization, existing studies have focused on the prevalence of official corruption, which has caused grievances among the Chinese citizens

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[10]The autocrat often faces the competence-loyalty dilemma when selecting his agents in the central ruling circle (Egorov and Sonin, 2011). While the autocrat hopes to recruit competent agents to work for him, he is also concerned that these competent agents may become too powerful and seek to replace him. Therefore, researchers have argued that the autocrat will strategically focus on choosing loyal agents, even if recruiting them may lead to the reduction in the quality of governance, when the autocrat's power remains unconsolidated. In a recent paper, Landry, Lu, and Duan (2018) find that the Chinese government appears to select sub-provincial officials based on their performance while naming provincial officials based on their demonstrated loyalty to the central leader.

and poor infrastructure quality, and discuss its origin and possible measures to curb local rent-seeking, so as to protect the Party's ruling legitimacy (e.g., Lu, 2000; Manion, 2004; Cai, 2015). In the case of the Soviet Union, Gregory (2009) draws from the official archives and provides a thorough discussion about the Soviet Communist Party's internal security branch. He finds that Stalin appeared to minimize agency loss in the Party's security system by reducing the number of agents who involved in carrying out his orders of political purges and meeting these agents in person regularly. In a recent study of local electoral fraud in the post-Soviet Russian Federation, Rundlett and Svolik (2016) theorize the variation in the magnitude of vote inflation, in which they highlight the regional official agents' own rationale to exaggerate Putin's support without Moscow's explicit order.

While the inner-circle and local agents each present the autocrat their own agency problems, the autocrat's dominance will be in even greater danger when these two groups of agents are motivated and able to conspire to undermine him. Under such circumstances, the autocrat will be at a major disadvantage as the resulting alliance between defiant central and local agents can exacerbate the agency problem created by each group of agents and leads to the autocrat's downfall. Without a regular and credible means of leadership turnover, the autocrat usually faces a higher stake of survival than do leaders in democratic states, as losing power often leads to the loss of freedom and even life (Cox, 2009; Geddes, Wright, and Frantz, 2014). Compared with democratic leaders, autocrats perhaps have stronger incentives to combat agency loss incurred during the delegation process.

2.3   Ethnic Local Autonomy as an Institution of Agent Control

I have established that ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China is essentially a political institution of decentralization that involves the political co-optation of local non-Han elite. Ethnic local autonomy has nonetheless presented a number of puzzles that cannot be fully explained by the existing literature. For one thing, the designation of ethnic autonomous territories (EATs) has largely targeted segments in society that do not impose any immediate threats to the autocrat. The timing for the introduction and revival of ethnic local autonomy

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in China also does not align well with the presence of several notable ethnic uprisings, such as the Hui uprisings in the late 1950s (see Dillon, 1999), the 1959 Lhasa Riots in Tibet (see Goldstein, 1997), and the 1962 Yita (Yining) Incident in Xinjiang (see Bovingdon, 2010).[11] More crucially, previous studies have overlooked the fact that both EAT designations as well as the use of the granted autonomous powers have mostly taken place below the provincial level. These important, yet neglected, details warrant a new explanation. In this section, I will develop my main argument, which considers ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China largely serves as an institution that helps the central leader tackle critical agency problems. I end this section by deriving the hypotheses. I will test them with a variety of original qualitative and quantitative data in the subsequent chapters.

2.3.1   The Argument

China's immense territory has prompted its rulers to devise different efficient delegation relationships with their agents within and outside the central government. The agents in the central government, with their regular daily interactions with the ruler, play a critical role in assisting the ruler with policy making based on an accurate understanding about the economic and political situations in the country. Those at the local level, many of whom the ruler cannot reach on a daily basis, are responsible for carrying out the ruler's policies at the grassroots level. The ruler counts on these local agents for their first-hand information on the ground so he can devise timely and proper policy and political responses.

The literature on the history of Chinese political institutions has thus paid particular attention to two interrelated developments – one examines the changes in the organization of the central bureaucracy and another highlighting the evolution of the hierarchy of the subnational government administration (e.g., Zhou, 2014; Chung, 2016b). To secure their rule, it is very important that the Chinese leaders can optimize the delegation chain so they can overcome different varieties of informational constraints to select dependable agents and

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[11]If any, these riots took place as Beijing revoked its promised local autonomy and other preferential treatments for non-Han groups that allow them to practice their religion.

monitor their performance once delegation takes place. Imperial and Republican China were both filled with examples in which influential local warlords and economic elites rose to defy, depose, and replace central rulers. During the early Imperial era, China saw the transition from the feudal system – through which the ruler governed local jurisdictions through independent feudal kings – to the central court's direct control.[12] The emperors in the later dynasties, moreover, also managed to monopolize ruling power within the central court.

The post-1949 Chinese regime is no exception. Like its predecessors, the Chinese Communist Party struggled to restore the political order upon claiming its victory in the Civil War.[13] After many years of foreign invasion and civil wars in the early 20th century had eroded the central government's ruling capacity (Harding, 1981), on the one hand, the Party had to rebuild the national administration in order to resume resource mobilization and extraction. On the other hand, the Party also had to create its grassroots presence through local state building as many parts of the country had been KMT strongholds (Koss, 2018).

It is important to note that the Party introduced ethnic local autonomy under such precarious circumstances. The revival of ethnic local autonomy in the early 1980s corresponded to a similar political situation, as Beijing sought to recover from the Cultural Revolution with a new central leadership (Baum, 1994; Yang, 2004b). While many studies of the Chinese market reform note the introduction of fiscal and policy decentralization in the 1980s and the following decades (e.g., Li, 1998; Oi, 1999; Lin and Liu, 2000; Liu, Shih, and Zhang, 2018), many assert the leading position of the central government (Treisman, 2002). Remick (2004) also points out the similarity between the period of the 1980s and the Nationalist Government in Nanjing as the central leader sought to rebuild his grassroots grasp through local state building. Why does the introduction of ethnic local autonomy tend to occur when the central state is weak? If ethnic local autonomy is part of the central government's attempt to rebuild its supremacy, how does it work?

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[12]Please see **Chapter 7**.

[13]In 1949, Chiang Kai-shek, following his defeat in the Chinese Civil War, relocated the KMT government to Taiwan.

Departing from existing studies, I propose that the central leader introduces ethnic local autonomy as an institution of agent control when he undertakes the task of power consolidation. The designation of ethnic autonomous territories allows the autocrat to establish his dominance over top local leaders in the presence of divided central leadership.

Leaders of authoritarian regimes are constantly under threats, which can both stem from the leader's lack of control over their inner-circle and local agents (Tullock, 1987; Svolik, 2012). The autocrat's rivals can undermine the leader's ruling position in the regime by concealing information about any actions against the autocrat. Military coups are perhaps the best example. The autocrat's rivals in the ruling group can also cause an even greater threat to his political survival because these rivals can impede then autocrat's delegation attempts both within and outside the inner circle – either by colluding with other agents appointed by autocrat or, perhaps even worse, by interfering with the selection process and forcing the autocrat to rely on problematic agents for the making of major policy and political decisions as well as their implementation.

Unable to contain his rivals in the ruling circle or fully trust his agents, the autocrat has to seek a new pool of agents. The autocrat can mobilize any identity affiliations, including the dormant ones, to carve out a new group from the general public. But this is far from enough, as the autocrat has to consider the possibility that the new agents end up colluding with his inner circle rivals as in the case of his existing agents. As a result, the autocrat will also have the incentive to increase coordination costs between new agents and existing ones, many of whom can be already in close contacts or have already formed an alliance with the autocrat's rivals.

Marginalized groups are prime candidates for such purposes. Granting local autonomy to politically peripheral ethnic groups is in particular attractive for several reasons. Ethnic identities often provide useful information heuristics for individual decision-making (Posner, 2005; Birnir, 2007; Hale, 2008). With a common ethnic identity, a group of individuals can quickly understand the shared norms and objectives among them, thus reducing the transaction costs among actors and facilitating collective action. Recent studies have suggested that ethnic diversity can undermine local public good provision because distinct group identities

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impede cooperation and coordination (e.g., Habyarimana et al., 2009). Therefore, by designating EATs and putting local non-Han elites in charge, the leader can reduce the concern of future inter-agent collusion. Ethnic local autonomy helps to prevent the autocrat's rivals from taking further steps to build their own political forces, thus alleviating the concern of moral hazard once grassroots delegation takes place (Kiewiet and McCubbins, 1991).

Because ethnic local autonomy allows the autocrat to curb the coordination among different groups of agents, the autocrat can then undermine the power of strong local elites, whose untamed political ambition can encourage them to build an entrenched subnational political force with their subordinates and ally with the autocrat's inner circle rivals. Through EAT designations, the autocrats turn the newly named jurisdictions into challengers for recalcitrant local agents and thereby hinder the emergence or expansion of their local power base.

2.3.2 Hypotheses

The argument I have developed above leads to a number of testable implications. These implications are consistent with the observations about when and where the Chinese central leader will grant ethnic local autonomy. They also align with the observed variation in the use of ethnic autonomous powers across different ethnic autonomous territories. These implications help us understand how ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China contributes to state building and national integration.

In the Chinese context, first, the central leader – the formal head of the Chinese Communist Party – will have the incentive to introduce ethnic local autonomy when he faces a divided Party inner circle. More specifically, *I expect to observe the designation of ethnic autonomous territories when the Politburo is divided or fragmented.*

Next, if ethnic local autonomy indeed allows the central leader to address the loss caused by unruly agents, the central leader will name ethnic autonomous territories in provinces under the control of recalcitrant elites. In a political regime in which interpersonal ties play a crucial role in facilitating trust and information exchanges (Pye, 1995; Guo, 2001; Bian,

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2018), *it follows that the central leader in China will name ethnic autonomous territories in provinces where their ruling elites are closely connected with each other while holding relatively weak ties with the central leader.* In other words, the designation of ethnic autonomous territories tends to occur in provinces with a self-contained network of local elites, as such a network will make it more difficult for the central leader to obtain the key information about their actions and performance on the ground.

Figure 2.2 shows how the chain of delegation between the central leader and his local agents changes when the central leader designates ethnic autonomous territories. The first part of the delegation chain takes place between the central leader and all provincial elites, including those leading ethnic autonomous regions, who report directly to the central leader. Next, when there exist no ethnic autonomous jurisdictions, those below the provincial jurisdictions (i.e., districts and counties) are the agents of their respective provincial leaders. Provincial leaders thus have two different roles in the delegation chain – they are both the agents of the central leader and the principals of their district and county subordinates. While such a multilevel delegation chain allows for organizational efficiency, the central leader risks his provincial agents building an insulated local elite network together with their district and county subordinates.

Figure 2.2: Delegation chain from the central to subnational jurisdictions in China.
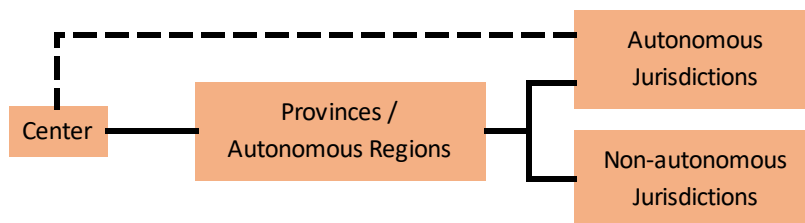
However, when ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties are present, the delegation dynamics becomes more complicated. As the central leader holds the absolute power to define the content of ethnic local autonomy and name ethnic autonomous jurisdictions, the ruling non-Han cadres of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties are no longer accountable only to their provincial superiors. These non-Han cadres, as in the case of their

provincial superiors, now also have two roles in the delegation chain, as they report to the central leader and to his possibly disloyal provincial agents. The change here suggests a key fact neglected by nearly every previous study of post-1949 Chinese ethnic local autonomy except for a few (e.g., Shen, 2013) – as a political institution of co-opting decentralization, ethnic local autonomy alters the principal-agent relationship among the central leader's direct and indirect agents *within* a province. Meanwhile, with their unique subnational legislative powers, *we should also expect to see more legislative activities from the local People's Congress in a subprovincial EAT when their provincial superiors are untrustworthy in the eyes of the central leader.*

With the designation of ethnic autonomous territories, the central leader exploits the group boundary between the Han and non-Han groups to curb undisciplined collusion between provincial and sub-provincial ruling cadres. The central leader assures himself that offering ethnic local autonomy at the sub-provincial level would not end up strengthening the Han provincial leaders' the leverage against him. Therefore, *we should observe that, compared with their colleagues in non-autonomous districts and counties, the ruling cadres in ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties should be largely unconnected to the provincial leaders.*

2.4   Conclusion: Plan of Empirical Tests

Having derived the hypotheses, I will test them with a variety of quantitative and qualitative evidence in the subsequent chapters. The empirical analysis includes three parts.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I draw from archival research and elite interviews to unpack EAT designations in post-1949 China. The primary objective of archival research and elite interviews is to delineate the process through which a local jurisdiction – especially districts and counties – becomes an ethnic autonomous territory. Using the acquired information, I will identify the key actors other than the central government in the designation process and how Beijing interact with provincial leaders and local non-Han communities when it proposes to

grant ethnic local autonomy in a province.

In Chapter 5, I construct an innovative index of Chinese political elite connectedness base on different tools of supervised machine learning and network sciences. In Chapter 6, I apply these indices, which allow us to measure the connectedness between and among central and local Chinese political elites, to study the designation of ethnic autonomous territories between 1949 and 2003. To study the mechanisms through which ethnic local autonomy allows the central leader to check provincial leaders' power, I assemble a dataset of local legislation and ruling cadres in EATs to study the variation in the frequency of legislative activities in the local people's congress of EATs, as well as the connection between non-Han cadres and their respective provincial superiors.

In Chapter 7, I explore the comparative implications of the proposed theory by moving the analytical focus beyond post-1949 Chinese ethnic local autonomy. First, I discuss two well-known historical cases of multilevel delegation and the central ruler's pursuit of political centralization in Imperial and Republican China. These two cases demonstrate how my theory can be generalized to other similar decentralization reforms that help the central ruler stretch his power to the grassroots level while containing connected ambitious inner circle rivals and unruly top local elites. Next, building on the theory of ethnic local autonomy I have developed here, I build a formal model of institutional ethnic accommodation and test the statistical association between inner-circle power dispersion and the granting of regional autonomy and other similar institutions (e.g., ethno-federation) in post-WWII authoritarian regimes.

CHAPTER 3

Ethnic Local Autonomy in Contemporary China

Throughout history, military conflicts, economic exchanges, and migrations have all contributed to the building of the Chinese nation, in which the "Han" people constitute the largest and most politically dominant ethnic group in the contemporary era. The dynamic construction of the Han identity has made the governance of non-ruling ethnic and racial groups a crucial task for all Chinese political leaders, as they seek to maintain the central state's authority while ensuring state integrity (Dreyer, 1976; Hoston, 1994; Shin, 2006).

Before the Imperial Era came to an end, two imperial dynasties were brought by the domination of non-Han groups. The Yuan Dynasty (1271-1386), which controlled all of modern-day China plus today's Mongolia, was one of the four khanates of the Mongol Empire (1206-1368). Founded by Kublai, one of Genghis Khan's grandsons, the Yuan court created four racial or ethnic categories to divide its subjects, including the Han people.[1] The Qing Dynasty (1636-1912), founded by the Manchurian people from Northeastern China, was the second non-Han court and the last imperial dynasty in Chinese history.[2] Before its downfall, the Qing Dynasty managed to establish control over more lands than any of its predecessors did, including Xinjiang and Mongolia. Mongolia was divided into Outer and Inner Mongolia with the latter under the court's direct rule. In 1884, the Qing court turned Xinjiang into

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[1]In the mid-14th century, Zhu Yuanzhang overthrew the Yuan court through peasant revolution and created the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Following the demise of the Yuan court, the Mongol Empire disintegrated into different small tribes.

[2]In 1616, Nurhaci, the leader of Jianzhen Manchu, unified all Manchurian tribes and established the Later Jing in today's Liaoning Province. In 1618, the Later Jing rebelled against the Ming court, citing the Ming court's atrocities against the ancestors of the Manchu people. Before conquering the Ming court, the Later Jing also defeated the Chahars, the largest Mongolian tribe while obtaining control over most of the small Mongolian tribes across today's Inner Mongolia.

a province. The Qing court established indirect rule in other non-Han areas, allowing the leaders of the titular groups to rule their territories so long as they pledged their allegiance to the Qing Dynasty in Beijing.

In this chapter, I trace the origin of ethnic local autonomy in contemporary China and the history of the Chinese government's policies toward non-Han ethnic groups after the Communist takeover in 1949. Before coming to power, the Chinese Communist Party had considered several solutions to govern ethnic diversity in the country. Starting with the Soviet model of self-determination in the 1920s, the Party moved to ethnic local autonomy upon the eruption of the Anti-Japanese War in 1937. After 1949, Beijing' policies toward non-Han groups have experienced several swift changes between tolerant accommodation and forced assimilation. While the end of the Cultural Revolution led to the revival and expansion of ethnic local autonomy in the 1980s, the Chinese government's ethnic policies move toward the paradigm of patronage after Jiang Zemin consolidated his rule in 1992. Following the new paradigm, Beijing focuses on delivering different varieties of special economic assistance to ethnic autonomous territories (EATs) as the means to achieve cultural assimilation and national integration.

Next, in Section 3, I provide a descriptive analysis of post-1949 Chinese EATs. The descriptive analysis here yields some notable, yet unexplored, patterns that are consistent with my primary theoretical claims. First, the scope of ethnic local autonomy, illustrated by the designation of EATs, has varied significantly in post-1949 China. Its fluctuation appears to coincide with the presence of a fragmented Party center, in which the Party head faces powerful inner-circle rivals in the Politburo. Also, ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties have constituted the majority of EATs in China. Perhaps more importantly, as I show in Section 4, ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties also have been the active EATs in exercising the granted local autonomy. After the National People's Congress passed the Law on Ethnic Local Autonomy (LELA) in 1984, most ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties have passed and revised their autonomous regulations as promised by Beijing. In contrast, the central government has blocked every legislating attempt by ethnic autonomous regions, including Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Ningxia, Guangxi, and Tibet. The difference

between autonomous and non-autonomous provincial jurisdictions thus becomes trivial, as they have been operating in a very similar way (Shen, 2013).

The historical review and descriptive analysis of ethnic local autonomy both suggest that common explanations are incomplete, as existing studies have overlooked several vital temporal and spatial variations in the introduction of ethnic local autonomy and its implementation in the country. I depart from the existing accounts by arguing that ethnic local autonomy, as exemplified by ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties, creates enclaves in which provincial leaders only enjoy limited control. Even after the central government started to delegate the subnational personnel power to provincial leaders in the early 1980s (Kou, 2005), the appointments of non-Han ruling elites in EATs remain subject to additional laws and regulations imposed by the central government (Liu, 2009; Sun, 2012).

3.1 Ethnic Local Autonomy: A Historical Review

In this section, I review the history of institutional and policy arrangements toward ethnic minorities in contemporary China. I delineate how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has changed the guiding principles of its policies toward non-Han ethnic groups since its founding in 1921. At first, the Party followed the Soviet model and proposed non-Han minorities the opportunity of self-determination. After the Long March (1934-1936) and the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945), the Party no longer considered self-determination a viable option if it wanted to maintain the cohesion of the nascent Chinese nation-state, and replaced it with self-rule, which was later revised once again into the offer of ethnic local autonomy.

In the early 1950s, the Chinese government officially identified different non-Han ethnic groups across the country while designating ethnic autonomous territories (EATs) at different levels of subnational jurisdictions. The granted autonomy provides non-Han minorities with the rights to enjoy titular group leadership and representation in local administrative and legislative bodies, to use indigenous languages for public services and school curricula, and to maintain traditional socioeconomic and religious customs. However, starting from the

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late 1950s, Mao Zedong and the Party began to revoke previous policy and institutional concessions for ethnic minorities. Following the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962), Beijing initiated a series of assimilation attempts, which culminated in the complete suspension of ethnic autonomous territories during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). It was not until the late 1970s that the Center restored local autonomy for ethnic minorities. In 1984, the National People's Congress passed the Law on Ethnic Local Autonomy (LELA), which was once under Beijing's consideration in the 1950s. Starting from the 1990s, Chinese ethnic policies took another turn, as Beijing gradually undermined EATs' self-rule and highlighted them more as the targets of various development assistance programs.

3.1.1   1921-1949: From Self-determination to Ethnic Local Autonomy

In 1911, the Wuchang Uprising led to the end of the Qing Dynasty and the dawn of the Republican Era. The following two decades saw constant alternation of the central state power among different warlords. After the Nationalists (KMT) completed the Northern Expedition in the late 1920s, the growing conflicts between the KMT – the revolutionary party leading the 1911 Uprising – and the Chinese Communist Party led to the first Chinese Civil War (1927-1937).[3] While the two parties briefly ceased fire during the Anti-Japanese War, the tension between Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong eventually escalated into total armed conflicts in 1946. Three years later, the Civil War ended with the CCP's victory and the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

In 1921, the Party's founding fathers had given careful consideration about the political status of non-Han nationalities in their ideal Chinese political system. While the KMT embraced the notion of "Five Races Under One Union," which asserted all ethnic groups

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[3]Following the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, the central government of China was first in the hands of Yuan Shikai and other warlords. Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) and the KMT, the revolutionary party that led the revolution against the Qing court, moved to Guangdong. By forming the United Front with the CCP in 1923, the KMT launched the Northern Expedition in 1926. Under the commands of Chiang Kai-shek, the KMT defeated or managed to co-opt different rival warlords, and nominally unified the entire country in the late 1920s. Before the Expedition ended in 1928, Chiang began to prosecute CCP members. The central government before 1928 is usually known as the *Beiyang* Government (Yuan Shikai commanded the *Beiyang* New Army created by the late Qing court). The central government after the KMT's victory is known as the *Guomin* (or Nationalist) Government. See Meisner (1999) and Chen (2002) for details.

in China should stand together to bring social harmony and political stability, the CCP, inspired by the Soviet nationality policies put forward Vladimir Lenin, contended that non-Han ethnicities are entitled to the rights of self-determination. As the Party declared in 1922, non-Han ethnic groups may choose to secede from China and build their independent nation-states. If a non-Han group decided to remain in the country, the Party would create a Chinese ethno-federation, in which Mongolia, Tibet, and Hui-Jiang (i.e., the Hui and the Uyghur people) were all the "autonomous federal states."

The CCP's ethnic policies changed considerably in the following two decades, as the Party leaders realized that self-determination would lead to the disintegration of the newly established Chinese nation-state. During the Long March (1934-1936), the CCP cadres built direct encounters with non-Han groups in Southwestern and Northwestern China on their way to Yan'an. At the Zunyi Conference of January 1935, in which Mao Zedong reached his ruling position in the Party center, Mao and others openly endorsed the designation of "autonomous government administration in ethnic minority areas." In October 1936, the CCP issued "the Declaration of the Hui People" and built two ethnic autonomous governments for the Hui people, the largest Chinese Muslim group, in Gansu and Ningxia. These two ethnic autonomous governments marked the official advent of ethnic local autonomy in contemporary China. During his time in Yan'an, Mao began to systematically recruit local non-Han elites into the Party to build the United Front between the CCP and local non-Han communities.[4] Mao also assembled a team of Han and non-Han cadres to research the Party's policies toward non-Han ethnic groups in China.[5] In 1937, the CCP created a formal committee on ethnic policies, which was the precedent of the State Nationality Affairs Commission after 1949.

After the Anti-Japanese War broke out, the CCP called for a meeting of the 6th Central Committee in January 1938. Drawing from their experiences with the Hui people, Mao and

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[4]To win their trust and support, the CCP promised local Muslim communities religious freedom in addition to political equality between the Han and the Hui people.

[5]The team included Zhou Enlai and Li Weihan. After 1949, Zhou became the Premier of the State Council while Li served the Minister of United Front. Available historical records show Li was one of the cadres that proposed ethnic local autonomy to Mao.

other leading cadres concluded that the Party's earlier proposal of self-determination would only undermine the integrity of the Chinese nation-state. The Central Committee decided to replace self-determination with "self-rule" (*zizhi*), which promised ethnic minorities the autonomy of local governance while precluding any right to seek secession and independence (see Birnbaum, 1970; Liu, 2004).[6] In May 1941, the Party issued "the Political Outline of Shaanxi, Gansu, and Ningxia." In the Outline, the Party stressed its plan to increase the number of ethnic autonomous territories for the Hui and Mongolian people in these provinces; in the same year, Mao established a special Party school to train non-Han minority cadres and placed Ulanhu in charge.[7] Upon the end of the Anti-Japanese War, the Party reaffirmed the Party's determination to offer non-Han ethnic groups the rights of self-rule through ethnic local autonomy in "the Outline of Peaceful State Building" (1946).[8]

The Party's transition to ethnic local autonomy from self-rule is another milestone in its policies toward non-Han ethnic groups, as it has critical implications for nation-building. With the promise of ethnic local autonomy, the Party now did not offer local autonomy to a non-Han group as a whole. Instead, local autonomy would be granted to selected local jurisdictions, where the Party could locate a cluster of non-Han minorities. Since 1949, the Chinese government has designated many separate ethnic autonomous territories for the same group across different parts of the country in different years. In this vein, ethnic local

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[6]While the Zunyi Conference established his command within the Party, Mao Zedong's power remained unconsolidated when Mao proposed the need for ethnic local autonomy (see Guo, 1982). First, he could only control some branches of the Red Army, with another major branch under the command of Zhang Guotao. Meanwhile, when he reached Gansu and later Shaanxi, the Party organization there was also highly fragmented. The introduction of ethnic local autonomy, in this vein, coincided with Mao's pursuit of power consolidation. During the Anti-Japanese War, the Party created more ethnic autonomous territories. Notably, many of them were outside Yan'an, Mao's stronghold, and were located in areas controlled by Mao's rivals, including the internationalist cadres like Wang Ming and Qing Bangxian in the Yangtze Bureau.

[7]Following the 1938 meeting, Mao recruited Ulanhu, a Mongolian cadre who was studying in Moscow then, into the committee on ethnic policies and extended ethnic local autonomy to the Mongolian people. See Wang (2007).

[8]The same year also saw the rise of an independence movement in Inner Mongolia that sought to join Outer and Inner Mongolia as a unified Mongolian nation-state. However, the independence movement soon came to a halt as both the USSR and the CCP explicitly opposed their unification. In October 1945, Mao dispatched Ulanhu to convince the supporters of the Mongolian independent movement that Inner Mongolia should remain within China as an ethnic autonomous region. In 1946, the CCP issued "the Declaration of Mongolian People," announcing the plan to create the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region (IMAR). The IMAR was officially created in April 1947.

autonomy in post-1949 China, as in the case of its Soviet counterpart (Brubaker, 1996), alters the nature of ethnic identities as these identities are intertwined with regional identities. In other words, ethnic local autonomy incorporates individuals' territorial affinities into their ethnicities, making political identities as the joint product of both in China. For instance, the Miao people in Southwestern China do not consider themselves as a cohesive Miao group. Instead, the Miao identity is defined together with individuals' respective "homelands" in Guizhou, Sichuan, Chongqing, Hunan, Yunnan, and other provinces. Kaup (2002) has also noticed a similar pattern for the Zhuang people, who can be found in Guangxi and other neighboring provinces.[9]

3.1.2   1949-1966: Initial Attempts of Accommodation

Upon its victory in the Civil War, the Chinese Communist Party reaffirmed ethnic local autonomy as the core for its policies toward non-Han nationalities. Between 1949 and 1954, the central government organized multiple attempts of ethnic identification (*minzu shibie*) while designating ethnic autonomous territories (EATs) across the country.[10] Before 1954, these ethnic autonomous territories could be present at any level of subnational government administration, from provinces to townships.[11] After the National People's Congress rati-

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[9]That said, since the late 1980s, the Miao elites across different provinces have started organizing to strengthen the links between different local Miao communities. They created a nationwide "Miao Research Association." Each year, the Miao Research Association holds a meeting in a Miao autonomous territory.

[10]Beijing dispatched several research teams to non-Han areas of the country. Constituted by government officials, anthropologists, linguists, historians, and sociologists, these research teams sought to identify distinct non-Han groups so that Beijing could determine the official list of non-Han ethnicities in the country. See Mullaney (2011) for the details about the identification process.

[11]All EATs designated before 1954 were called *ethnic autonomous areas*, or *zizhi qu* in Chinese. The Party did not make any distinctions between EATs across different levels of local jurisdictions at all. By June 1952, Beijing had designated 130 ethnic autonomous areas. Beijing later reported its early experiences in the 1952 "General Program on the Implementation of Ethnic Regional Autonomy" and the 1953 "Basic Summary of the Experiences on the Promotion of Ethnic Regional Autonomy." The General Program listed the following powers for ethnic autonomous areas. In particular, designated non-Han groups in autonomous areas have the right to (1) determine the organizational form of the autonomous government, (2) determine their written language(s) for government administration, (3) use their languages for education, (4) recruit and train non-Han cadres, (5) set the pace of social reform (e.g., land redistribution and agricultural collectivization), (6) manage their government finances, (7) develop indigenous cultural, education, art, and public health institutes, (8) organize their public security forces, and (9) formulate separate regulations.

fied the first Chinese Constitution in 1954, the central government restructured ethnic local autonomy in the country by only allowing EATs at the top three tiers of subnational jurisdictions: ethnic autonomous regions (*zizhi qu*), ethnic autonomous prefectures (*zizhi zhou*), and ethnic autonomous counties (*zizhi xian*).[12]

In an EAT, ethnic local autonomy can be granted to one or more non-Han ethnic groups. According to the 1954 Constitution, non-Han ethnic groups with granted local autonomy enjoy titular group leadership and representation in local administrative and legislative bodies (i.e., the People's Government and the People's Congress), use indigenous languages for public services and school curricula, and maintain their traditional socioeconomic and religious customs through local legislation.[13] In the same decade, moreover, when the Party introduced land reform and other socialist programs, which were often carried out with the use of violence, Beijing often required Han cadres in EATs to carry out these socialist initiatives in a "democratic" manner by taking into account the distinct traditional customs and socioeconomic systems of local non-Han communities (see Birnbaum, 1970; Guo, 2008; Hao and Bao, 2010). As a result, land redistribution and the formation of agricultural cooperatives (the precursors of people's communes) were either postponed or introduced as optional for local non-Han residents in EATs.

While the first decade of the PRC saw Mao and the Party's accommodation of ethnic diversity, the Chinese government's policies toward non-Han groups took a radical turn in the late 1950s (see Schwartz, 1973). In the early 1950s, when addressing the government's ethnic policies, Mao always emphasized the need to respect the local autonomy granted to non-Han

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[12]In Inner Mongolia, ethnic autonomous counties are named as *qi* based on the traditional Mongolian administrative system. After the National People's Congress ratified the 1954 Constitution, the Chinese government suspended all ethnic autonomous townships created before 1954; some of them were merged to form ethnic autonomous counties. Meanwhile, Beijing continued to identify more non-Han minorities within China and designated new ethnic autonomous territories across the country. In 1955, the central government turned the province of Xinjiang into the Uyghur Autonomous Region. In 1958, Beijing named Ningxia as the Hui Autonomous Region and Guangxi as the Zhuang Autonomous Region.

[13]In post-1949 China, ethnic autonomous territories for decades were the only local jurisdictions with the power to formulate and pass their own regulations. It was not until the early 1980s that non-autonomous provincial governments were granted local legislative power, which was later extended to selected non-autonomous municipalities. However, non-autonomous local governments can only formulate regulations on a limited range of policy issues, such as trade and foreign investment. At the county level, to this day ethnic autonomous counties remain the only county jurisdictions with local legislative power. See Shen (2013).

groups and the need to eradicate the greater Han chauvinism and discrimination against the non-Han groups. However, starting from the mid-1950s, Mao began to hint that China was in danger of "local nationalism," in the non-Han areas. To prevent the country from disintegrating, Mao launched the Anti-Rightist Movement in the following year. During the Movement, the Party issued the "Guideline for the Promotion of the Anti-Rightist Movement and Socialism Education Programs to Ethnic Minorities," cautioning that the measures of ethnic accommodation and the designation of EATs were potentially counterproductive as they hardened the differences between Han and non-Han groups. As a result, the Party should consider suspending any special treatments to the Chinese citizens of non-Han groups. People's Communes were thus forced upon ethnic autonomous territories when the Great Leap Forward (GLF) started in 1958. Many non-Han cadres in EATs were also criticized and removed from their Party and government posts as they were "the reactionary elements" for being the "local ethnic nationalists."[14]

After "three difficult years," the Chinese government ended the GLF in 1961. As the Party leaders sought to recover from the political and economic turmoil, Beijing resumed its policies ethnic accommodation while reinstating local non-Han cadres' posts. However, as the tension escalated between Mao, who sought to reclaim his prominence in the Party center, and Liu Shaoqi, who wished to focus on the government's tasks of social and economic recovery, China's nationality policies saw another dramatic shift in the late 1960s.[15]

3.1.3 1966-1977: Suspension of Local Autonomy and Radical Assimilation

In 1966, the political turbulence within the Party center culminated the eruption of the Cultural Revolution. In the next two years, the central government replaced local Party committees and governments across the country with "revolutionary committees," leading

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[14]In the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Beijing ordered to confiscate lands by Muslims and closed mosques as part of the Religious System Reform began in 1958 (Birnbaum, 1970; Dillon, 1999).

[15]In 1964, Jiang Qing and Lin Biao, two of Mao's allies in the Center, openly criticized Li Weihan, a key cadre leading accommodation policies and ethnic local autonomy, for cultivating anti-Party forces among non-Han minorities in the name of "United Front." Li, who was the Minister of United Front then, stepped down in December.

to the official suspension of ethnic local autonomy. The creation of revolutionary committees was mainly prompted by Mao and other Cultural Revolution leaders' concern that local leaders may not loyally comply with their revolutionary endeavors for "class struggle" (Xin, 1999). Mao and others thus mobilized a series of "power seizures" to take down local Party secretaries and government, replacing them with revolutionary committees led by military officers and cadres who commanded these seizures (Wang, 1972; Walder, 2014; Walder and Lu, 2017).

During the Cultural Revolution, the Party center perceived any accommodation to non-Han nationalities to be incompatible with the imperative of class struggle. The Party, once again, began to to repress Han and non-Han cadres who had previously participated in EATs designation and led the implementation of ethnic policies in the 1950s (Heberer, 1989).[16] With revolutionary committees in place, Han cadres took over the leadership of EATs. In 1970, Beijing disbanded the State Nationality Affairs Committee (SNAC) in the State Council after the 9th Party Congress (Chen, 2009).

Despite the suspension of ethnic local autonomy, Beijing began to restore some preferential treatments toward non-Han ethnic groups after the September 13th Incident (1971) (see Dreyer, 1976, 2001).[17] As the Incident troubled the Party center with the sudden loss of Mao's heir apparent, Zhou Enlai helped to organize two meetings on ethnic policies in Ningxia and Guangxi. The meetings in 1972 concluded that the central government should resume the production and circulation of ethnic commodities, such as halal food. In the following year, the central government restored the provincial Nationality Affairs Commissions in Guangxi and several other provinces. Furthermore, the Party brought several non-Han

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[16]In 1968, Ulanhu, who had played a key role in devising China's ethnic policies since the late 1930s, was criticized for building the secession-seeking Inner Mongolian People's Party (*neiren dang*). Many Mongolian cadres were arrested and persecuted together with Ulanhu. In November of the same year, the revolutionary committee took control over the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, making Inner Mongolia the first EAT to lose its autonomous status. The central government continued to suspend other EATs in 1968, including the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (April), the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (August), Tibet and Xinjiang (both in September). See Wang (2007) for more details.

[17]In August 1971, it was alleged that Lin Biao, the designated successor of Mao, and his son (Lin Liguo) were planning a military coup against Mao and the central leadership. Lin and many of his family later perished in an air crash when flying into Mongolia on September 13th (see Chen, 2002; MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2008).

cadres, notably Ulanhu, back to the Central Committee during the 10th Party Congress (1973). By the end of the Cultural Revolution, while the Han cadres still dominated in most EATs, non-Han cadres were appointed as the government heads in 18 (out of 25) ethnic autonomous prefectures and 37 (out of 69) ethnic autonomous counties.

3.1.4 1978-1992: Revival and Expansion of Ethnic Local Autonomy

In 1977, with the support of other senior cadres, Mao's successor Hua Guofeng cracked down the Gang of Four and declared the end of the Cultural Revolution.[18] After Deng Xiaoping ascended to power, the government's ethnic policies once again returned to ethnic accommodation. First, the new Constitution in 1978 reinstated the chapter on ethnic local autonomy. In the same year, the central government restored the SNAC in the State Council and brought back cadres who were in charge of government policies toward non-Han nationalities in the 1950s.[19] Several Party leaders, such as Hu Yaobang, also reaffirmed the importance of ethnic local autonomy during his trips to Tibet and Xinjiang (Goldstein, 1997; Bovingdon, 2010).[20] Finally, as Beijing restored EATs designated before the Cultural Revolution, the central government launched another round of ethnic identification, based on which many new EATs were named.

Nearly five decades after the introduction of ethnic local autonomy, the National People's Congress passed the Law on Ethnic Local Autonomy (LELA) in 1984.[21] The passage

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[18]The crackdown of the Gang of Four in Beijing is known as the Huairen Hall Incident (Yang, 2004b).

[19]Ulanhu had his posts in the provincial and central governments reinstated. After returning to his posts, he directed the formulation of the Law on Ethnic Local Autonomy (LELA) (Wang, 2007). In 1977, Ulanhu was named the Minister of United Front; he later became a Politburo member in 1978. Yang Jingren, a Hui cadre in charge of establishing and heading the SNAC in the 1950s, was named the Director of the SNAC again in the same year. In 1979, the Party rectified the criticism against Li Weihan, who had led the introduction of ethnic local autonomy and other policies toward non-Han groups since the 1940s and served as the Minister of United Front before the Cultural Revolution. At the age of 84, Li became the Vice Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

[20]As the new General Secretary, Hu called for the "real implementation" of ethnic regional autonomy in Tibet and highlighted the importance of "reviving Tibetan culture, education, and science" and giving the Tibet "the right of regional autonomy under the unified leadership of the Central Committee." He later said the same thing for Xinjiang.

[21]The drafting of LELA, led by Ulanhu and others, was based on the 1952 General Program on the

of LELA was the most significant milestone of ethnic policies in post-1949 China, as LELA not only ratified ethnic local autonomy introduced in the early 1950s but also expanded its scope (see Phan, 1996; Kaup, 2000; Ao, 2001; Friberg, 2005). In particular, LELA extends the legislative power of EATs by mandating different types of regulations, including the autonomous regulations (*zizhi tiaoli*), the specific regulations (*danxing tiaoli*), the supplementary regulations (*fujia tiaoli*), the special regulations (*teshu tiaoli*), as well as the accommodation provisions (*biantong guiding*), which are exclusively seen in EATs. First, the autonomous regulations allow EATs to outline the organization and functions of their local government administration and legislature. Next, the specific regulations allow EATs to formulate unique rules for various policy areas of their choice, such as economic development, external trade, education and cultural activities, public health, sports, environmental protection, birth control, migration, and natural resource management (Zhu, 1986; Shi, 1989; Kang, Ma, and Liang, 2007; Zang, 2015). The remaining three types of local regulations allow EATs to adapt or cease to implement the laws, regulations, and orders from the central government.[22]

3.1.5   1992-present: Moving Toward Patronage

As the National People's Congress passed LELA, the Chinese government appeared to come to terms with ethnic local autonomy. Nonetheless, while Beijing has maintained most ETAs in the past three decades, several developments in the 1990s suggest the rise of a new paradigm for the government's policies toward non-Han ethnic groups, one that focuses

Implementation of Ethnic Local Autonomy (aka General Program) and the 1953 Preliminary Summary of the Experiences on the Promotion of Ethnic Local Autonomy.

[22]As cautioned by Shen (2013), it is important to compare the difference in the powers held by autonomous and non-autonomous jurisdictions for a clear picture of ethnic local autonomy in China.While Beijing revived ethnic local autonomy in the early 1980s, it also started delegating more administrative and legislative discretion to non-autonomous provincial governments, which then acquired the power to make decisions on cadre appointments and public finances (Ma, 1997; Li, 2010). At the district level, the central government granted local legislative power to selected municipalities in the 1980s. One can thus contend that the difference between provincial and district autonomous and non-autonomous jurisdictions perhaps has become less salient. However, to this day, no non-autonomous jurisdictions have the power to formulate autonomous regulations. Furthermore, unlike their non-autonomous counterparts, ethnic autonomous counties remain the only county jurisdictions that enjoy local legislative powers.

on neither ethnic accommodation nor repressive assimilation. Without suspending ethnic local autonomy as in the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese government has moved toward a "patronage" paradigm, treating EATs more as the destinations of different varieties of development assistance than local autonomous units.

In 1993, after Jiang Zemin consolidated his ruling power, the State Council released the Working Regulations for Ethnic Townships ("Working Regulations"). EATs and ethnic townships (*minzu xiang*) are different in several notable ways (Leijonhufvud, 2009). First, unlike EATs, ethnic townships do not enjoy any autonomous powers stipulated by LELA. Also, the Working Regulations consider ethnic townships, where non-Han cadres are put in charge, mainly as grassroots jurisdictions that require additional financial and personnel support from provincial and central governments.[23]

Starting from the ethnic townships, Beijing extended the emphasis on economic assistance for non-Han ethnic groups to EATs. This change is partly the government's response to a series of protests and large-scale armed riots in several ethnic autonomous regions, Tibet and Xinjiang in particular, in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, as the result of increasing economic disparity between the coastal Han and inland non-Han provinces (see Dreyer, 2001; Mackerras, 2003). As the grievances grew among the non-Han groups, the central government decided to provide different varieties of affirmative action policies and financial support to co-opt minorities who were willing to stay loyal (Sautman, 1998; Tuttle, 2010). The distributive allocations of development transfers have strengthened Beijing's control over EATs, especially ethnic autonomous regions, as non-Han minorities grew dependent on the central government's provisions, which in turn increased the cost of pursuing secession (Fischer, 2015). In a review of different schools of Chinese ethnic policies, Sun (2019) considers the current mainstream as the "the socialist autonomists," who propose to maintain the established institutional framework of ethnic local autonomy while focusing on eradicating

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[23]Beijing began to create ethnic townships after the 1954 Constitution stipulated that EATs can only exist at provincial, district, and county levels. After the Great Leap Forward began, Beijing replaced all ethnic townships with people's communes. It was not until the mid-1980s that the Center restored townships, including ethnic ones. Now there exist than 1,000 ethnic townships in every province except Shanxi, Shaanxi, Hainan, Ningxia, and Shanghai.

"economic backwardness" in ethnic autonomous territories.

Other development programs initiated by Beijing in the same decade also illustrated the shift toward patronage-based ethnic policies. In 1994, Beijing announced the 8-7 Program, through which the Chinese government sought to eradicate extreme poverty for eight million citizens within seven years. The 8-7 Program, which could be traced back to a series of poverty reduction programs in the mid-1980s, explicitly highlighted EATs as one of the key targets (Park, Wang, and Wu, 2002). Along with the 8-7 Program, the central government introduced the "East-West Cooperation Program," through which Beijing paired EATs across the country with Han coastal local jurisdictions such that these rich Han jurisdictions can provide financial support and transfer Han cadres to speed up economic development in non-Han areas. In 2000, the central government proposed the plan "Develop the Great West," with which Beijing vowed to bring industrial production and economic prosperity to Western China, where most EATs are located (Naughton, 2004).

Several institutional changes also suggest a similar transition. In the 1990s, while ethnic local autonomy largely remained intact, the central government suspended the autonomous status of several EATs for economic development (Tian, 2010). One well-known example took place in Guangxi, where Beijing turned the Fangcheng Multi-ethnic Autonomous County into a district-level municipality in 1993. Despite the loss of ethnic local autonomy, Fangchenggang enjoys additional subsidies from both the central and provincial governments. Another similar instance can be found in Liaoning, where the Fengcheng Manchurian Autonomous County was turned into another county-level Municipality in the same year.[24] In 2002, the State Council approved the designation of the Lijiang Municipality in Yunnan, which led to the split of the Lijiang Naxi Autonomous County (Yang, 2008). In 2004, the Chinese government decided to incorporate the Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture into Urumqi, Xinjiang's capital city, as a special economic zone (Editorial Board of Xinjiang Gazettes, 2009).

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[24]While both EATs and municipalities are eligible for additional fiscal subsidies and other financial assistance from upper-level governments, municipalities do not enjoy any autonomous powers as specified in the LELA.

These developments led to changes in the legal framework of ethnic local autonomy. After the 1999 Central Ethnic Work Conference, Beijing announced a plan to amend the 1984 LELA, which was eventually released in 2001. The 2001 amendment, compared with its 1984 predecessor, placed more emphasis on the central government's role in reducing economic backwardness in EATs, as highlighted by Sun (2019). In line with these legislative revisions, the policy shift can also be demonstrated by the central leadership's discourse on ethnic policies. While the Chinese leaders in the 1950s and the early 1980s all stressed the importance of respecting ethnic minorities' autonomous powers, Jiang Zemin and his successors rarely mentioned "ethnic local autonomy" when addressing the government's non-Han ethnic minorities in public (see Liu, 1994). Instead, current Chinese leaders always highlighted the government's determination to assist economic development to induce cultural assimilation and nation-building in non-Han areas.

3.2 Ethnic Autonomous Territories in Post-1949 China

The discussion above focuses on the broad trends in the Chinese government's policies toward non-Han ethnic groups at the national level. Drawing from unique historical administrative records, in this section, I provide a descriptive analysis of post-1949 ethnic autonomous territories (EATs) at the subnational level. The objective here is to demonstrate the spatial and longitudinal variations in the implementation of ethnic local autonomy across the country to highlight some important variations that existing studies have neglected. The analysis addresses the following questions. When did the central government designate EATs in the country? Where are they located? To which non-Han groups are these EATs dedicated? How do these EATs vary in terms of population and land size? Finally, I compare the making of autonomous regulations among different EATs to understand how the use of local autonomy has varied across different levels of local government jurisdictions.

I find that ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties account for the majority of post-1949 EATs. Their presence remains to be explained, as existing studies of Chinese ethnic local autonomy have primarily focused on their provincial counterparts, namely ethnic au-

tonomous regions (e.g., Kaup, 2000; Wu, 2009; Henders, 2010; Potter, 2010; Hillman, 2016). Next, EATs, which can be named for more than one non-Han group, exhibit noticeable differences in both the timing of their designation as well as the population and land size. It appears that the Chinese government has tended to designate EATs when the Party leadership experiences severe power struggles as a new central leader comes to power.While one can attribute to the variation in land size to differences in population density, several EATs even have the Han group constitute the majority in the total local population. Furthermore, compared to their provincial counterparts, sub-provincial EATs have been actively exercising their granted local autonomy from the central government.

These variations warrant proper explanations. While existing studies have considered ethnic local autonomy in China either as an institution of conflict resolution or ethnic repression, the findings here suggest an association between central power struggle and the granting of ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China. Moreover, EATs appear to allow the central leader to extend his direct command over subnational jurisdictions. With the passages of their autonomous regulations, which are formulated based on the central government's granting of ethnic local autonomy, EATs seem to serve as the enclaves within provinces that permit the central government's intervention whiling placing the check on the provincial leaders' governing discretion.

Figure 3.1 indicates provinces along with special administrative regions (Hong Kong and Macau) in Mainland China. In general, the Chinese government divides subnational government administration into three levels – provinces (*sheng*, Level I), districts (*di*, Level II), and counties (*xian*, Level III). EATs can be designated at any of these levels.

Table 3.1 lists non-autonomous and autonomous subnational units.[25] Below counties are townships (*xiang zhen*), where one can find ethnic townships that do not count as EATs.[26]

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[25]At present, there are four direct-controlled municipalities – Beijing (the national capital), Shanghai, Tianjin, and Chongqing – in China. China has also established two special administrative regions – Hong Kong and Macau – after they returned to China from their respective European colonial governments.

[26]Present in every province but four (Shanxi, Shaanxi, Hainan, Ningxia, and Shanghai), ethnic townships do not have any autonomous powers (Qin, 2002; Leijonhufvud, 2009). Also, provincial governments can decide the establishment of ethnic townships on their own. The administrative heads of ethnic townships must come from the corresponding non-Han ethnic groups. Based on my personal conversations with local

Figure 3.1: Provincial jurisdictions and special administrative regions (Hong Kong and Macau) in Mainland China. Source: http://d-maps.com/.

3.2.1 Timing of EAT Designations

Since 1949, the Chinese government has established 222 unique EATs across the country. The information about the creation and changes of EATs is collected from *Historical Records of Political and Administrative Divisions of China, 1949-2002* (Shi (2006), in Chinese) and the Website on Administrative Divisions (www.xzqh.org/, in Chinese).

Figure 3.2 shows the number of new EATs designated in each year after 1949. Several patterns are noteworthy. First, EAT designations largely took place in the 1950s and 1980s; these two decades both saw intense power competition and leadership turnover in the Party center. In the 1950s, Mao Zedong faced the challenge to maintain his supremacy in the newly established Communist regime, as he had to contain potential challenges from other influential cadres while build the vertical command over different parts of the country (Harding, 1981; Shih, Shan, and Liu, 2010). In the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping had to coordinate with other

officials during my fieldwork, in most cases, the Party secretaries of ethnic townships are chosen from local non-Han elites.

Table 3.1: Subnational government jurisdictions in China: Ethnic autonomous territories (EATs) vs. Non-ethnic autonomous territories (non-EATs).

	Non-EATs	EATs
Level I	Provinces Direct-controlled municipalities Special administrative regions	Ethnic autonomous regions
Level II	Districts District-level municipalities	Ethnic autonomous prefectures
Level III	Counties County-level municipalities	Ethnic autonomous counties

senior cadres to advance his reform agenda while keeping local governments in check (Baum, 1994; Yang, 2004b).

Figure 3.2: Designation of ethnic autonomous territories in post-1949 China.
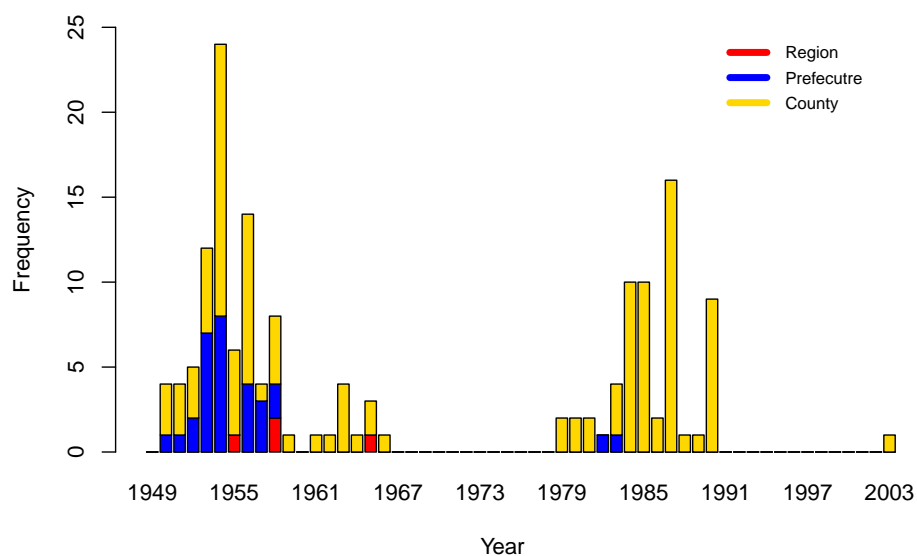
All ethnic autonomous regions (EARs) were designated before the Cultural Revolution broke out in 1966. Inner Mongolia, established in 1947, was the first EAR; Ningxia, Guangxi, and Xinjiang became EARs before the Center launched the Great Leap Forward in 1958. Tibet received its autonomous status in 1965. Ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties have shown more variation, and it seems the Chinese government has more interest in them,

as these subprovincial EATs were the main focus for EAT designations in both the 1950s and 1980s. Before 1966, the Center named 89 ethnic autonomous prefectures or counties, with prefectures all named before 1958. The revival of ethnic local autonomy in the 1980s led to the designation of two ethnic autonomous prefectures and 59 ethnic autonomous counties. Altogether, Beijing has named 37 ethnic autonomous prefectures and 180 ethnic autonomous prefectures between 1950 and 2003.

3.2.2 Geographical Distribution of EATs

Figure 3.3 shows the locations of existing EATs in China. Ethnic autonomous regions have remained mostly intact since their creation. In contrast, about 20 subprovincial EATs no longer exist, as the central government merged ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties when it created autonomous regions and prefectures, respectively.[27] At present, one can find 155 EATs, including five autonomous regions, 30 autonomous prefectures, and 120 autonomous counties, in the country.

As shown in Figure 3.3, it is clear that many EATs are located in the country's Western hinterland. Below the provincial level, as seen in Figure 3.3(b), one can find most ethnic autonomous prefectures in non-autonomous provinces. Nonetheless, five autonomous prefectures are in Xinjiang, which is itself an autonomous region for the Uyghurs.[28] Nearly half of all ethnic autonomous prefectures are in Qinghai Province (six in total) or Yunnan Province (eight in total). As for autonomous counties (see Figure 3.3(c)), 36 are under the jurisdictions of ethnic autonomous regions and autonomous prefectures. Moreover, a quarter of them can be found in Yunnan. With 14 subprovincial EATs in total, Yunnan governs the highest number of subprovincial EATs compared with other provinces in the country.

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[27]For instance, before Ningxia became the Hui Autonomous Region, it was a province divided into several Hui autonomous prefectures.

[28]The five ethnic autonomous prefectures in Xinjiang are: Yili (for the Kazakh), Kizlisu (for the Kyrgyz), Changji (for the Hui), and two for the Mongols – Bortala and Bayingolin.

Figure 3.3: Current ethnic autonomous territories in China.
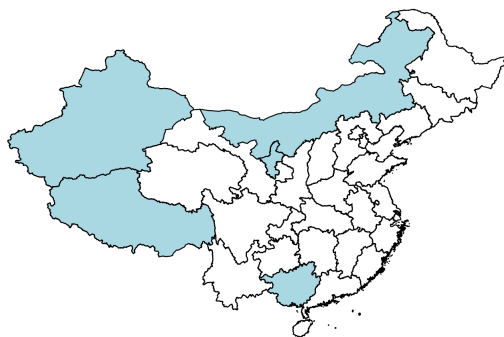
(a) Ethnic Autonomous Regions

(b) Ethnic Autonomous Prefectures
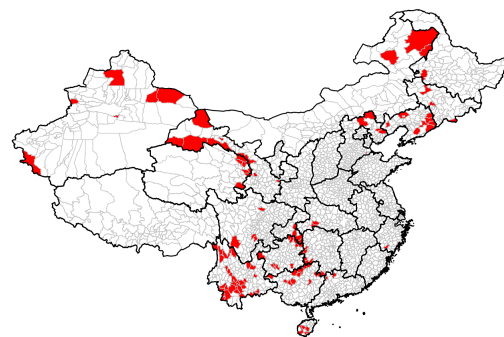
(c) Ethnic Autonomous Counties

Figure 3.4 presents counties governed by EATs with different colors – counties in red are themselves ethnic autonomous counties; blue and yellow ones refer to counties in ethnic autonomous prefectures and regions, respectively. One can see that EATs account for a significant portion – nearly 65% according to the most recent government statistics – of the entire territory. EATs, including ethnic autonomous regions, are present in almost two-thirds of provinces. At the subprovincial level, the Chinese government has named EATs in 18 provinces, including one directly governed municipality (Chongqing) and three ethnic autonomous regions (Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, and Xinjiang).[29]

In the same figure, one can see that some provinces appear to be composed primarily of EATs. Qinghai, while not being an ethnic autonomous region by itself, has 98% of the total land governed by ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties. A similar pattern can be found in Xinjiang, Yunnan, Sichuan, and Guizhou, where EATs constitute the majority of their subprovincial jurisdictions.

Figure 3.4: Counties governed by ethnic autonomous territories. Counties that are either ethnic autonomous counties themselves (red) or are in ethnic autonomous prefectures (blue) and regions (yellow).

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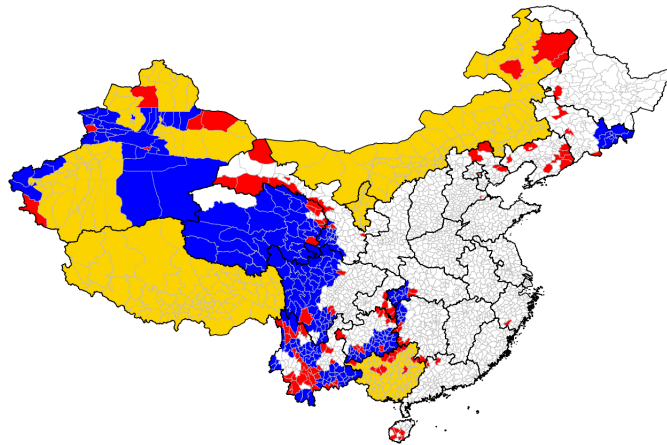
[29]In 1997, Beijing named Chongqing as the fourth directly-governed municipality (the first three are Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin). Before 1997, Chongqing was a district in Sichuan Province.

3.2.3   Non-Han Ethnic Groups in EATs

So far, the Chinese government has named EATs for 44 of 55 officially recognized non-Han groups. Table 3.2 lists the number of existing ethnic autonomous territories for the largest 20 non-Han ethnic groups in the country. In the order of population size, the Zhuang people, the Manchu people, and the Hui are the largest three non-Han ethnic groups in China.

Table 3.2: The number of ethnic autonomous regions (EARs), ethnic autonomous prefectures (EAPs), and ethnic autonomous counties (EACs) for the largest 20 non-Han ethnic groups in China. Source: 2010 Census and the dataset of local administrative divisions compiled by the author.

Rank	Group	Total	%	EAR	EAP	EAC
1	Zhuang	16,187,163	1.3	1	1	3
2	Manchu	10,708,464	0.86	0	0	11
3	Hui	9,828,126	0.79	1	2	11
4	Miao	8,945,538	0.72	0	6	22
5	Uyghur	8,405,416	0.68	1	0	0
6	Tujia	8,037,014	0.65	0	2	8
7	Yi	7,765,858	0.62	0	3	18
8	Mongol	5,827,808	0.47	1	3	8
9	Tibetan	5,422,954	0.44	1	10	2
10	Buyi	2,973,217	0.24	0	2	3
11	Dong	2,962,911	0.24	0	1	7
12	Yao	2,638,878	0.21	0	0	13
13	Chosun	1,929,696	0.16	0	1	1
14	Bai	1,861,895	0.15	0	1	1
15	Hani	1,440,029	0.12	0	1	6
16	Kazakh	1,251,023	0.1	0	1	3
17	Li	1,248,022	0.1	0	0	6
18	Dai	1,159,231	0.093	0	2	7
19	She	710,039	0.057	0	0	1
20	Lisu	635,101	0.051	0	1	1

At the provincial level, each of ethnic autonomous regions is designated to a single non-Han ethnic group, including the Mongols (in Inner Mongolia), the Tibetans (in Tibet, or *Xizang*), the Uyghurs (in Xinjiang), the Zhuang people (in Guangxi), and the Hui (in Ningxia). An ethnic autonomous prefecture or county, in contrast, has been designated to one or more non-Han groups. Among existing ethnic autonomous counties, 87 of 120 are assigned to a single non-Han group. In other words, multigroup EATs are the most common

at the county level. Ten of existing 30 ethnic autonomous prefectures see two groups "share" local autonomy. Six ethnic autonomous prefectures are designated to the Miao, the fourth largest non-Han group according to the 2010 Census (Table 3.2). It is interesting to note that these Miao autonomous prefectures are all joint EATs, in which the Miao people have to share the granted local autonomy with the Zhuang, the Tujia, the Dong, or the Buyi.[30]

After taking the timing of creation into account, most subprovincial EATs created before 1966 went for the Miao (13 in total), the Yi (11), the Tibetan (11), the Hui (10), and the Mongols (10). After the Cultural Revolution, nearly a third of EATs below the provinces are assigned to the Manchurian (11 in total) in the Northeast and Tujia (9) in the Southwest, making them the primary beneficiaries during the revival of ethnic local autonomy (Tian, 2010).

The distribution of EATs across non-Han ethnic groups suggest that ethnic local autonomy does not merely act as an institution of conflict resolution or ethnic repression as widely presumed. As indicated by Table 3.2, Beijing has designated the majority of EATs to non-Han groups that have never engaged in large-scale uprisings against the central government. Currently, the Miao, as the *fourth* largest non-Han group, hold the highest number of EATs, including six ethnic autonomous prefectures and 22 counties in Yunnan, Hubei, Hunan, Guizhou, Guangxi, and Chongqing. As the *eighth* largest non-Han group, the Yi have been designated to the second highest number of EATs. 21 EATs (3 prefectures and 18 counties) in four Southwestern provinces, including Yunnan, Sichuan, Guangxi, and Guizhou are built for them. The Hui, who constitute the *third* largest non-Han group and the largest Muslim community in China, enjoy local autonomy in one ethnic autonomous region (Ningxia), along with two ethnic autonomous prefectures and 11 ethnic autonomous counties in Xinjiang, Gansu, Yunnan, Hebei, Guizhou, and Qinghai. The Tibetan people, as one of the most secession-prone non-Han groups in China (Schwartz, 1994; Tuttle, 2010;

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[30]Based on elite interviews and archived documents, in the late 1950s local Miao elites were planning to promote the creation of a Miao autonomous region by merging districts and counties in Guizhou, Hunan, Sichuan, and other neighboring provinces. However, as the anti-Rightist Movement and the Great Leap Forward broke out in the late 1950s, the central government cracked down the movement and purged many Miao elites. Xiangxi, which was first a Miao autonomous prefecture back then, was also changed into a Miao-Tujia autonomous prefecture in 1957.

Han and Paik, 2014; Fischer, 2015; Hillman, 2016), have been granted local autonomy in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), in addition to ten prefectures and two counties in Yunnan, Sichuan, Gansu, and Qinghai. The Yao (the 12th largest non-Han group) are entitled to 13 autonomous counties in Yunnan, Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hunan. Together these five groups hold more than half of EATs in China.

Even for EATs dedicated to secession-prone groups, it is also not clear whether their tension with the dominant Han solely drives the granting of local autonomy. Take the Tibetan EATs at the example. Since 1949, Beijing has created 23 Tibetan EATs, which include one ethnic autonomous region, 10 ethnic autonomous prefectures, and 12 ethnic autonomous counties before the Cultural Revolution. While the Tibetans have posed a major threat to national integrity for the Communist regime, Beijing did not name Central Tibet, which saw one of the largest ethnic uprisings in 1957, the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) until 1965 (Schwartz, 1994; Goldstein, 1997). All other Tibetan EATs were built in the 1950s across Yunnan, Sichuan, Gansu, and Qinghai. While one can argue that Beijing created these Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties to attract the Tibetan elites' support for the new Communist regime, many of them are located in provinces where Tibetans rarely rioted against Beijing. Moreover, it should note that these Tibetan EATs were created in different years. If ethnic local autonomy mainly served as the instrument for conflict prevention or separatism appeasement, one should expect their designation around the same time – either before or after the 1957 uprising in Lhasa. It appears that the establishment of Tibetan EATs does not coincide closely with the occurrence of ethnic riots that involve the Tibetans.

3.2.4 Population Density and Land Size of EATs

EATs in post-1949 China have varied widely regarding their land size. Figure 3.6(a) shows the variation in the land size of existing EATs. At the provincial level, while three ethnic autonomous regions (Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia) are greater than one million square kilometers, Guangxi and Ningxia are about 200 thousand and 66 thousand square kilometers,

Figure 3.5: Designation of Tibetan autonomous territories, 1949-1966.
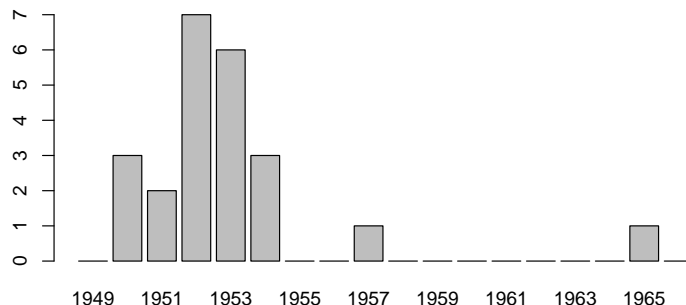
respectively. The difference between the largest and smallest ethnic autonomous prefectures is also significant, close to 500 thousand square kilometers although the median land size is about 30 thousand square kilometers. The majority of ethnic autonomous prefectures are smaller than 100 thousand square kilometers. At the county level, with a median of about 3 thousand square kilometers, an ethnic autonomous county can be as large as 66 thousand square kilometers, which is about the size of Ningxia, and be as small as 176 square kilometers. Most ethnic autonomous counties, however, are no larger than 10 thousand square kilometers.

Once we take the population size into consideration, most EATs in China are scarcely populated (Figure 3.6(b)). According to the 2010 census, three out of five ethnic autonomous regions contain fewer than 50 people per square kilometer. Guangxi is the only ethnic autonomous region with population density greater than $200/\text{km}^2$. Among ethnic autonomous prefectures, more than half have fewer than 50 people square kilometer, while more than 100 ethnic autonomous counties see 200 people or fewer per square kilometer.

EATs have also exhibited remarkable variation in the relative size of their designated non-Han ethnicities. According to the 2010 Census, while on average EATs have their respective non-Han ethnic groups account for 60.7 percent of the total local population, the percentage of titular non-Han groups in some EATs can be as small as 10 percent (Figure 3.7(a)). For ethnic autonomous regions, while the titular ethnic groups account for the majority of the

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Figure 3.6: Land size and population density of ethnic autonomous territories, 2010. Source: The 2011 Statistical Yearbook of Ethnic Minorities.
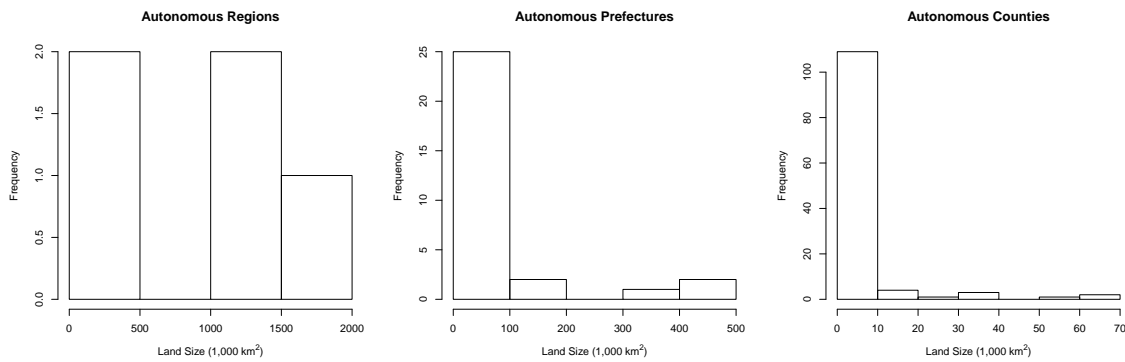
(a) Land size
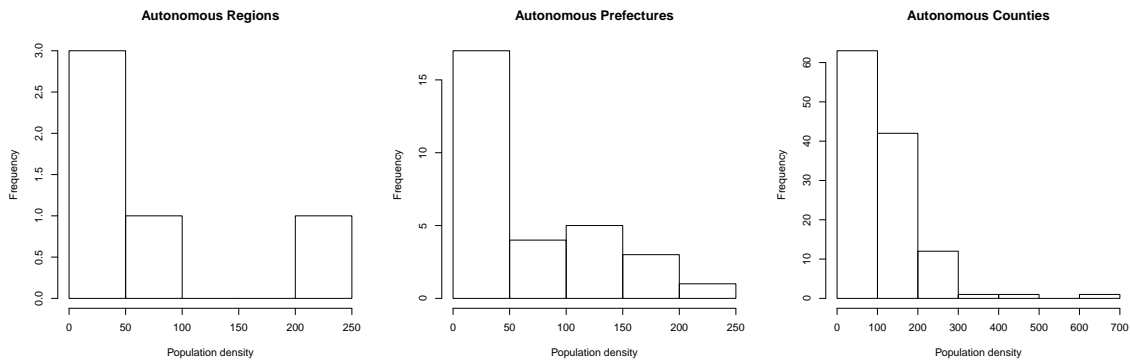
(b) Population density

total population in Tibet (96.8 percent) and Xinjiang (60.4 percent), the relative size of the designated non-Han groups in the remaining three regions all falls below 40 percent. In Inner Mongolia, the Mongols only constitute about one-fifth of the total population. As for ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties, only 17 have the share of non-Han groups more than 90 percent. Designated groups only account for less than 50 percent of their respective local population in another 43, which account for nearly a third of EATs in the country. Five subprovincial EATs, located in Inner Mongolia, Jilin, Guangdong, and Zhejiang, see titular non-Han groups less than one-fifth of the local population.

In brief, one can see that Beijing often granted local autonomy to non-Han ethnicities that do not even constitute the majority in local communities. This fact is consistent with

available archived government documents, which indicated that the central government does not have a specific threshold for the relative size of non-Han ethnic groups in the local population when designating EATs.[31]

Figure 3.7: Percentage of titular non-Han population in ethnic autonomous territories, 2010. Source: The 2010 Census.

(a) All EATs

(b) Autonomous Regions

(c) Autonomous Prefectures

(d) Autonomous Counties

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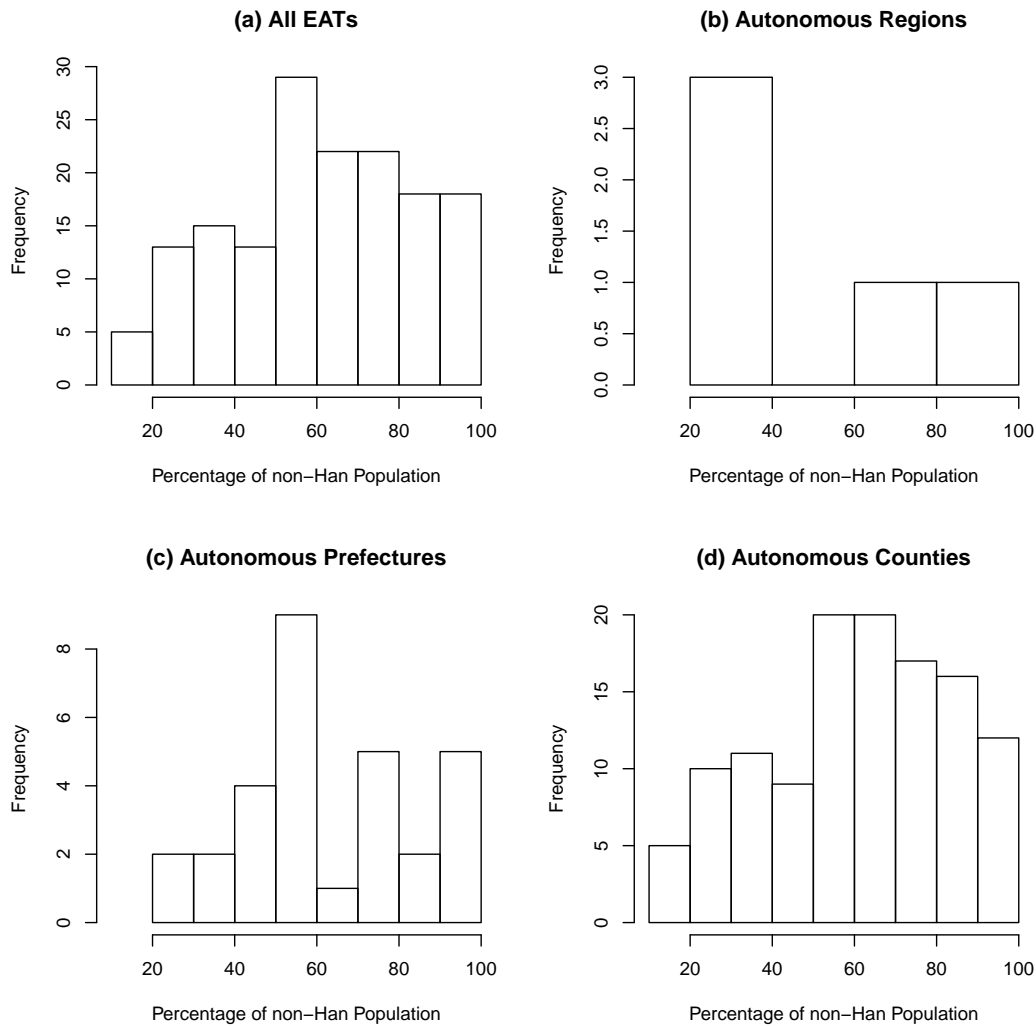
[31]Future research can look into the spatial distribution of non-Han ethnic groups in each subnational unit to explore whether residential segregation by ethnicities can prompt the granting of ethnic local autonomy. Doing so will require extensive, accurate historical census data at the county level.

3.3 Ethnic Local Autonomy in Practice: Autonomous Regulations

EATs in China have differed significantly regarding the use of their granted autonomous power. To illustrate, I focus on the making of the autonomous regulations (*zizhi tiaoli*) after the 1980s. I have collected the original data on all local regulations in EATs from the Beida Fabao, an online database on Chinese laws and regulations (`https://www.pkulaw.cn/`, in Chinese).[32] During my fieldwork in China, I also interviewed scholars and local officials involved in the formulation of regulations in EATs.

When the Chinese government fulfilled the Party's promise of ethnic local autonomy in the 1950s, Beijing allowed EATs to formulate their organizational regulations (*zuzhi tiaoli*). Considering that it was not until the 1980s that Beijing began to delegate non-autonomous local jurisdictions some legislative powers (Shen, 2013), EATs' power to formulate organization regulations was quite exceptional.[33] Despite the opportunity to structure their government and legislative organizations through the organizational regulations, only 29 EATs, including one ethnic autonomous region (Ningxia), 16 ethnic autonomous prefectures, and 12 ethnic autonomous counties, passed their organizational regulations. Among these, 18 EATs had their organizational regulations approved by the State Council before the Great Leap Forward; the rest did so between 1962 and 1966. As explained by one of my interviewees, the central government decided to allow the formulation of the organizational regulations because the central leader had to accommodate EATs where the Party had yet to build a strong organizational presence. In the late 1950s, the importance of organizational regulations in EATs declined as the central government finished building local Party committees in every local jurisdiction with the establishment of local People's Government and People's

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[32]I thank the National Library of China for providing the access to the database.

[33]Even if many non-autonomous subnational jurisdictions, including provinces, directly-governed municipalities, and district-level municipalities, enjoy some local legislative powers, many legal scholars in China have pointed out that their powers are not entirely identical with those granted to EATs (see Shen, 2013). For instance, while non-autonomous subnational jurisdictions focus on writing their regulations to implement laws and regulations introduced by upper-level governments, EATs retain the rights – at least on paper – to "alter" (*biantong*) upper-level laws and regulations in accordance with their local circumstances. EATs, moreover, can create (*chuangzao*) regulations for specific matters even in the absence of relevant upper-level laws and regulations.

Congress as the model grassroots governing bodies (Harding, 1981). Nonetheless, he added that it remains important to pay particular attention to the organizational regulations as the fact of passing them somewhat suggests that these EATs enjoyed some more leverage from the central government compared with EATs without organizational regulations.

Compared with the 1950s and 1960s, the difference in the use of autonomous legislative power has become more systematically pronounced across different EATs after the 1980s. While LELA allows every EAT to formulate its autonomous regulation (*zizhi tiaoli*), no ethnic autonomous region has passed the autonomous regulation despite multiple drafting and submission attempts in the past three decades (Feng, 2017). After the central government turned down more than 20 drafts, Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang have suspended the formulation of their autonomous regulations. Ningxia, as the only ethnic autonomous region that passed its own organizational regulation in the 1950s, retained the formulation of the autonomous regulation as one of its legislative priorities in 2008 although the progress also has been stalled since then (Pan, 2009). For the formulation of the autonomous regulations, the local People's Congress in ethnic autonomous regions has to submit the drafted regulation to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, which will conduct a comprehensive review with all relevant ministries and departments in the State Council. As highlighted by many scholars in China (e.g., Song and Ma, 2014; Feng, 2017), the primary obstacle is that the draft requires the consent from nearly every central ministry and department. These ministries and departments have no intention of sharing their decision-making and administrative discretion with ethnic autonomous regions.[34]

Contrary to their provincial counterparts, the majority of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties have successfully passed and enacted their autonomous regulations. Some have even managed to revise them after Beijing released the amended LELA in 2001. The only exceptions, perhaps unsurprisingly, are ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties in Xinjiang.[35] According to LELA, the formulation of the autonomous regulations in subprovincial

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[34]It is also nearly impossible to adjudicate disagreements with these many departments and ministries.

[35]Among all ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties in Xinjiang, only the Bayingolin Mongol Autonomous County has passed a "provision" for the formulation of the autonomous and specific regulations

EATs requires the approval of their respective provincial governments and an *ex post facto* report to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. During my fieldwork, local officials in ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties emphasize that provincial leaders usually feel ambivalent toward any legislative activities in ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties. Many even consider the making of autonomous regulations to be redundant following the release of LELA from the National People's Congress.[36] The ruling elites in subprovincial EATs have to assert their granted local autonomy with the Center's support.

Figure 3.8 shows the activities of EATs regarding the making of the autonomous regulations since 1985. Most autonomous regulations were passed and enacted before Jiang Zemin consolidated his power in 1992. The decline in EATs' legislative attempts also matches the rise of the patronage paradigm in Beijing's policies toward non-Han ethnicities. In the 2000s, many EATs revised their autonomous regulations after the National People's Congress released the amended LELA in 2001. The peak occurred between 2005 and 2006, during which Hu Jintao was about to finish his first term as the General Secretary. As in the case of EAT designations, the formulation of subprovincial autonomous regulations appears to be in line with the arrival of a new central leader whose power is yet to be consolidated.[37]

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have consulted a variety of historical sources and elite interviews to delineate how the introduction of ethnic local autonomy and its implementation have varied by different historical periods since 1949 and across different levels of local jurisdictions.

The analysis offers some crucial insights on the political implications of ethnic local

in 2009, which has never been put in use.

[36]In the words of one local official, provincial Party secretaries usually see the formulation of the autonomous regulations as an "separatist" attempt.

[37]Recent studies have noted that some prefectures are active in customizing the legal texts provided by Beijing when formulating their regulations while others merely repeat the same texts in LELA (Huang, 2014). Future research will explore the variation in the substance of ethnic legislative texts through computational text analysis.

Figure 3.8: Passage and revisions of autonomous regulations in ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties.
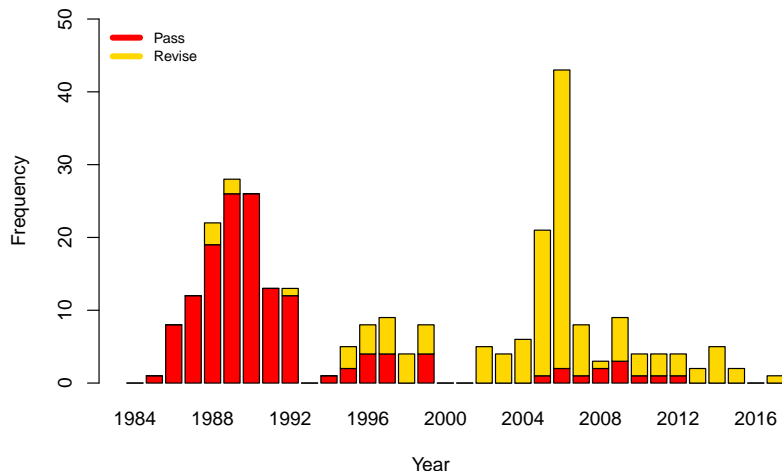
autonomy in contemporary China. First, the Chinese government's policies toward non-Han ethnic groups have switched many times since 1949. More importantly, the switch between accommodation and assimilation does not appear to occur at random. Instead, the granting of ethnic local autonomy in the early 1950s and its revival in the 1980s both took place when the Party center experienced power struggles within the central leadership. After Jiang's full takeover brought the rise of a regular power transfer system, China's ethnic policies moved toward the patronage paradigm, and EATs have been reduced to localities for the Center's economic assistance and other development programs.

Second, Beijing has designated the majority of EATs to non-Han thnic groups that have rarely or never demonstrated any secession activities. This finding counters the common views of ethnic local autonomy, which have mainly focused on ethnic autonomous regions for secession-prone groups (e.g., Bovingdon, 2010; Tuttle, 2010; Hillman, 2016). While I do not deny the possibility that ethnic local autonomy could be used as the institutional device to defuse the tension between the dominant Han and these groups, my findings do warrant an alternative explanation for ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China as an institution of agent control.

Lastly, EATs have exercised their granted autonomous power to different degrees. In particular, I have found that sub-provincial EATs have been able to use their granted local autonomy more actively than their provincial counterparts have. In this vein, ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties do appear to become enclaves that allow Beijing to check provincial leaders, as they become enclaves where provinces cannot fully exercise their discretion.

The uncovered patterns are consistent with the main argument. That is, ethnic local autonomy provides the central leader with the institutional means to counter the delegation dilemma and extend his reach to subnational jurisdictions. Altogether, these findings should encourage researchers to depart from the conventional notion that treats ethnic autonomous territories in China either as a conflict-defusing device or a window-dressing institution that conceals the Party's repressive endeavors against non-Han minorities.

CHAPTER 4

Tracing the Granting of Ethnic Local Autonomy

In the previous chapter, I have shown that the presence of ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China cannot be explained merely by the threats of non-Han ethnic mobilization in the country. Existing policy and scholarly studies of post-1949 Chinese ethnic autonomous territories (EATs) have mostly focused on ethnic autonomous regions, especially Tibet and Xinjiang (e.g., Ghai, 2000; Carlson, 2004; Wu, 2009; Ghai and Woodman, 2009; Henders, 2010; Hillman, 2016), few examine the exact process through which an EATs came into being. What are the key actors and events that precede EAT designations? What role does the central government play in the designation process? What are the relationships among the central leader, provincial elites, and local non-Han ethnic communities when a district or county jurisdiction is granted ethnic local autonomy?

In this chapter, I provide a structured case study of the process of EAT designations in post-1949 China, focusing on ethnic autonomous prefectures. In the subsequent discussion, the unit of analysis is an ethnic autonomous prefecture. I consult different varieties of first- and second-hand historical records to rebuild the sequence of events preceding the official establishment of an EAT in the founding convention. I examine Beijing's role in each case and pay particular attention to the relationship between the central leader and provincial ruling elites where the central government names an ethnic autonomous prefecture.

Because ethnic autonomous prefectures, as one of the district-level local jurisdictions, are located immediately below the provinces, I argue that they provide an ideal setting to illustrate the proposed logic that considers ethnic local autonomy as an institution of agent control. I expect to observe that, in most cases, Beijing preemptively motivated local non-

Han elites to demand ethnic local autonomy through their respective provincial elites that either only have weak connections with the central leader or have strong ties with the central leader's strong inner-circle rivals. EAT designation is thus not a simple bottom-up process, as the granting of ethnic local autonomy does not stem from the voluntary demands of local non-Han communities; rather, EAT designation starts with Beijing's deliberate grassroots ethnic mobilization that often bypasses the provincial leaders.

I find that Beijing has played an active role in the designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures. While all local non-Han elites followed the formal rules and "requested" ethnic local autonomy through their respective provincial jurisdictions, the central government, or in some cases the central leader himself, had established prior informal and formal direct contacts with these "autonomy-demanding" local non-Han ethnic communities. The claimed grassroots demand for ethnic local autonomy was usually the result of the Center's deliberate local mobilization that bypassed provincial elites. Second, as revealed by the internal documents from the Cultural Revolution, I discover that nearly every provincial leader that saw the designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures during his tenure was criticized for resisting Mao and the Party center's commands or having colluded with Mao's rivals in the Politburo.

I organize this chapter as follows. In Section 2, I explain the decision to focus on ethnic autonomous prefectures and the objectives of selecting cases based on the dependent variables. Next, in Section 3, I introduce the main historical sources for the case study, including local gazetteers, SNAC overviews, and culture and history materials. Based on the uncovered historical records and elite interviews, in Sections 4 and 5, I rebuild the process for a district-level jurisdiction to become an ethnic autonomous prefecture, which ended with the founding convention and discuss the role of the Center and the central leader in the granting of ethnic local autonomy. In Section 6, I examine the relationships between the central leader and the ruling cadres when these ethnic autonomous prefectures were designated.

4.1 Case Selection: Ethnic Autonomous Prefectures

The sample of interest in this chapter includes every existing autonomous prefecture (*zizhi zhou*). While EATs can be designated at each level of subnational jurisdictions (i.e., province, district, and county) (see Chung, 2016a; Donaldson, 2017), I have decided to focus on ethnic autonomous prefectures. Ethnic autonomous prefectures, located one level below the provinces, provide one of several possible forms of district-level administration in post-1949 China.[1] Compared with their district-level counterparts, ethnic autonomous prefectures are distinct for a couple of reasons. First, with Beijing's granting of ethnic local autonomy, these prefectures are under the joint control of both the Center and provincial leaders. The ruling non-Han elites in ethnic autonomous prefectures become the joint agents of the central leader and their respective provincial superiors. They province a direct illustration to my main argument, which suggests that the designation of EATs allows the Center to constrain provincial jurisdictions.[2]

Since 1949, the Chinese government has named 37 ethnic autonomous prefectures, 35 of them before the Great Leap Forward started in 1958. In 1954, Beijing incorporated two prefectures into the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. Four years later, Beijing merged Bayinghaote, Guyuan, and Wuzhong – three Mongolian or Hui autonomous prefectures – with the newly created Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and removed their EAT status. In the same year, the Guixi Zhuang Autonomous Prefecture became the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. In the end, there were 29 ethnic autonomous prefectures before the eruption of the Cultural Revolution. After the purge of the Gang of Four in 1977, Beijing named two new ethnic autonomous prefectures, one in Hubei and the other in Guizhou, making the total number of ethnic autonomous prefectures 31. In 1987, the central government

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[1]In total, now there are 334 district-level units across 27 provinces in Mainland China (excluding directly-governed municipalities, Hong Kong, and Macau). Guangdong and Sichuan both have 21 district-level units, the highest among all provinces. Hainan is the only province that does not have any district-level jurisdictions. On average, a province is divided into about 12 districts, which can be districts, district-level municipalities, or ethnic autonomous prefectures. Source: *The Chinese Statistical Yearbook, 2016.*

[2]I thank Kai Guan at Central Minzu University for pointing this out. I plan to include all remaining ethnic autonomous counties in future research.

turned Hainan, which was a Li-Miao Autonomous Prefecture in the Guangdong Province, into a province by itself and placed four ethnic autonomous counties under its control.

At present, there are 30 ethnic autonomous prefectures in China. Table 4.1 lists every ethnic autonomous prefecture included in the following analysis. In Table 4.1, I also indicate whether the Party center visited a prefecture during the Long March and the early 1950s, as well as the dates of critical events that led to its official designation. At present, one can find ethnic autonomous prefectures in eight provinces and one ethnic autonomous region (Xinjiang). A third of ethnic autonomous prefectures have the granted autonomy shared by two different non-Han ethnic groups. Two of the Tibetan autonomous prefectures are dedicated to a second non-Han ethnic group. As one of the largest non-Han ethnic groups in the country, the Miao people do not have a prefecture by themselves; the central government has designated all Miao autonomous prefectures with another non-Han group.

Table 4.1: Current ethnic autonomous prefectures in China.

| Province | Prefecture | Groups | Long March | Ctr Team | Creation of EATs | | | |
					Request	Approval	Prepare	Convention
Gansu	Linxia	Hui	No	1950/10	1956/8	1956/9	1956/9	1956/11
Gansu	Gannan	Tibetan	Yes	1950/7	-	-	1953/1	1953/9
Guizhou	Qiannan	Buyi-Miao	Yes	1950/11	-	1956/4	1956/5	1956/8
Guizhou	Qianxinan	Buyi-Miao	Yes	-	1981/3	1981/9	1981/11	1982/4
Guizhou	Qiandongnan	Miao-Dong	Yes	1950/11	1954/11	1956/4	1956/5	1956/7
Hubei	Enshi	Tujia-Miao	Yes	-	-	1983/8	1983/8	1983/12
Hunan	Xiangxi	Tujia-Miao	Yes	1951/1	-	-	1952/5	1952/8
Jilin	Yanbian	Korean	No	1951/8	-	1952/8	1952/8	1952/9
Qinghai	Yushu	Tibetan	Yes	1950/8	-	-	1951/1	1951/12
Qinghai	Haixi	Mongol-Tibetan	No	1950/8	1953/2	1953/8	1953/5	1954/1
Qinghai	Huangnan	Tibetan	No	1950/8	-	1953/8	1953/3	1953/12
Qinghai	Hainan	Tibetan	No	1950/8	-	-	1953/9	1953/12
Qinghai	Haibei	Tibetan	No	1950/8	-	-	1953/6	1953/12
Qinghai	Golo	Tibetan	Yes	1950/8	-	-	1953/5	1953/12
Sichuan	Aba	Tibetan-Qiang	Yes	1950	1952/12	1952/12	1952/12	1952/12
Sichuan	Ganzi	Tibetan	Yes	1950/9	1950/9	1950/7	1950/11	
Sichuan	Liangshan	Yi	Yes	1950/8	-	1952/4	1952/6	1952/10
Xinjiang	Changji	Hui	No	1950/9	-	1953/12	1954/3	1954/7
Xinjiang	Bayingdolin	Mongol	No	1950/9	-	1953/12	1954/3	1954/6
Xinjiang	Kizlisu	Kyrgyz	No	1950/9	-	1953/12	1954/2	1954/7
Xinjiang	Yili	Kazakh	No	1950/9	-	1953/12	1954/4	1954/11
Xinjiang	Bortala	Mongol	No	1950/9	-	1953/12	1954/4	1954/7
Yunnan	Xishuangbanna	Dai	No	1951/2	1952/7	-	1952/9	1953/1
Yunnan	Dehong	Dai-Jingpo	No	1951/1	-	-	1953/4	1953/7
Yunnan	Dali	Bai	Yes	1950/7	1954	1956	1956/8	1956/11
Yunnan	Nujiang	Lisu	No	1950/11	-	1954/4	1953/8	1954/8
Yunnan	Wenshan	Zhuang-Miao	Yes	1951/5	1956	1957/5	1957/3	1958/3
Yunnan	Diqing	Tibetan	Yes	1954/4	1956/8	1956/9	1954/12	1957/9
Yunnan	Honghe	Hani-Yi	No	1951/4	-	-	1953/9	1953/12
Yunnan	Chuxiong	Yi	Yes	1951/1	1957/5	1957/10	1958/1	1958/4

My case selection requires some explanations. With the focus on existing ethnic autonomous prefectures, I have selected my cases based on the dependent variable; in other words, I have chosen to study a group of cases that experience the same outcome – the granting of ethnic local autonomy.

Selecting cases that share the same outcome has a long tradition in political science research. Back in the 19th century, Mill (1872) proposes the method of agreement, through which researchers start their analysis by focusing on cases that have the same value for the dependent variable, such as economic modernization, social revolutions, and regime transition. Researchers would then identify explanatory variables that remain the same across all cases and use these variables to illuminate the outcome of interest.[3]

Despite its common use, selecting on the dependent variable has been criticized in recent decades (see George and Bennett, 2005). Achen and Snidal (1989) and Geddes (1990) both point out that the lack of variations in the outcome variable can yield biased inferences. Without having observations that exhibit different values in the dependent variable, researchers can reach misleading conclusions about both the existence and direction of the correlation or causal relationship between the explanatory variables and the outcome of interest. For instance, as discussed by Geddes (1990, 2010), many studies in the late 20th century conclude the pro-development effect of non-democratic political systems by only considering the newly industrialized countries in Asia. The conclusion turns out to be false, as they do not to take non-democratic states that fail to grow their economy, especially those in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin American, into account.[4]

Having these caveats, I argue that my decision to focus on cases sharing the same outcome of interest – that is, the granting of ethnic local autonomy – is crucial for the current project. The primary objective of the structured case study here is to study the factors for the granting of ethnic local autonomy present in every case for further statistical analysis with the inclusion of all other non-autonomous district-level units in the study sample. Doing so will help to unpack the designation process of ethnic autonomous territories to understand the sequence of events before a district-level jurisdiction officially becomes an EAT, a question

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[3]Likewise, Przeworski and Teune (1970) suggest that researchers can study the "most different systems" that witness the same consequences of analytical interest but differ along with some different dimensions. Again, when observations do not vary by the dependent variable, one should look for similarities among these observations for explanations.

[4]Perhaps it is not surprising that Achen and Snidal (1989) have named selection on the dependent variable as a "inferential felony."

that has never been fully studied before.

Several scholars have offered similar views about including case study with the use of selection on the dependent variable in the research design. Geddes (1990) suggests that focusing on cases with the same particular outcome helps to generate detailed knowledge for the building of theory and testable implications. George and Bennett (2005) also maintain that selecting cases based on the dependent variable can serve as the heuristics for initial exploratory research, based on which scholars can identify potential causal paths and factors that contribute to the outcome of interest. Dion (2003) provides a rather provocative point by asserting that studying cases that share the same values for the dependent variable can be fruitful to identify the "necessary" conditions. By holding the values of outcome variable constant across all cases, one can examine whether there exist any independent variables that barely or do not exhibit any variations across the observed cases. In doing so, one can consider this group of independent variable as the necessary conditions for the phenomenon of interest for the following statement – "a particular independent variable *must* occur for the outcome to occur" – in contrast to a statement of "sufficient" condition like "the presence of a particular independent variable *implies* the occurrence of the outcome."[5] The project "Mass Atrocity Endings" led by Bridget Conley-Zilkic and others (see `https://sites.tufts.edu/atrocityendings/`) provides a recent application of selection on the dependent variable, through which they seek to "learn the causes" that lead to the termination of mass killings (Conley and Hazlett, 2017).

The following analysis will offer useful illustrations to the theoretical claims in two ways. First, the structured case studies of the designation process of every existing ethnic autonomous prefecture will shed light on the sequence of events leading to the phenomenon of interest for us to identify the key players and how their interactions lead to EAT designations in general. Second, I can place these "necessary" conditions for the granting of ethnic local autonomy under careful scrutiny in subsequent statistical tests to explore whether they are also the sufficient conditions. After all, it is likely that district-level units outside the sample

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[5]However, as cautioned by Braumoeller and Goertz (2000), one still needs variations in both independent and dependent variables to avoid trivially necessary conditions.

here also exhibit similar or identical values of the independent variables as those included in the study. Including these conditions for quantitative analysis will also generate probabilistic estimates of these explanatory variables, which case studies often cannot produce (see Lieberson, 1991; Sekhon, 2004).

4.2 Primary Historical Sources

I have consulted various official archived documents and local publications for the case study in this chapter. Discussions below are also drawn from elite interviews during my fieldwork in China between September and December 2017. Three sources – local gazetteers, overviews, and culture and history materials, deserve careful introduction as they provide the details on the process of EAT designations.

4.2.1 Local Gazetteers

Since the 1980s, the local governments in post-1949 China have been publishing local gazetteers (*difangzhi*), which contain considerable political, economic, social, demographic, and environmental information about their jurisdictions.[6] These post-1949 local gazetteers have thus become a major source of historical and social sciences research on contemporary China (see Will, 1992; Thogersen and Clausen, 1992; Looney, 2008; Xue, 2010).[7]

For the current project, I have studied relevant provincial and prefectural gazetteers. Most of these gazetteers dedicate separate chapters, or even standalone volumes in some cases, to local demography, local government administration, local legislature, government

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[6]One could trace the tradition of compiling local gazetteers in China back to the Song Dynasty (9601279) (see Will, 1992). The post-1949 Chinese central government has encouraged provincial, district, and county governments to publish their local gazetteers. Some localities have even published multiple volumes or additional gazetteers to document the local history in the Reform Era. Townships and villages have recently started compiling their local gazetteers.

[7]To name a few, Turvey, Crees, and Fonzo (2015) study the presence of gibbons in China based on records from county gazetteers for more than four centuries to formulate policy recommendations of wildlife conservation. Walder (2014) and Walder and Lu (2017) consult local gazetteers to study the spread of political violence across the country during the early years of the Cultural Revolution.

policies toward non-Han ethnic groups, and a chronology of key historical events in the local jurisdiction, to identify the chain of events leading to the official granting of local autonomy.

4.2.2 SNAC Overviews

In the late 1980s, the State Nationality Affairs Commission (SNAC) published a series of "Overviews" (*gaikuang*) on every ethnic autonomous territory. The SNAC asked EATs to revise the original overviews in the 1980s and published the second edition of the entire series between 2008 and 2009 as the Party welcomed the 60th anniversary of the People's Republic of China.

The first series in the 1980s largely focuses on the language and culture of local non-Han ethnic groups while providing very little information about ethnic local autonomy and other related policies toward the non-Han people in the local jurisdictions. In contrast, the SNAC provided EATs with a standard outline for the revised Overviews and asked every EAT to devote one of the chapters to document its designation and illustrate the use of ethnic local autonomy in their jurisdictions. The revised Overviews thus serve as a valuable primary source for additional crucial details of EAT designations that receive little attention in the local gazetteers – such as the central government's pressure on the provincial leaders to speed up the processing of local non-Han elites' request for EAT designation. Some prefectural gazetteers have also only marked the year of their founding convention without specifying the process and the actors involved in the requesting and preparation stages for EAT designations.

4.2.3 Local *Culture and History Materials*

Finally, I have studied the "culture and history materials" (*wenshi ziliao*), a unique primary source of local history in post-1949 China.

In April 1959, Zhou Enlai, who served as the Chairman of the National Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (PCC), proposed to have local PCCs collect their culture

and history materials so that local elderly residents could recount their memories about key historical events before they passed away. To carry out Zhou's proposal, the local PCCs formed a local Culture and History Commission and started inviting retired cadres and military officers to write about their experiences in various major national and local historical events, such as the Long March (1934-1936), the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945), the Civil War (1945-1950), and the founding of the People's Republic of China (1949). The local PCCs then collect these short essays and publish them in local *wenshi ziliao*. Local *wenshi ziliao* are considered as "pseudohistorical" records (*yieshi*) as they provide valuable personal accounts to supplement the "official" history (*zhengshi*) documented by the local gazetteers.

For decades, local *wenshi ziliao* were only available to Party cadres and government officials. Meanwhile, since the local PCCs do not publish these materials on a regular basis, it has been very challenging to locate a comprehensive collection of local *wenshi ziliao* in China. During my fieldwork in China, I attempted to access as many local *wenshi ziliao* as possible with the help of the local PCCs and People's Congress in EATs as well as Fudan University Library and the National Library of China have also provided valuable guidance.

For most EATs, local *wenshi ziliao* offer incredibly first-hand accounts, as retired non-Han cadres wrote about various tasks they had to accomplish before the EAT founding convention. Many have also discussed their interactions with provincial and central leaders as their jurisdictions were granted ethnic local autonomy. In several EATs, these materials are the only possible primary sources other than local gazetteers as many senior cadres either had passed away before my visits or had become too ill for face-to-face interviews.

4.3   Designation of Ethnic Autonomous Prefectures

On paper, districts and counties that seek to become ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties have to submit a formal request to their respective provincial governments to express their interest in becoming EATs. In the request, districts and counties have to explain

Figure 4.1: Designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties.

Districts/Counties Request	→	Provinces Submit	→	The State Council Approves	→	EATs Form Preparatory Committee	→	EATs Hold Founding Convention

why they deserve ethnic local autonomy with concrete evidence, such as the relative size of the non-Han ethnic groups in the local population. After the review by the provincial governments, their reports will then be delivered to the State Council, which holds the final say about the designation of ethnic autonomous territories. Following the State Council's approval, prospective EATs then form a preparatory committee to organize the founding convention to declare their official establishment. In contrast, provinces will directly speak to the Center about the possibility of becoming autonomous regions.

A close examination of the history of existing autonomous prefectures delineates a more complicated process than the one I have outlined above. According to uncovered historical records, I find that the designation of ethnic autonomous territories (EATs) is neither a solely bottom-up process as portrayed in the formal rules nor a strictly top-down repressive process as many have presumed. Instead, the granting of ethnic local autonomy across the country involves a rather intricate interaction among the central government, provincial elites, and local non-Han communities.

Figure 4.1 summarizes the general formal steps that districts and counties are supposed to go through before they become ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties. In this section, I will follow the steps indicated in Figure 4.1. For each phase, I will first explain the formal procedures and then discuss important deviations from the designed process. The details discussed here were drawn from elite interviews and archived documents from local government archives. These documents provide rich details about the establishment of different EATs, including the main tasks of the preparatory committee and how different committee members divided up these tasks. Archived materials also show the agenda for the founding convention.

4.3.1 Requesting Provincial Review

The first two steps in Figure 4.1 constitute the *request* phase. A district-level jurisdiction has to submit a formal request to its respective provincial government if it seeks to become an ethnic autonomous prefecture. In the request, the district-level jurisdiction has to explain why it deserves to become an EAT with compelling evidence. There is a clear guideline regarding the evidence that should be included in the request, although many district-level jurisdictions start by highlighting the percentage of the non-Han ethnic groups in the local population. That said, the archived documents from the National People's Congress have shown that the central government never imposes a clear-cut threshold for the relative size of the local non-Han population and it will take "other historical and socioeconomic factors" into consideration. The request to become an EAT seems to be largely processed on a case-by-case basis at the national and provincial levels.

Existing ethnic autonomous prefectures have differed significantly regarding the actor who submitted such request. According to available historical records, several prefectures were created in the early 1950s without any prior requests from subnational jurisdictions. Some ethnic autonomous prefectures, such as Xiangxi (in Hunan) and Liangshan (first in Xikang, later in Sichuan), held the founding convention soon after the arrival of the Central Research Team, which was dispatched by Beijing. Other prefectures, such Yianbian (in Jilin), appeared to have provincial governments initiate the request on their behalf although Jilin's request only took place after the Central Research Team's visit. I will discuss the role of the Central Research Team in detail later.

Compared with EAT designations in the 1950s, the designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures in the 1980s appears to be more formalized, as both Qianxinan (in Guizhou) and Enshi (in Hubei) both went through the administrative hierarchy before the granting of ethnic local autonomy. They both submitted the request to their respective provincial governments, which would then review the request before sending it to the State Council in Beijing. Nonetheless, as indicated by the historical records, both prefectures embarked on the pursuit of ethnic local autonomy only after local non-Han officials attended the

SNAC Convention, which took place in Beijing following the end of the Cultural Revolution. Existing documents in Enshi even explicitly stress the influence of Beijing as local non-Han elites' primary motivation to request ethnic local autonomy.

Historical records show that the provincial government could demand additional materials from prefectures to justify the necessity of ethnic local autonomy and kept the request at the provincial level. For instance, Enshi, a Tujia-Miao Autonomous Prefecture in Hubei, was asked to submit three reports to the provincial government after its first request in 1980. After the submission of the first request, Enshi waited for another three years to become an ethnic autonomous prefecture in 1983. More importantly, it only came after non-Han cadres in Enshi traveled to Beijing to express their demand, which drove the visit of the SNAC Director to Hubei to "negotiate" with the provincial government.

Overall, the request for EAT designations often takes place after the Center's mobilization of local non-Han elites. Beijing also did not sit quietly in the process, as often it had intervened in the exchanges between the prefectures and provinces in the designation process. In the following section, I will provide more details about Beijing's role in EAT designations.

4.3.2   Obtaining Beijing's Approval

The official approval from the State Council is required for every EAT designation. An ethnic autonomous prefecture could only start preparing for the founding convention after it heard from the State Council. In the State Council, two ministries are worth particular attention. First, SNAC would review the request for ethnic local autonomy sent by the provincial governments. Once the SNAC confirms the designation of an ethnic autonomous territory with the State Council's approval, the request would then move to the Ministry of Civil Affairs, which is responsible for any changes in the local administrative divisions. In the end, the request would receive the formal approval in the State Council meetings before returning it to the provincial governments. One should note that the Ministry of Civil Affairs does not hold the power to approve the request of EAT designation. It will only register all necessary administrative changes after the State Council announces the official approval.

Existing ethnic autonomous prefectures have also exhibited remarkable variation in obtaining the central government's approval for EAT designations. In the 1950s, it appears that the State Council and great administrative areas (GAAs), the local jurisdiction that once existed between the central government and the provinces from 1949 to 1954 (see Solinger, 1977b; Xin, 1999), both held the power to approve the designation of EATs. For instance, Yianbian, the Chosun (Korean) Autonomous Prefecture in Jilin, received the formal approval from both the State Council and the Northeast GAA, which took place on the same day according to historical records. The naming of Ganzi and Aba, two Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures in Sichuan, took place following the green light from the Southwest GAA in addition to the State Council's approval.[8] For several ethnic autonomous prefectures, historical records during the same period are ambiguous about whether their designations had the Center's prior approval, as they were named shortly after the Central Research Team's visits from Beijing (see below) between 1950 and 1952.

In some cases, the State Council approved the proposal to create all ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties in a single province altogether. For instance, Xinjiang submitted the plan of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties, which received the State Council's approval in late 1953. A similar situation took place in Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan, where most ethnic autonomous prefectures were built following the meetings between the Central Research Team from Beijing and their respective provincial leaders and local non-Han elites. I will return to the role of the Central Research Team in the following section.

4.3.3 Forming the Preparatory Committee

With the State Council's approval, an EAT only needs to hold a founding convention to declare its official establishment. The formation of a preparatory committee would precede the founding convention. Depending on the specific set of tasks at hand, the duration of the preparation stage has lasted from one month to a year across existing ethnic autonomous

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[8]After 1949, Ganzi was first placed under the Xikang Province, which was merged into Sichuan in 1951. Also, while first being created as a Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Aba became a Tibetan-Qiang Autonomous Prefecture in 1987.

prefectures.[9]

In general, the preparatory committee for most ethnic autonomous prefectures has two primary tasks. First, the committee has to hold local "elections" to select the delegates for the founding convention. While the total number of delegates has varied significantly, the central government requires the preparatory committee to engineer the representation of the titular ethnic groups and other ethnicities in the founding convention so that the composition roughly corresponds to each group's share in the local population. In addition to the inclusion of different ethnic groups, before the Cultural Revolution the committee would have to ensure that the selected delegates also represent the class structure in the local jurisdiction. In particular, workers and peasants would be "reasonably" represented in the founding convention based on their relative size in the local workforce. In the end, the founding convention should represent not only different ethnic groups in the prefecture but also the social classes as honored by the Chinese Communist Party.

Figure 4.2 shows the relationship between the relative size of the designated non-Han ethnic group(s) in the local population and the percentage of the delegates from these groups in the founding convention for every ethnic autonomous prefecture. It is common that the designated non-Han groups are *overrepresented* at the founding convention. Only eight prefectures saw the *underrepresentation* of the designated non-Han ethnic groups; that is, the percentage of the delegates from the designated non-Han groups is lower than the groups' relative size in the total population.

Second, the preparatory committees is also responsible for advertising the notion of ethnic local autonomy in their respective local non-Han communities. The committee will then assemble a special propaganda team (*xuanchuan dui*) and dispatch it to every township and village in the prefecture, where the team members distribute pamphlets to explain the designation of an ethnic autonomous prefecture. The team will also organize local community meetings to introduce how ethnic local autonomy leads to the improvement in the political

[9]While some ethnic autonomous prefectures created a preparatory committee before the Center officially decided to grant them local autonomy, the function of the pre-approval preparatory committee is different than its post-approval counterpart, as the former largely focused on preparing the formal report that explains the necessity of ethnic local autonomy. Here I focus on *post-preparatory* preparatory committees.

Figure 4.2: Representation of designated non-Han groups in the founding convention or the inaugural local People's Congress of ethnic autonomous prefectures. Sources: Local gazetteers, SNAC overviews, and local *Culture and History Materials*.
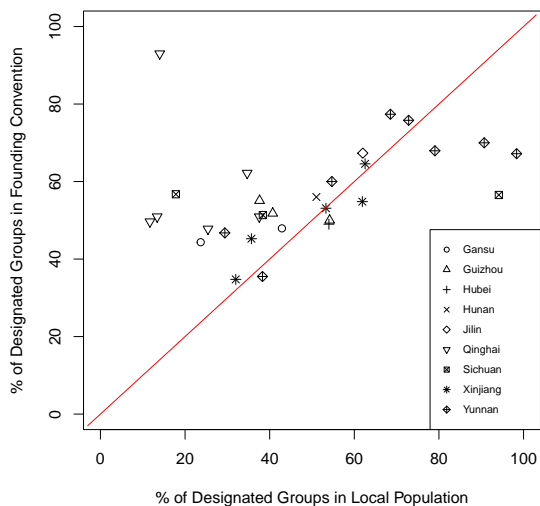
and social status of non-Han ethnic groups.[10] One should not underestimate the importance of the propaganda team, which was more common for EAT designations in the 1950s. The formation of the propaganda team and the central government's emphasis on the team's work suggest that many local non-Han leaders either remained unclear about, if not unaware of, the content of ethnic local autonomy. As a result, the creation of autonomous prefectures often took place without genuine grassroots interest beforehand.[11]

In addition to these two tasks, the Center has also asked some prefectures to conduct a population census to count the ethnic composition of the local population. The inclusion of population census offers several crucial lessons regarding EAT designations in post-1949 China. For one thing, conducting a census after the State Council's formal approval once again suggests that the decision to grant ethnic local autonomy is not solely based on ethnic

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[10]Very often, the propaganda team will include young cadres from the local Chinese Communist Youth League. Several interviewees were former members of the propaganda team.

[11]One interviewee provided the following example: "The central government repeatedly stresses that ethnic local autonomy will end longstanding discrimination and repression toward the non-Han ethnic groups in the country, but we have never felt being treated like that as our group had always been the leading group here before the arrival of the Chinese Communist Party."

demography, as the Center has rendered its approval of EAT designations without having a clear picture about the presence of local non-Han communities in mind. Meanwhile, when the population census is one of the tasks during the preparation phase, Beijing's approval usually includes the addition of neighboring townships and villages in other counties into the new EATs. As explained by local non-Han cadres, any border changes can indicate the direct intervention from Beijing because the central government controls local administrative divisions, and local non-Han elites would not risk their relationships with neighboring local jurisdictions by requesting any border changes.

4.3.4 Holding the Founding Convention

Every ethnic autonomous prefecture has held a "founding convention" (*chengli dahui*) to declare the official designation. After Beijing introduces the elections of local People's Congress across the country in the late 1950s (see Xin, 1999), the founding convention is also the inaugural meeting of the local People's Congress of the new EAT.

At the convention, which can last more than a week, the delegates will "elect" the leading cadres for the local People's Government and the local People's Congress. As indicated in the archived documents, the leading cadres would have been determined before the convention and delegates would receive a written note to inform them for whom they should vote for during the founding convention.[12] For EATs designated before 1966, the delegates were responsible for passing the organizational regulations for the local People's Government and the local People's Congress. At the convention, the delegates would discuss the drafts provided and then voted on any revisions. Since the 1980s, after Beijing stipulates the formulation of the autonomous regulations in LELA, the founding convention will only elect the director of the local People's Congress Standing Committee, who will be in charge of the

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[12]In multi-group EATs, these posts will be alternated between different groups. There exist no formal rules about how groups allocate the governing powers in multi-group EATs, and it will be a topic of future research. As I have learned from my trips to different multi-group EATs, different non-Han groups can share their granted ethnic local autonomy in at least three ways. First, different groups can alternate the posts between different terms. Second, different groups can choose to divide up the posts equally. Finally, different groups may allocate government posts proportionally based on the relative share of different groups in the local population.

drafting of the autonomous regulations.

<center>*   *   *</center>

The overview of the sequence of events that lead to the designation of EATs above offers a more complicated picture of the granting of ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 than presumed.

According to the official procedures, the central government requires every autonomy-seeking district jurisdictions to go through their respective provincial governments to request the EAT status. On paper, the State Council will only process the requests from the district jurisdictions after their respective provincial superiors have conducted a thorough review and submit them to Beijing. However, drawing from various primary historical sources, I find that the central government has usually interfered with, and even jump-started, the designed "bottom-up" process. First, there is evidence that every ethnic autonomous prefecture started the official process of EAT designation following the central government's direct ethnic mobilization at the local level. Next, the central government has stepped in to expedite the whole process when the provincial governments appear to impede a request of EAT designation from their districts.

Altogether, the designation of ethnic autonomous territories in post-1949 China is neither a simple bottom-up nor a clear top-down process. In the former case, the granting of ethnic local autonomy would have been largely driven by non-Han elites' genuine interests without any outsider's intervention. In the latter case, the central government will simply name EATs without any prior communication with local jurisdictions. In the next section, I will discuss different channels of the central government's involvement in EAT designations.

4.4   Role of the Central Government

While the path towards the granting of ethnic local autonomy has varied across existing ethnic autonomous prefectures, it is important to note that the central government (in some

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cases the central leader himself) and local non-Han communities have established various institutional or personal contacts before the initiation of the designation process. Before coming to power in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party had their first encounters non-Han ethnic groups in Southwestern and Northeastern China during the Long March (1934-1936) (Dreyer, 1976; Gladney, 1998). In the 1950s, the Chinese government dispatched multiple research teams to different parts of the country while establishing SNAC in the State Council to hold nationwide conventions that brought local non-Han elites across the country to Beijing to meet the central leader in person (Xu, 2009; Mullaney, 2011; Kazuko, 2016). Mao Zedong also personally specified the key areas for the designation of ethnic autonomous territories.

4.4.1 Long March

For many ethnic autonomous prefectures, their first encounter with the Chinese Communist Party and its cadres took place during the Long March – more than a decade before the Party successfully defeated the KMT during the Civil War. According to uncovered historical records, 15 ethnic autonomous prefectures met the Party's Red Army during the Long March. Mao even briefly stayed in a number of them when he and other cadres were on their way to Yan'an. Some prefectures were also home to the Party's revolutionary bases during the Anti-Japanese War and Civil War. Qiandongnan, a Miao-Dong autonomous prefecture in Guizhou, also hosted the Party's Liping Meeting, which was chaired by Zhou Enlai, in 1934. The Dian-Qian-Gui Border Region, one of the Party's revolutionary bases in the 1930s, also included today's Wenshan Zhuang-Miao Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan. The Xiang-Er-Chuan Border Region that the Party created in the same decade was based in Xiangxi, now a Tujia-Miao autonomous prefecture in Hunan. During the Civil War, the Party established the Bai-Bao-Le Border Region in Hainan.[13]

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[13]One can also find the trace of He Long and Ren Bishi, who commanded the Second Red Front Army during the revolutionary period, in many ethnic autonomous prefectures in Guizhou. Ren was a top Politburo member along with Mao, Liu Shaoqi, and Zhou Enlai before he died of a hemorrhagic stroke in 1950 at the age of 46. He Long, on the other hand, later became the Vice Prime Minister in 1954. During the Cultural Revolution, Lin Biao accused He Long of coup attempts against Mao. In 1969, He died in Beijing as he

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Following the Long March, Mao and other leading cadres (e.g., Zhou Enlai) began to rethink the Party's ethnic policies, which to this moment had focused on the promise of secession and self-determination, and systematically recruit non-Han cadres. Many of these non-Han cadres later served as the key local Party and government posts while playing an active role in the designation of ethnic autonomous territories.[14]

4.4.2 Mao's Personal Choices

Following the Party's victory in the Civil War, Mao Zedong issued a memo to Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, Ren Bishi, as well as Li Weihan, who became the founding director of the State Council.[15]

In his memo, Mao specified several provinces, including Tibet, Qinghai, Ningxia, Xinjiang, Gansu, Xikang, Yunnan, Guangxi, and Guizhou, to be the main areas for the granting of ethnic local autonomy in China. In addition to these provinces, noticeably, Mao also included Hainan and Xiangxi, the districts in Guangdong and Hunan respectively, for the "careful consideration" of EAT designations. Except for Tibet, which became an ethnic autonomous region in 1965, all other locations that Mao mentioned in his 1950 memo saw the creation of ethnic autonomous prefectures. Hainan and Xiangxi themselves became ethnic autonomous prefectures.

could not receive the treatment for his diabetes.

[14]For instance, Ou Baichuan led the designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties in Guizhou. Ou was a Miao cadre who served under General He Long before 1949. As a native of Songtao, Ou directed the Nationality Affairs Committee in Guizhou in the early 1950s. He later became the Vice Governor in Guizhou before he was purged in the Anti-Rightist Movement in 1957. For more details, see the *Biography of Ou Baichuan* (Songtao Department of Propaganda and Party History Research Center, 2004).

[15]The memo, issued in September 1950, is retrieved from the Database for the History of Contemporary Chinese Political Movement. I thank the assistance from the Universities Service Centre for China Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. See `https://ccrd.usc.cuhk.edu.hk` (in Chinese).

4.4.3 Central Research Teams

Under Mao's commands, the State Council recruited a group of researchers and government officials to assemble four Central Research Teams in June 1950. As documented by Kazuko (2016), the members of the Central Research Teams were selected from various departments and ministries in the State Council and leading universities across the country. The Central Research Teams had representatives from the Communist Youth League, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Ministry of Culture. Between 1950 and 1952, Beijing deployed these research teams to different non-Han localities across the country (see Xu, 2009) (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Central Research Teams between 1950 and 1952. Sources: Xu (2009) and Kazuko (2016). Leaders of each team are marked with stars.

	Number of Delegates	Key Members	Destinations	Duration	
				Start	End
Southwest	120+	Liu Geping* Fei Xiaotong Xia Kangnong	Xikang Sichuan Yunnan Guizhou	1950/7	1951/6
Northwest	120+	Shen Junru* Sa Kongliao Peng Sike Ma Yuhuai	Shaanxi Xinjiang Gansu Ningxia Qinghai	1950/8	1950/12
Central South	70	Li Dequan* Fei Xiaotong Cao Mengjun Mao Jie Xiong Shouqi	Guangdong Guangxi Hunan	1951/7	1951/10
Northeast	-	Peng Zemin* Sa Kongliao Peng Sike	Inner Mongolia Liaoning Rehe Jilin	1952/7	1952/9

Historical records indicate that these Central Research Teams had traveled to all existing ethnic autonomous prefectures before these prefectures initiated the official process of EAT designations. In every prefecture, the respective Central Research Team would speak to the leaders of the non-Han communities while conducting local ethnographic and linguistic research Luo (see 1952), both of which help to establish the formal connections between local non-Han communities and the central government in Beijing. The team would also organize community meetings with local non-Han groups and the Han cadres to discuss the

government's ethnic policies, including the possibility of becoming an ethnic autonomous territory. As indicated by Mullaney (2011), the Central Research Teams were also responsible for identifying official non-Han ethnic categories in the country as Beijing was conducting the first population census in 1953.

The Central Research Teams are undoubtedly essential for the designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures. For instance, despite Mao's 1950 memo, Hainan was stripped of the EAT status in 1951. It was only after the arrival of the Central Research Team later in the same year that Hainan was restored as a Li-Miao Autonomous Prefecture in 1952. Similarly, although it had been a non-Han Party base during the Civil War, Jilin Province only delivered Beijing the report to turn Yianbian into a Chosun (Korean) autonomous prefecture following the Central Research Team's visit in July 1952. In Qinghai, Guizhou, Yunnan, and Xinjiang, the Central Research Team focused on building connections with provincial leaders before visiting the districts. The provincial governments in Qinghai, Guizhou, Yunnan, and Xinjiang submitted the plan of EAT designations soon afterward.[16]

4.4.4 SNAC Enlarged Meetings of Non-Han Ethnic Groups

When the Central Research Teams traveled to various parts of the country, the central government also invited the leaders of local non-Han communities to Beijing. Two enlarged meetings (*kuoda huiyi*) are particularly noteworthy as they precede the nationwide designation of EATs, including ethnic autonomous prefectures, in the 1950s and 1980s.

In December 1951, with SNAC's coordination, the Center convened the first enlarged meeting of non-Han ethnic groups in Beijing. In the meeting, Mao and other central leaders met many local non-Han elites in person. As documented by the local gazetteer, for instance, non-Han representatives from Guolou, Qinghai, which later became a Tibetan autonomous prefecture, met Mao in a separate small meeting. Both Aba and Xishuangbanna documented their local leaders' visits to the capital city, during which these local non-Han

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[16]In the case of Xinjiang, the provincial government formed a special committee and submitted the proposal of ethnic local autonomy in 1953, which led to the creation of autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties in the following year with Beijing's approval (Zeng, 2009; Bovingdon, 2010).

elites attended face-to-face meetings with Mao and other central leaders, before they became ethnic autonomous prefectures.

Again, in August 1979, following the end of the Cultural Revolution, SNAC held another enlarged meeting in Beijing for the "re-education" of government policies toward the non-Han ethnic groups. The meeting of 1979 led to a new wave of ethnic identification and the designation of ethnic autonomous territories in the country. For instance, Enshi, which later became a Tujia-Miao autonomous prefecture in 1983, named two Tujia autonomous counties between 1979 and 1980 before starting its request to become an ethnic autonomous prefecture.

4.5 Central Leader and Provincial Elites of Ethnic Autonomous Prefectures

As suggested by the theory developed in Chapter 2, the presence of central leader's strong inner-circle rivals and his recalcitrant provincial elites incentivizes the leader to introduce ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China. In this section, I examine existing records on the provincial leaders of ethnic autonomous prefectures to see whether they indeed had any strains in their relationships with the central leader – either because they had a relatively weak ties with the Party head or because they had a close connection with the head's most threatening competitors in the Politburo. Many of these provincial cadres are also known for being vocal critics of the central leader, particularly Mao Zedong, and creating their own local elite in the provinces.

Again, the analysis here is for the purpose of illustration, and the discussion below by no means serves as the attempt of hypothesis testing, as I exclude provincial leaders who did not see the designation of ethnic autonomous territories. Table 4.3 lists the leading provincial cadres when Beijing named ethnic autonomous prefectures in their jurisdictions.

As revealed by internal Party archives, many provincial Party Secretaries and Governors in Table 4.3 are criticized for their attempts to undermine the central leader's ruling position

Table 4.3: Leaders of the provinces that saw the designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures. Source: The dataset of Chinese local elites compiled by the author.

	Party Secretary		Governor	
Jilin	Liu Xiwu	1949-1952/4	Zhou Chiheng	1950-1952/3
	Li Mengling	1952/4-1955/2	Li Youwen	1952/4-1968/3
Sichuan	Li Jingquan	1950-1965/2	Li Jingquan	1950-1955/1
Xinjiang	Wang Zhen	1949-1952/6	Bao Erhan	1949-1955/9
	Wang Enmao	1952/6-1971/5	Saifuding	1955/9-1968/9
Hubei	Chen Pixian	1978-1983/1	Han Ningfu	1979-1983/4
	Guang Guanfu	1983/2-1994/12	Huang Zhizhen	1983/4-1986/1
Hunan	Huang Kecheng	1949-1952/8	Wang Shoudao	1950-1952/12
Gansu	Zhang Desheng	1949-1954/6	Deng Baoshan	1950-1967/5
	Zhang Zhongliang	1954/6-1961/1		
Yunnan	Song Renqiong	1950/2-1952/7	Chen Geng	1950-1955/2
	Xie Fuzhi	1952/7-1959/8	Guo Yingqiu	1955/2-1958/11
Qinghai	Zhang Zhongliang	1949-1954/5	Zhao Shoushan	1950/1-1952/10
			Zhang Zhongliang	1952/11-1954/6

in the Party. According to a 1976 report, in which the Department of Organization lists 61 cadres who "violated" the spirit of the Cultural Revolution, Li Youwen – Jilin's Governor when Beijing named Yianbian as an ethnic autonomous prefecture in 1952 – was imprisoned for questioning the orders from Mao in the 1950s. Zhang Zhongliang, the leader of both Qinghai and Gansu in the 1950s, was forced to criticize himself for being "arrogant" and "stubborn" to ignore the central leader's commands. He also confessed that he built an alliance with the "capitalists" in the Party during his tenure in both provinces.[17]

Many in Table 4.3 also became the targets of purges and mass criticism for committing the crime of "localism" (*difang zhuyi*) by building their own provincial "independent kingdoms" in the country. Zhou Lin, who served as the Party Secretary and Governor of Guizhou Province for a decade before the Cultural Revolution, was criticized for building his local political force against Mao in the province.[18] Mao also condemned Huang Kecheng and Zhou Xiaozhou, each serving the post of the Party Secretary of Hunan in the 1950s, for the similar "anti-Party" activity. In Yunnan, the Red Guards reported the wrongdoings of Song Renqiong, the first Party Secretary of the province after 1949; Song was reported for seeking to sabotage the "dictatorship of the proletariat" by promoting the idea that treats Yunnan

[17]In the same report, Zhang also accepted the Party center's accusation that Xi Zhongxun (the father of Xi Jinping) and others were trying to build their power base in Northeastern China. For the discussion about "capitalists" in the political movement during PRC's first two decades, see Chan (1979).

[18]Zhou was detained until Deng Xiaoping regained his power in the Party center in 1975.

as a unique province and resisting Beijing's "plans of revolution."[19] Bao Erhan, the first Governor after Xinjiang's "peaceful liberation" in 1949, went through endless interrogations for questioning the supremacy of Maoism. Wang Zheng, Xinjiang's first Party Secretary, was denounced for appointing his lackeys in the province. While Wang himself was able to avoid mass criticism in the Cultural Revolution, many of his former and current subordinates were arrested and had to "confess" their "anti-Party" plots in public meetings.

Two provinces – Sichuan and Guangdong – are worth additional discussion, as they have been the focus of existing studies of central-local relations in post-1949 China by scholars outside the country. Both provinces have the same cadres holding the posts of provincial Party Secretary and Governor at the same time in the 1950s. These cadres were well known as the "local emperors" (*tu huangdi*) in their respective provinces for their entrenched presence in the provincial leadership. First, Li Jingquan controlled the provincial leadership in Sichuan as both the Party Secretary and the Governor. In 1960, he was promoted to the first Party Secretary of the Southwest Bureau. As noted by Solinger (1977b) and Goodman (1980, 1986), Li was considered a vocal critic of Mao's policies while asserting his political influence by saying "without Sichuan, there would be no China." During the Cultural Revolution, available official documents suggest that Li was a major target of mass criticism campaigns for colluding with local landlords and capitalists as an "anti-revolutionary bad element." Li was also condemned for his plan to establish the "Li Dynasty" in Southwestern China by cultivating his followers in Sichuan and neighboring provinces. Similarly, in the PRC's early years, Guangdong was famous for the prevalence of "Cantonese localism" (Vogel, 1969). After 1949, Guangdong was under the control of Ye Jianying, a military general as well as a native of the province. Ye took several leading Party and government positions in Guangdong, serving as the provincial Party Secretary and Governor between 1949 and 1955. During Ye's tenure in the province, Guangdong saw increasing tension between native cadres, who strove to maintain the dominance of the local gang, and their colleagues sent by Beijing from other provinces. Cadres from Guangdong and other provinces constantly fought about

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[19]Song's successor, Yen Hongyen, faced a similar fate and killed himself in 1967 following the raid of the Red Guards in Kunming, the capital city of Yunnan.

how to implement various policy initiatives from Beijing.[20] In 1955, Beijing replaced Ye with Tao Zhu and Zhao Ziyang while removing several native cadres from power (e.g., Fang Fang). As the question of localism dictated the political landscape in Guangdong, the central government decided to name Hainan a Li-Miao autonomous prefecture despite its brief abolition in 1951.

Finally, many of those listed in Table 4.3 only had weak ties with the Communist Party as well as the central leader. Deng Baoshan, the first Governor of Gansu, was not a Party member at all. During the Civil War, Deng was a local warlord in Northwestern China; he played a crucial role in arbitrating the negotiation between the Party and Fu Zouyi, a former KMT general in Beijing, and facilitating the city's liberation in 1949. Many in Table 4.3 were also either the colleagues or subordinates with the central leader's prominent inner-circle rivals. Historical records show that Deng Baoshan was one of the local officials who "appreciated" Deng Xiaoping's political and military talents before Deng's rise in the Party (see Wang, 2004a). Liu Xiwu, the first post-1949 Party Secretary of Jilin, was a member of the ruling clique under the command of Liu Shaoqi and Peng Zhen in Northeastern China (see Yang, 2016). Both Liu and Peng were removed from the Party center in the Cultural Revolution. Huang Kecheng and Zhou Xiaozhou were close to Peng Dehuai, who was repressed and purged in the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution for questioning Mao. One can say the same for the ruling provincial cadres in Southwestern China, as Deng Xiaoping was in charge of the Southwestern GAA before he was promoted to the Party center. Li Jingquan, the disgraced "King of Sichuan," and Song Renquan, the first Party Secretary of Yunnan, were both tagged as Deng's local agents.

4.6   Conclusion

In this chapter, drawing from various original historical sources, I have examined the history of existing ethnic autonomous prefectures to rebuild the process of EAT designations in

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[20]For instance, they could not agree with each other on the pace and intensity of land reform, which usually involved the use of violent means (Xin, 1999).

post-1949 China. While the focus on ethnic autonomous prefectures here is subject to the pitfalls of selecting cases on the dependent variable, the study of these cases provides some preliminary illustrations for the proposed theory.

I have found that the granting of ethnic local autonomy is not a simple top-down or bottom-up process. Instead, the designation of ethnic autonomous territories appears to be a bottom-up process that takes place only after the central government's mobilization of local non-Han communities. Before a district officially becomes an ethnic autonomous prefecture, the central government has also stepped in when the provincial government appears to hinder the designation process. The granting of ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China thus follows a crooked path. While on paper Beijing requires local non-Han elites to submit a form request to their respective provincial governments, the requests appear to be actually driven by the central government's various *ex ante* contacts with local non-Han elites. The tasks Beijing tends to assign during the preparatory phase in the designation process also suggest the absence of voluntary grassroots demands for ethnic local autonomy. After discussing the different means through which the central government can interfere with the designed process of EAT designations, I have also discovered that the designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures has tended to take place in the provinces where their ruling leaders had a loose or difficult relationship with the central leader.

These findings warrant a new perspective on post-1949 Chinese ethnic local autonomy, which has been largely considered as an institution of ethnic appeasement or repression in the country. The findings here are consistent with the main argument. While the case studies in this chapter do not provide a valid test to the derived hypotheses, they do suggest elite interactions – in particular those between the central and provincial elites – as a crucial factor behind the introduction of ethnic local autonomy in China.

CHAPTER 5

Power Dynamics within the Chinese Communist Party

Since 1949, China has grown to become one of the most durable hegemonic party regimes in the world.[1] To unpack the underlying mechanisms of regime resilience in post-1949 China, researchers have paid particular attention to the Chinese Communist Party's central leadership. Elite politics thus becomes one of the most important research topics in the literature on contemporary Chinese politics. After Nathan (1973) proposes a set of stylized models to demonstrate the formation and interactions within and between different *factions* inside the Party, scholars have explored how the cooperation and competition between different groups within the Party have shaped a variety of important policy and political decisions in post-1949 China (e.g., Shirk, 1993; Yang, 2004b; Huang, 2006; Shih, 2009; Shih, Adolph, and Liu, 2012; Wang and Wang, 2018).

As in the case of other authoritarian regimes, opaque communications among top leaders in the Party center have divided the scholars of Chinese elites politics. Conceptually, previous studies have debated whether "factionalism" or "informal group politics" can best capture the nature of Chinese political elite interactions. Some argue that multiple "factions," each of which constitutes a hierarchically structured patron-client network, have split the Party center. Others suggest somewhat the opposite, contending that the ruling cadres have maintained informal personal ties with fluid group boundaries. Researchers have also discussed different forces that lead to elite affiliations and group formation within the Party. Scholars have also been discussing whether one group necessarily dominates over others or different

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[1]I follow the typology built by Geddes (1999) and Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2018), who identify hegemonic party regimes as one of the leading types of non-democratic states in the post-WWII period.

groups have reached some sort of power balance in the Party center. China scholars have largely consulted a variety of second-hand or ad hoc qualitative information, such as oral histories and internal Party documents, and offer many different views regarding both the number and the types of "factions" or "informal groups" in the Party's central leadership (see Pye, 1981; Dittmer and Wu, 1995; Tsou, 1995).

As more elite profiles and new statistical tools became available in the past two decades, recent studies have attempted to build systematic indicators to peer into the black box of Chinese elite politics. With a particular focus on the Party center, which usually refers to the Politburo and its Standing Committee, previous studies have consulted the Party newspapers (e.g., the People's Daily) (e.g., Yang, 1987; Kou and Cheng, 2006; Kou and Liang, 2008) and the biographical information of cadres that hold key leadership posts (e.g., Bo, 2004a, 2007, 2008; Shih, Shan, and Liu, 2010) to identify the dominant cadres or groups and characterize their mutual ties and interactions.

Building on existing studies, I argue that many of these approaches provide only partial solutions. First, the use of the Party newspapers demands prior knowledge about how the Party center is split among different cadres or groups before locating relevant news items to quantify their relative power balance. Some may attempt to build the co-citation networks of the ruling Chinese cadres to identify their connections, but two cadres are not necessarily connected when they are both mentioned in the same articles. Second, while the biographical information helps to show the *types* of leading cadres in the Party, the literature has yet to formulate a consistent set of biographical characteristics required to analyze the internal politics of the Party.[2] The journalistic accounts of the Chinese elite politics usually only focus on some particular sets of biographical features without fully specifying if people that share the same particular characteristics are really connected together.

The illustration of the proposed theory in Chapter 2 requires a set of measures that can

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[2]One of a few important exceptions is Keller (2016), who applies social network analysis (SNA) to estimate the relative importance of different individual characteristics for the selection of Politburo members in the past two Central Committees. She finds that, among all conventionally known individuals' demographic and career characteristics, formal co-worker ties best predict the selection of a Central Committee member into the Politburo.

systematically indicate the degree of agency loss imposed by the central leader's inner-circle and local agents. In this chapter, I propose to undertake this task by constructing a group of innovative measures of elite connectedness, namely the degree to which two cadres are connected with each other. While previous studies have largely treated elite connectedness as the indicator of patron-client exchanges between the political elites, here I argue that elite connectedness affects the risk of agent defection or the cost of agent monitoring for the central leader.

In this chapter, I use the biographical similarity, which takes into account a cadre's entire life history, between a pair of cadres as the measure of elite connectedness. A higher degree of connectedness between the central leader and his agents in the Politburo and the Chinese provinces will indicate a lower risk of agent defection and a lower cost of agent monitoring for the central leader, as the central leader may find it easier to trust or monitor his agents through shared life experiences. A higher degree of connectedness among local elites, in contrast, can be troublesome for the central leader as he may not hold any shared experiences to resolve the issue of information asymmetry between him and the local elites for effective monitoring, and they, in turn, may find it easier to collude against him.

With a complete biographical datasets of all Central Committee members (1921-2015) and provincial elites (provincial Party secretaries and governors), I combine three different statistical methods from supervised machine learning and network science to build innovative measures of central and provincial elite connectedness. To measure the degree of central leadership fragmentation, first, I apply different feature selection algorithms from supervised machine learning to identify the set of politically relevant biographical covariates, or *features*, that can predict the selection of Politburo members in each year after 1949. With these selected covariates, next, I employ the Gaussian kernel to create an innovative measure of demographic and career similarity between individual cadres to reflect the *strength* of their connectedness and create each year's Politburo network. Finally, I use a *modularity*-based community detection technique, developed by network science (see Fortunato, 2010; Fortunato and Hric, 2016), to estimate the degree to which one can partition the Politburo network in each year, which in turn can inform us of the degree of central leadership

fragmentation in each year after 1949. Drawing from a unique dataset of provincial Party secretaries and government heads between 1949 and 2017, I apply the same method to study the connectedness between local elites as well as the strength of their ties with the formal Party head and the head's inner circle rivals.

Compared with existing approaches, measuring elite similarity through the Gaussian kernel provides a flexible means to aggregate different biographic characteristics without imposing any prior assumption about how these informal personal ties and formal organization links work together to build latent elite connectedness. As I formulate the degree of leadership fragmentation as a single quantitative measure, I avoid a longstanding challenge in the literature as scholars remain divided about how to *count* the exact number of factions or informal groups within the Party center. Lastly, the proposed methods prevent researchers from relying on any ad hoc consideration of biographical characteristics. While many scholars disagree about the relative importance of formal organization links and shared demographic features when discussing the building of elite ties, feature selection facilitates systematic validation while incorporating both into the construction of elite connectedness. Altogether, I have developed a unified statistical framework to study elite connectedness at both central and local level. The resulting measures will allow future comparative analysis of both national and local elite networks by different periods and regions.

This chapter proceeds as follows. In Section 2, I briefly review the literature on elite politics in post-1949 China and explain how my proposed methods depart from existing work. In Section 3, I introduce the statistical tools, including the kernel method, network modularity, and variable selection (or feature selection) from network science and supervised machine learning for my analysis. In Section 4, I apply these methods to study three aspects of elite power dynamics within the Party – the degree to which the Politburo is divided (*central leadership fragmentation*), the degree to which the provincial leadership is so embedded that the ruling cadres in a province enjoy the leverage to insulate themselves from the Center's command (*local leadership embeddedness*), and the degree to which central and local Party heads are connected with each other (*central-local connectedness*). I conclude this chapter by discussing how one can apply the new network measures in future research on Chinese

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political economy. One promising step, for instance, is to replicate important studies that consider elite politics and factional ties (*guanxi*) as the main explanatory variables (e.g., Kung and Chen, 2011; Zeng and Yang, 2017; Jiang, 2018).

5.1 Post-1949 Chinese Elite Politics

Although history has seen an abundance of authoritarian regimes, it remains difficult to build an accurate understanding of many of them. Because formal constitutions are usually subject to leaders' manipulation in authoritarian regimes (Ginsburg and Simpser, 2014; Pepinsky, 2014), scholars often have to rely on the life stories of prominent inner-circle elites and anecdotes of power struggles to explain most major political events and policy decisions in dictatorships (Bunce, 1979). Nonetheless, while the focus on political elites, or the "high politics," is well understood, the informality of elite interactions in non-democracies states often creates a black box that can be nearly impossible to decipher.

As one of the most resilient hegemonic party regimes in the world, China is no exception. For decades, scholars have noted the importance, as well as the difficulty, of identifying ruling cadres in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and their interactions with each other.[3] Because such information is usually occluded, early researchers had to rely on the accounts provided by those personally connected to the Party (see Kou, 2005).[4] Before the Cultural Revolution came to an end, the Chinese political refugees who fled to Hong Kong and foreign countries also have provided valuable details about the country when traveling to the country was difficult (see Harding, 1984). The quality of these accounts, which usually cannot be fully

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[3]I define Chinese cadres generically as employees for the Party and government posts, which some may call Party cadres and government officials, respectively. For more discussion, see Ang (2012). I do not include military officers here.

[4]For example, Guo Qian (1909-1984, aka Guo Hualun), who was a member of the Chinese Communist Party in the 1930s, defected to work for Chiang Kai-shek after being captured in 1940. With Guo's information, Chiang successfully cracked down the CCP's Southern Bureau, one of the Party's largest bases during the Anti-Japanese War. After 1949, Chiang brought Guo to Taiwan along with the KMT government. In Taipei, Guo served as a Research Fellow of the Institute of International Relations (IIR), a KMT-sponsored research institute on the Chinese Communist regime during the Cold War. Guo wrote extensively on the CCP's activities between 1921 and 1949. See Guo (1982).

verified, largely depends on whether these informants could accurately and systematically recount their personal observations and experiences.

The qualitative analysis of elite dynamics, therefore, occupies an important position in the early studies of post-1949 Chinese politics. As China scholars accumulate the thick descriptions of elite interactive dynamics, some in the mid-1970s begin to build a general theoretical framework to illuminate the Chinese elite politics. One of such examples is provided by Nathan (1973), who thoroughly discusses different stylized "models" to illustrate the formation of political *factions*, each of which can be treated a stand-alone hierarchical patron-client network. He also explains how these factions can cooperate or compete with each other in the Party center. He proposes that the inter-factional interactions within the Party appears to exhibit a "code of civility." In other words, despite the presence of multiple factions, cadres who command different factions within the Party center usually can reach a certain degree of power balance and tolerate the presence of others.

Following the seminal work of Nathan (1973), the literature has seen other competing arguments about the nature of post-1949 Chinese elite politics. Informed by the September 13th Incident of 1971,[5] Tsou (1976) questioned the very notion of "code of civility," contending that power struggles in the Party center typically end with a single faction's clear-cut dominance. The existence of multiple factions within the Party may in fact suggest the dominant faction's victory and the subordination of other factions. Moreover, Tsou (1976) challenges the popular "factionalism model" by questioning whether there indeed exist different hierarchically structured factions in the Party. Also, while some scholars highlight policy debates and ideological differences as the sources of factional affiliations in the Party, he cautions that ideology and policy positions are usually "up for grabs" for the dominant cadres to establish their ruling positions within the Party. Tsou (1976) also argues that the use of "factions" can be both narrow and pejorative, and as a result, hinders a comprehensive understanding of Chinese elite politics. In light of these different caveats, he proposes

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[5]In August 1971, it was alleged that Lin Biao, the designated successor of Mao Zedong, was planning a military coup. After their plan was exposed, Lin and his son tried to flee from the country and later perished in an air crash when their flight was flying into Mongolia from Beijing on September 13th (see Chen, 2002; MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2008).

the concept of "informal groups" an an alternative to highlight the fact that the Party's central leadership is intertwined with fluid ties between individual cadres amid formal Party organizations and these groups may not always have a fixed boundaries between each other.

Inspired by these discussions, scholars in the following decades turn their attention to personal ties between the ruling cadres to characterize the informal politics of elite interactions in post-1949 China. Studies have sought to illuminate not only the foundations but also the objectives of various elite connections, or "guanxi" in the Chinese language, within the Party's inner circle. Regarding the first question, researchers have jointly considered informal ties and formal organizational links, which can be formed through shared demographic features as well as common educational and co-worker experiences. Second, while some argue that Chinese political elites form connections to protect their interests and personal safety in a highly volatile political environment (see Pye, 1981), others suggest that the development of any relationship may also be driven by non-instrumental goals (Dittmer and Wu, 1995).

Despite these disagreements, scholars mostly agree that elite ties provide the essence of social and political life in China, and existing studies have consulted connections between prominent cadres to explain different political and policy decisions in the country, such as fiscal decentralization (Shirk, 1993), market reform (Yang, 2004b), monetary policies (Shih, 2009), and the formation of the Party center (Shih, Adolph, and Liu, 2012), and the selection of military officers in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) (Wang and Wang, 2018).[6] Researchers also appreciate the fact that that ties between different cadres through varieties of bonding experiences can serve different instrumental and emotional purposes (e.g., King, 1991; Dittmer and Wu, 1995; Pye, 1995; Guo, 2001). These experiences can take place during an individual's early life and occur when a pair of cadres attend the same schools and serve in the same work units by providing regular contacts. Some experiences, such as common provincial origins, can trigger shared identity without two individuals necessarily knowing each other in person. Altogether, these experiences accumulate and build different

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[6]See Bian (2018) for a review of the political and socioeconomic importance of connections in Reform China.

degrees of elite connectedness.[7]

As early studies of Chinese elite politics have mostly relied on personal observations and anecdotal evidence, it can be difficult to verify the information they offer (see Kou, 2005). The use of the accounts from these "insiders," who often have to be kept anonymous, can also raise the concern of selection bias because scholars usually can only approach the Chinese citizens who manage to build external connections. These caveats have driven recent scholars to search for systematic indicators of elite interactions and connectedness based on publicly available information. First, Yang (1987) and Kou and Cheng (2006) collect news articles from the People's Daily and the PLA Daily that document top leaders' activities to demonstrate the rise and fall of different cadres and "factions" within the Party center. They first count how frequently the People's Daily and other official newspapers reported a leading cadre and his colleagues in a "faction," and then study whether these newspapers placed these articles at visually prominent positions. They find that cadres who lost power struggles to others or were purged from the Party center either disappeared entirely from the newspapers or had their news articles relegated to marginal corners in the newspapers.

Second, Bo (2004a, 2007, 2008) conducts a thorough study of the demographic and career traits of the Central Committee and Politburo members to assess the relative power of different *informal* groups within the Party center. After Hu Jintao became the General Secretary in 2002, Bo (2004a) finds that the Princelings and the Communist Youth League both rose to be the most important political groups.[8] Shih, Shan, and Liu (2010) compile perhaps the first comprehensive biographical dataset of the Central Committee (CC) members between 1921 and 2006 to measure the power "equilibrium" within the Party center.[9] Drawing from

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[7]Scholars have also disagreed with each other regarding the very definitions of formal links and informal ties. See Pye (1995) and Dittmer (2002) for more discussion on the conceptualization of informal politics in post-1949 China.

[8]The Princelings, also known as the "Crown Princes," refer to the descendants of senior cadres who participated in the revolutionary activities between 1921 and 1949. Bo (2004a) also argues that members that came from the same elite universities in China (e.g., Peking University and Tsinghua University) can be of great political importance.

[9]The Central Committee, elected by the Party Congress, is the supreme decision-making body of the Chinese Communist Party. By design, the CC full members elect the Politburo, which then forms the Standing Committee of the Politburo, the apex of power in the Chinese political system (e.g., Shirk, 1993;

the biographical information of the Central Committee members, Shih and his colleagues measure the degree of influence enjoyed by the formal Party head. They identify "factional" ties between a pair of cadres when these two came from the same province, attended the same school, or served at the same work unit. They then observe the percentage of cadres that hold any ties with the formal Party head and the head's rival in the Central Committee. Perhaps seeking to adjudicate the disagreement between Nathan (1973) and Tsou (1976), Shih, Shan, and Liu (2010) conclude that the Party has always seen the presence of multiple factions since 1949, and every formal Party leader does also venture to remove or undermine the influence of his rivals after they come to power.

Following the introduction of social network analysis (SNA) in comparative politics (see Siegel, 2011), scholars have continued to assemble the biographical information of both central and local elites. Using the analytical tools that allow researchers to examine the structure of a given elite network and identify the relative importance of individual cadres in the network, researchers have started to revisit the puzzle of political promotions. Oppera, Nee, and Brehm (2015) create a homophily index by adding elite ties from the shared birthplace, school, and workplaces to measure whether the strength of provincial leaders' ties with the central leader can determine their promotion prospect. Keller (2016) finds that co-worker ties, compared with common province origin and schools ties, play the most important role in determining the selection of Politburo members from the Central Committee. Interestingly, while Keller (2016) uses a binary variable to indicate the *existence* of elite ties, Oppera, Nee, and Brehm (2015) construct a continuous measure to reflect the *strength* of elite ties by taking the sum of three different shared biographical features.

Several recent studies have also employed quantitative measures of elite ties to study local economic development, market transactions, and anti-corruption campaigns in China. Jiang (2018) finds that municipal Party secretaries will achieve higher economic growth in office when they hold informal ties with their respective provincial superiors.[10] Using a unique

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Lieberthal, 2004; Kung and Chen, 2011).

[10]Jiang (2018) considers a municipal Party secretary is connected to his or her respective provincial leader when the former is promoted to the current post under the later.

dataset of land market exchanges, Chen and Kung (2019) show that firms with connections to the Politburo members are more likely to receive a price discount than those without such connections. While Lorentzen and Lu (2018) discover that the first-wave anti-corruption campaign under Xi Jinping largely focused on badly performing cadres in corrupt provinces, Chang (2018) explores how indicted high-level cadres have behaved differently compared with their subordinates. For instance, Chang (2018) demonstrates that prominent cadres mostly play the role in connecting corrupt subordinates and do not necessarily get involved in the corrupt transactions by themselves.

As I will explain in more detail below, my proposed methods depart from previous work in several ways. First, in line with Oppera, Nee, and Brehm (2015), my methods will focus on evaluating the "strength" of elite ties, namely the degree of elite connectedness. As many scholars of Chinese society have highlighted (e.g., Hwang, 1987; Fei, 1992; Ma, 2007), the Chinese people exhibit "the differential mode of association" (*chaxugeju*), through which individuals assess the relative importance of different social relations, ranging from family members and close friends to acquaintances with whom they seldom interact. However, instead of treating elite connectedness as a simple sum of three shared biographical features, I propose a new approach to construct a continuous measure that explicitly accounts for the multidimensional nature of connectedness. Next, while early scholars have been debating the definitions and relative importance of "formal" links and "informal" ties in Chinese elite politics, I consider demographic and career similarities jointly as the basis of elite connectedness. I argue that any quantitative measures have to reflect the fact that formal organizational links, which can be generated mostly through co-worker experiences, and informal personal ties, which usually stem from the early lifespan of socialization through kinship, schools, and birthplaces, build up the connectedness between two individual elites.

5.2   Statistical Methods

In this section, I introduce the statistical tools that I employ to build the measures of elite connectedness. Drawing from an original dataset of central and local Chinese political

elites, first, I use the *kernel method* to measure the pairwise biographical similarity between two cadres and assess their connectedness. The key here is to study whether two cadres, since their birth, shared many experiences throughout their lifespan. Second, I explain the techniques of community detection from network science and apply the concept of *network modularity* to measure the degree to which a network can be divided, which can inform us of the degree of central leadership fragmentation when the networks of interest consist of the Politburo members in different years. Finally, I discuss how I use *feature selection*, or variable selection, from supervised machine learning to identify the set of politically relevant biographic traits to map the weighted Politburo networks. For readers' convenience, I provide only brief intuitions of each statistical tool here. Readers can refer to the Appendix of this chapter, where I explain the technical details for each method.

In the case of *central leadership fragmentation* – the degree to which the Politburo is divided – for each year, I start by using feature selection to find politically relevant biographical covariates that can predict the selection of Politburo members from the Central Committee. I then include the selected covariates to kernelize the biographical similarity between each pair of Politburo members. Finally, I combine the kernels of all pairs to create a weighted Politburo network, based on which I apply the community detection technique to estimate the degree to which a Politburo network can be divided into different small clusters. As for *local leadership embeddedness* and *central-local connectedness*, I measure the connectedness between local Party secretaries and their corresponding government heads and the connectedness between local elites and the formal Party head, respectively.[11]

5.2.1 Kernel Method

I propose to measure the *strength* of the tie between a pair of cadres by observing the similarity of two individuals' life experiences. In China and many other countries, two individuals are usually considered strongly connected if they have spent a large portion of their lives

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[11]Future research can follow the same procedures to study the fragmentation of local leadership when the data on local Party committees are available – currently, available datasets only include local Party secretaries and government heads.

together. As argued by Dittmer (2002), the connection between two Chinese political elites is the accumulation of different varieties of primordial and career characteristics. Through various "bonding experiences," the two cultivate shared social capital and cultivate mutual trust. A theoretically sound quantitative measure of elite connectedness should account for the long-term bonding process and common socialization experiences.

I start by creating an "attribute vector" for each cadre based on the original biographical datasets of central and local political elites. Instead of focusing on one or several specific attributes at a time (e.g., Bo, 2004a, 2007, 2008), a cadre's attribute vector contains his or her entire life trajectory from published profiles that include as many demographic, education, and career covariates as possible. In each cadre's "attribute vector," each covariate takes the value of 0 or 1. Demographic and education covariates include the birth year, province origin, ethnicity, and schools and graduation years. An elite's career covariates indicate an elite's recorded activities in the Party, including the year of becoming a Party member and all work units at which she or he has served. The covariate will also indicate the period during which a cadre serves in a working unit. The original datasets also list whether a cadre participated in various major events during the revolutionary period (1921-1949), such as the first Chinese Soviet Government in Ruijin of the Jiangxi Province, (1931-1934), the Long March (1934-1936), the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945), the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949), and their military affiliations (e.g. the Red Army, the Field Army, and the Volunteer Army) in these operations.[12] It is important to point out that two cadres will not be connected simply because they have served in the same work unit – instead, for the following analysis, I count two cadres connected only if they were present in the same unit *at the same time.* Therefore, my measures of elite connectedness are time-varying.

The next step is to quantify how similar each pair of vectors is, so we can evaluate the *connectedness* between two individual cadres. For this purpose, I employ the Gaussian

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[12]One can merge all attribute vectors to build a matrix of n rows and g columns, in which each row represents a cadre, and each column corresponds to a biographic covariate. The resulting matrix leads to the transpose of a *bipartite* network of n individual cadres. In the network science literature, a bipartite network, or a two-mode network, shows the membership of different individuals in a network. Each row represents a group; each column refers to a member of the network. See the Appendix for more discussion.

kernel, which is very common in machine learning to compute the distance between two vectors and the degree to which they are similar (see Balcan, Blum, and Srebro, 2008; Shahbazi, Raizada, and Edelman, 2016).[13] The kernel-based machine learning techniques have been widely employed to study the "strength" of social relations in virtual communities based on individuals' Facebook and Twitter profiles (e.g., Zhuang et al., 2011; Zhong, Du, and Yang, 2013).

For the current project, the Gaussian kernel allows me to observe the pairwise biographical similarity between two cadres by calculating the distance between their attribute vectors. In doing so, researchers no longer have to impose any functional assumptions about how different biographical attributes aggregate to build elite connectedness. After all, in a high-dimensional space that include numerous biographical features, it is possible that these features work collectively in a non-linear, complex manner. The Gaussian kernel is also convenient, as it provides an interpretable value between 0 and 1, where a value of 1 means that two vectors are completely identical.

5.2.2 Community Detection

I apply community detection methods to study the extent to which one can partition the Politburo network in each year to assess the degree of *central leadership fragmentation.* In the network science literature (Fortunato, 2010; Fortunato and Hric, 2016), community detection methods seek to identify the presence of separate *communities*, or clusters, within a network such that members in the same cluster are more likely to connect with each other than those in other clusters. Among various available techniques of community detection, modularity-based methods receive the most attention. In brief, the main objective of modularity-based community detection is to find the largest degree to which one can partition a network into many different communities or clusters (Newman, 2004, 2006).

Scholars have applied similar techniques to study the behaviors of and connectedness among political elites in the United States and other advanced democracies. For instance,

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[13]See the Appendix for more technical discussion.

Zhang et al. (2008), by constructing different networks of Congress members based on the bills they co-sponsor between 1979 and 2004, study the degree of partisan polarization between the Democrats and Republicans. In doing so, they discover a higher level of polarization in the House of Representatives. Waugh et al. (2011) also employ modalarity as the measure of partisan polarization in the American Congress. Moody and Mucha (2013) build a network of Senate members, in which they connect two members they supported the same a bill and show increases in partisan cleavages between the two national parties since the Clinton administration.

For the current project, I treat the Politburo in each year as a network by itself and study how the modularity of these Politburo networks has changed after 1949.[14] To clarify, given that I employ a continuous measure of elite connectedness, which renders each tie between 0 and 1, each Politburo network is a *weighted* network. The derived measure of modularity is also continuous, with higher values indicating greater fragmentation of a Politburo network.

5.2.3 Feature Selection

I consider the selection into the Politburo as a supervised machine learning question. In China, the Politburo and its Standing Committee are elected from the Central Committee (CC) during the Party Congress. In each Party Congress, which now takes place every five years, a delegate can be elected into the Central Committee (CC) as a full or alternate member. While both types of CC members attend the meetings and express their opinions, alternate members do not have the rights to vote. Also, only full members can be the candidates for the Politburo and its Standing Committee. Alternate members may be promoted to full status when a full member is purged or, as more often after the 1980s, resigns or passes away (see Yang, 2004b). Compared with full CC members, alternate members usually hold posts of lower ranks in the Party and government administration at the local level.

With the dataset that contains hundreds of biographical covariates of the CC members,

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[14]I follow the same procedures to examine how the modularity of Central Committee networks has fluctuated since 1949.

I apply regularized regression via the elastic net, developed by Zou and Hastie (2005), to select the biographical covariates that predict the selection of Politburo members in each year.[15] The dependent variable in the regression is dichotomous, taking the value of 1 if a full CC member is elected into the Politburo for a given year. The explanatory variables include the biographical covariates of all full CC members in the dataset. I then include all covariates with non-zero coefficients to compute elite connectedness and build the adjacency matrix of each weighted Politburo network.

5.3 Power Dynamics within the Chinese Communist Party

In this section, I apply the methods discussed above to study the degrees of central leadership fragmentation, local leadership embeddedness, and central-local connectedness in China. First, focusing on the networks of Politburo members, I explore the degree to which the Party center is divided. Next, I analyze the degree to which the provincial leadership is embedded, which is the case either when the Party secretary and governor are closely connected with each other or when the same cadre controls both posts. Finally, I examine provincial Party secretary's connectedness with the central leader across different historical periods. The following analysis begins with the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and ends with Jiang Zemin's retirement in 2003, during which the Party completed its first regular succession.

5.3.1 Central Leadership Fragmentation

To measure the degree of central leadership fragmentation, I have computed the modularity of the Politburo networks between 1949 and 2003. For each year, I first apply supervised machine learning to select the biographical covariates that best predict the selection of Politburo members. I then construct the weighted Politburo network based on the set of chosen "features" and calculate its modularity.

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[15]More specifically, I include every biographical covariate with a non-zero coefficient.

As a hegemonic-party regime, the CCP dominates the post-1949 Chinese political system, in which the Party's Politburo and its Standing Committee (PBSC) wield supreme decision-making power (Shirk, 1993; Lieberthal, 2004).[16] In each Party Congress, the Party first elects full and alternate members of the Central Committee (CC). Full CC members then "elect" the Politburo and PBSC. Figure 5.1 shows the composition of Politburo and Central Committee members since the 7th Central Committee (1945). The number of Politburo members is usually between 20 and 30 while Standing Committee (SC) members only account for a small portion (see Figure 5.1(a)). In contrast, the number of CC members has been increased to more than 300 since 1949, and full members always constitute the majority (see Figure 5.1(b)).

Figure 5.1: Composition of the Central Committee and Politburo members.

(a) Politburo

(b) Central Committee
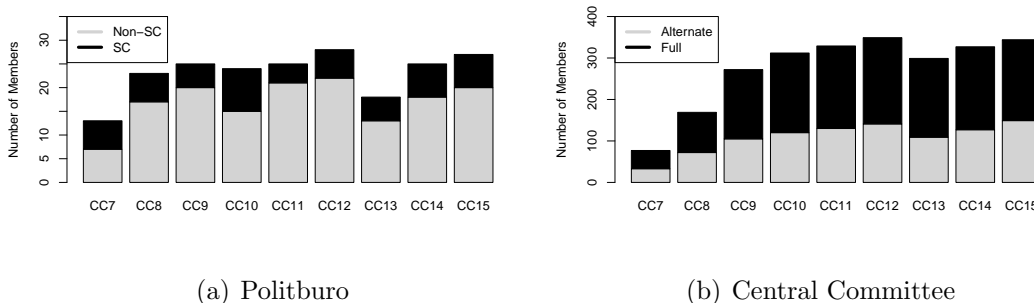
Figure 5.2 shows how the modularity of Politburo networks changes between 1949 and 2002. Again, a higher value of modularity suggests a greater level of fragmentation.

In **Period 1**, the Party's central leadership was at first somewhat cohesive with relatively low modularity. This is not surprising, as Mao Zedong managed to subdue many of his rivals during the Rectification Movement (1942-1945) and successful named Liu Shaoqi as his future successor in 1945 (see Gao, 2000). After 1949, Mao and Liu Shaoqi's ruling power faced the first significant challenge from Gao Gang and his follower Rao Shushi.[17] Threatened by

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[16]Before the 8th Party Congress in 1956, the Politburo did not have a Standing Committee. Instead, the Party's core leadership was the Secretariat, a small body that functioned similarly as today's PBSC. The Party kept the Secretariat after 1956, but the Secretariat no longer acted as the supreme ruling circle.

[17]According to official accounts (e.g., Zhang et al., 2012), Gao sought to undermine the ruling position of

Figure 5.2: Modularity of Politburo networks, 1949-2002.
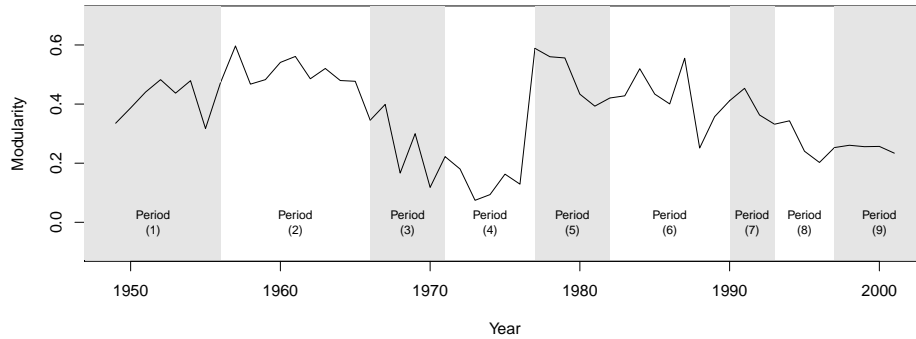
Gao's ambition, the Party center removed Gao from the Politburo.[18] The end of the Gao-Rao Incident coincided with the fall in the Politburo's modularity.

During **Period 2**, in line with Shih, Shan, and Liu (2010), the 8th Party Congress (1956) appeared to create a notable peak in the Politburo's fragmentation, as the Party increased the size of Politburo by appointing new members to replace several ill senior cadres.[19] In the following decade, the Politburo seems to have a hard time remaining cohesive, which is consistent with the general understandings of growing conflicts between Mao and other prominent cadres in the Party center in this period. First, during the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962), Mao purged several top cadres, notably Peng Dehuai and Zhang Wentian, from the Party center for criticizing his industrial policies in the Lushan Meeting (1959) (Chen, 2002). Following the GLF's end in 1962, Mao and Liu Shaoqi further drifted apart, as Mao's pursuit of "class struggle" stood in contrast to Liu's focus on the recovery of the Chinese economy.[20] The strains between the two escalated and brought the eruption of the Cultural

Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi, both of whom were Mao's close aides in the Party, by openly criticizing their economic policies (see Chen, 2002).

[18]In 1954, Gao committed suicide, and Rao was arrested in the following year. In August 1955, the Party terminated Gao and Rao's membership.

[19]New Politburo members include Bo Yibo, Li Fuchun, Luo Ronghuan, Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Li Xiannian, and He Long. Li Xiannian later played a crucial role in cracking down the Gang of Four (1977).

[20]Seeing the chaos brought by the GLF, Mao at first declared to distance himself from national policy-making so that Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, and Deng Xiaoping could lead the Party to restore the Chinese economy. However, Mao sought to maintain his influence by building his personal cult through a series of

Revolution in 1966, in which Mao sought to reclaim his unchallengeable prominence in the Party center. At the beginning of **Period 3**, the Party replaced several top cadres (e.g., Peng Zhen) with fervent "revolutionary" cadres in the Politburo in the 11th Plenum of the 8th Central Committee. The Party also stripped Liu Shaoqi, Mao's official heir apparent, of all leading posts (see Dittmer, 1974).[21] When the Party convened the 9th Party Congress in 1969, the Politburo reached the lowest degree of central leadership fragmentation after Mao removed every cadre he considered untrustworthy.

Throughout the Cultural Revolution (1966-1977), the Politburo appears to have been fairly cohesive with only two minor spikes in the degree of fragmentation. In Figure 5.2, the first spike took place between 1971 and 1972. Between 1966 and 1971 (**Period 3**), while the Party center became unprecedentedly cohesive,[22] the relationship between Mao and Lin took a radical turn. While the exact reasons remain unclear, historical studies have suggested that Mao's distrust of Lin might have been triggered by an internal discussion in 1970 about whether the Party should name Mao as the new Chairman, the post vacated after Liu Shaoqi's purge in 1968. Along with his colleagues, Lin urged Mao to take the post. Mao, who had allegedly considered to abolish the post, found Lin's enthusiasm disturbing, as he feared that Lin was driven by his lust for power after his death.[23] In August 1971, it was reported that Lin Biao and his son (Lin Liguo) were plotting a military coup in Shanghai. After the Party center caught their plan, Lin and others took a flight out of Beijing on September 13th. The airplane was crashed around the border between China and Mongolia, killing everyone on board.[24]

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mass political campaigns. Starting from the 1962 Socialist Campaign, which was later expanded into the Four Clean-up Movement across country (see Baum, 1975), Mao sought to reclaim his dominance through grassroots mass mobilization. In the 1960s, Mao formed an alliance with Lin Biao and Jiang Qing, his wife, to tag whoever against him as anti-Party forces.

[21]Liu Shaoqi later passed away in Henan. His wife, Wang Guangmei, was detained by the Red Guards of Tsinghua University and transferred to the Qincheng Prison in 1967. Wang was freed in 1979.

[22]In 1969, Mao named Lin Biao as his new future successor.

[23]The tension between Mao and Lin presented a classical "crown-prince problem" – the dictator and his successor often found themselves in conflict as the former worried that his ambitious heir apparent might seek to grow his power and challenge his authority (Herz, 1952; Tullock, 1987).

[24]For details, see MacFarquhar and Schoenhals (2008) and Shi and Li (2008).

The September 13th Incident, which marked the beginning of **Period 4**, led to another round of cleaning within the Party. As documented by MacFarquhar and Schoenhals (2008), while Mao continued the Cultural Revolution, he decided to counter the rise of Jiang Qing and other revolutionary zealots in the Party center by restoring the power of Deng Xiaoping and several senior cadres in the 10th Party Congress (1973).[25] While the Politburo's modularity remained relatively low compared with the first two decades, in Figure 5.2 one can still see that the mild turbulence within the Party center persisted during the rest of the Cultural Revolution, as Jiang and her followers sought to contain Deng's rise. The tension between Jiang and Deng coincided with the second small spike in the Politburo's modularity around 1975. After Zhou Enlai passed away in January 1976, the Gang of Four accused Deng of being the mastermind behind a student demonstration at the Tiananmen Square. Although the students claimed that the demonstration was only intended to mourn Zhou's passing, Deng was stripped of all posts for the second time during the Cultural Revolution in April of the same year.

The power struggles within the Party center escalated after Mao's death, and the end of the Cultural Revolution saw the second highest modularity of the Politburo network (beginning of **Period 5**). In 1976, while Mao named Hua Guofeng as his successor before his death, Jiang Qing and her followers sought to sabotage Hua's succession by withholding the key internal Party documents from him; some even said that they were even planning a coup to replace Hua (see Yang, 2004b). With the support from Li Xiannian, Ye Jianying, and other senior cadres, Hua arrested Jiang and others in the Gang of Four in Beijing. In the next year, the Party officially ended the Cultural Revolution with Deng's return to the Politburo. Between 1977 and 1981 (**Period 5**), Deng managed to defeat Hua and built up his dominance within the Party by forming alliances with other senior cadres (Yang, 2004b; Kou and Cheng, 2006). To prevent another round of leadership turmoil, Deng engineered a collective leadership where ideally no single cadre could unilaterally dominate the Party

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[25]Internal Party documents from the Hoover Institution show that Mao was concerned that Jiang and her followers, who formed the Gang of Four in 1972, had gone too far by trying to purge everyone against them in the Party. In 1973, Mao agreed to bring Deng, who was also stripped of all leading posts along with Liu Shaoqi in the late 1960s, back to the Politburo.

center.[26] With Deng's rise in the Party, Figure 5.2 suggests that the central leadership during **Period 6** became increasingly unified although the overall modularity remains higher than that of the 1970s, which aligns with the creation of the collective leadership commanded by Deng and other senior cadres.[27]

With the collective leadership in place, however, the Party center remained far from fully settled. In the early 1980s, the Party center first grew divided over the scope and pace of the market reform (see Yang, 2004b). Seeing Deng's reform initiatives, Chen Yun and several senior cadres were concerned that the sudden introduction of the market economy in China would jeopardize not only the economy but also the Party's ruling legitimacy. Their concerns were not unfounded. In 1986, college students protested in Beijing as China experienced price irregularity, currency inflation, and rampant official corruption by those who managed to reap from the reform for private gains. Under conservative senior cadres' pressure, Hu Yaobang stepped down in 1987, and Zhao Ziyang took over the post of General Secretary.[28] The rift between the pro-reform and anti-reform "cliques" within the central leadership continued and later became a critical trigger of the June Fourth Incident in 1989. After the Incident, Jiang Zemin, who was then the Party secretary of Shanghai, replaced Zhao and became the third General Secretary in the same decade. Deng himself also stepped

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[26]While Hua allied with senior cadres to crack down the Gang of Four, their alliance fell apart after Hua openly proclaimed the principle of "Two What-ifs." Hua argued that he would firmly follow Mao's teachings under any circumstances. This ideological position made Hua reluctant to rectify the Party's wrongdoings during the Cultural Revolution and irritated the senior cadres that helped Hua crack down Jiang Qing and her followers. In response, Deng and other senior cadres decided to start the campaign that advocated "the practice is the sole criterion for testing (the) truth" in 1977. The campaign began at the central Party school, where Hu Yaobang served as the Vice Dean. Contrary to Hua's dogmatic adherence to Mao's teachings, those who embraced the importance of "practice" contended that all ideological teachings, including those proposed by Mao, need to be tested by practicing them in real life. The campaign later turned into an open criticism against Hua, who stepped down from the central leadership after December 1978. See Baum (1994) and Yang (2004b) for more details.

[27]After Hua stepped down, Deng led the Party to build a collective leadership. Deng first appointed Hu Yaobang as the Party's General Secretary and then chose Zhao Ziyang as the Premier of the State Council. Deng himself commanded the People's Liberation Army (PLA) as the Chairman of the Central Military Commission. The "Deng-Hu-Zhao" system ruled China between 1981 and 1989 (Yang, 2004b); three different cadres were placed in charge of the Party, the government administration, and the military, respectively. This decade also saw the influence of other senior cadres in the Party center with the creation of Central Advisory Commission.

[28]In 1988, Beijing slowed down the pace of market reform by imposing several price and wage regulations. After Zhao became the Party Secretary, Li Peng was appointed as the new Premier.

down from the Chairmanship of the Central Military Commission. These changes brought another period of low modularity in the Politburo (see Figure 5.2).

While the Party center survived another crisis, the Politburo remained divided at the beginning of **Period 7** in Figure 5.2. On the one hand, Jiang Zemin's power in the Center remained to be consolidated, as his appointment in 1989 mainly acted as the compromise between Deng and other senior cadres. On the other hand, while the first three years after the 1989 Incident marked the dominance of Chen Yun and other anti-reform cadres, Deng remained influential even without any official Party posts (Yang, 2004b). In 1991, Deng managed to name Zhu Rongji, a market-oriented financial expert, as the Vice Premier.[29] In January 1992, Deng embarked on a tour in Southern China, where Beijing first introduced the market reform in the previous decade. During his "Southern Tour" (*nanxun*), Deng brought foreign and Hong Kong journalists to several cities, where he stressed the importance of continuing the market reform. With the military's support, Deng vowed to strike down whoever acted against the reform.[30] Later, during the 14th Party Congress (1992), Jiang officially declared market reform as the Party's core economic policy as the General Secretary, settling the decade-long debate between Deng and other senior cadres.

Again, Deng's victory did not come without any compromise. Deng agreed to retain Jiang as the General Secretary while removing the Yang brothers from the PLA leadership. Meanwhile, Chen Yun and other senior cadres agreed to dissolve the Central Advisory Commission and fully retire from policy-making in the Center together with Deng. In 1992 and the following year (the beginning of **Period 8**), Jiang Zemin became the President, the Chairman of the Central Military Commission, and the Party's General Secretary. The Party saw the first instance of "comprehensive takeover" since the end of the Cultural Revolution. For the first time since the end of the Cultural Revolution, the Party center appears to have stabilized as the Party finally established a regular succession scheme – Hu Jintao, who suc-

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[29]It was reported that Deng at first sought to replace Jiang with Zhu. However, Deng's proposal faced strong objections from many senior cadres because they did not wish to see another change of the Party head after Hu and Zhao.

[30]In July of the same year, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), under the commands of Yang Shangkun and Yang Baibing, openly endorsed Deng's pro-reform position (see Kou and Cheng, 2006).

ceeded Jiang in 2002 and similarly took over all leading posts in 2003, entered the Politburo Standing Committee in 1992. Xi Jinping, following a similar pattern, was promoted to the Politburo Standing Committee in 2008 and succeeded Hu in 2013. Accordingly, the Politburo's modularity reached another low point and remained stable as the Party prepared for Jiang's retirement and another complete succession by Hu between 2002 and 2003.

5.3.2 Local Leadership Embeddedness

Throughout history, China's enormous size has prompted the central leaders to manage their territories through different multi-tiered government administration systems (see Li, 2010; Zhou, 2014). During the Imperial Era, the ruling elites at each level of local jurisdictions play the vital role in carrying out the imperial court's orders while providing the court with crucial information about the situations in different parts of the empire.

While creating a multi-level local administrative system offers the solution for effective governance, it has always been a challenge for those commanding the central state to find competent local agents and make sure they always comply with the court's mandates. The classical principal-agent problems, including adverse selection and moral hazard, have thus haunted Chinese leaders. Imperial China created an extensive examination system to fill in the state bureaucracy across all ranks, but it is still not easy to prevent these officials from shirking their assigned responsibilities. Imperial China is also full of incidents in which local political forces rose to challenge or even dismantle the central state (e.g., Ma, 2013). Two of the once most powerful dynasties, the Han (BC 202-AD 200) and the Tang (AD 618-907), both disintegrated partly because powerful local warlords grew to defy the central court. In the late Qing, the governors in different provinces also grew recalcitrant and began to demand more power from Beijing (Liu, 2003).

Before coming to power in 1949, the Party's leaders faced a similar challenge in keeping the compliance of local cadres. Between 1945 and 1949, the Party established six great administrative regions (GAR) (*da xingzhenqu*) to manage the territories acquired from the

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KMT during the Civil War.[31] The leader of each GAR not only led local Party and government bodies but also commanded the regional armed forces. With such immense power in their hands, these GAR leaders soon became a major threat to the Party leader (see Solinger, 1977b; Harding, 1981).[32] As a result, after the Party came to power, Mao had to take several steps to constrain the power of GARs before he could abolish them completely in 1954. In August 1952, the Party center first appointed all GAR leaders to different positions in the central leadership, so they would all be present in Beijing. Later, Beijing discharged GAR leaders of their military commands and suspended GARs as the first tier of subnational government administration. In June 1954, the Constitution officially abolished all GARs.

In the early 1950s, the Party also had to take immediate actions to resolve the shortage of competent and loyal local cadres (Harding, 1981). The Party was forced to retain many local elites who had been in power before 1949. Very often, the Party also had to appoint the same cadres to serve as local Party secretary and government head at the same time (Goodman, 1986). Furthermore, as an insurgent party, many local leaders selected by the Party came from the Red Army during the revolutionary period and other pre-1949 military forces. As a result, perhaps unsurprisingly, many local leaders in the 1950s were former or current military officers for the local People's Liberation Army (PLA) bases (see Whitson, 1973). In light of these challenges, Mao sought to build his institutional supremacy over local jurisdictions. The Party accomplished this objective first by creating a local Party committee in every local jurisdiction along with the local People's Government and the local People's Congress. Meanwhile, the Party continued to recruit and train new cadres to fill in various local Party and government bodies.

As the Party built its grassroots organizational forces across the country, however, Mao and the Party center soon encountered a dilemma. While maintaining a solid command from

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[31]The first GAR was the Huabei GAR, which covered today's Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanxi, and parts of today's Henan, Shandong, and Inner Mongolia.

[32]During the Civil War, the Party center had to remind the GAR leaders repeatedly that they were required to report policy implementation and political situations on a regular base. Many GAR leaders (e.g., Lin Biao) either chose to ignore the order or submitted their reports only after multiple notifications from the Center (see Xin, 1999).

above is undoubtedly crucial to ensure local elites' compliance, excessive top-down control can be counterproductive as local elites often found it necessary to adjust the Center's directives in accordance with unique circumstances on the ground. Since the mid-1950s, China has seen the ebb and flow of policy and administrative decentralization (Li, 2010), as Beijing has sought to maintain its supreme command while offering enough discretion to local elites to carry out their responsibilities on the ground. Previous studies have discussed various institutional (e.g., control over personnel matters) and policy instruments (e.g., fiscal subsidies and other distributive allocations) that Beijing has employed to discipline local elites' performance. This task perhaps has become increasingly crucial and difficult since the central government expanded the scope of policy and administrative decentralization in the Reform era (e.g., Huang, 1996; Bernstein and Lu, 2003; Yang, 2004a; Zhan, 2006; Birney, 2007; Landry, 2008; Sheng, 2010; Lorentzen, 2014; Chung, 2016b; Zeng, 2016).[33]

As in the central leadership, local jurisdictions at all levels are under the joint rule of the local Party committee and the local People's Government, headed by the Party secretary and the government head, respectively. In the literature on Chinese politics, these two posts are considered among the "highest rank" of the provincial leadership (Zang, 1991). The Party secretary usually occupies the leading position as the "first-hand figure" (*yibashou*) in the local jurisdiction.[34] Following from existing studies of central-local relations in China, I define

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[33]In the 1980s, the central government started delegating more fiscal and administrative power to provincial and selected municipal governments that do not have the autonomous status. First, after 1980, provinces were granted the power to plan their budget. In the previous decades, although provinces were granted some fiscal management power, they had no authority of revising the budgetary items assigned by Beijing. As China moved toward a market economy, provinces are also given more responsibilities over economic planning. In the same decade, Beijing introduced several revenue-sharing schemes, under which rich provinces were encouraged to retain their fiscal surplus while transferring a share of the fiscal revenues to Beijing so that the central government could use these revenues to subsidize underdeveloped provinces. Second, the central government granted provinces legislative powers, creating a two-tiered legislative system in China, in 1982. Previously, except for EATs, only the National People's Congress had legislative power. Third, the central government delegates personnel power to the provincial government in 1982 so that Beijing was only responsible for the appointments at the provincial level. Now provinces hold power to appoint officials at the municipal and county levels.

[34]In the future, I will examine how the modularity of local Party Committees has varied over time and across different localities (e.g., provinces) to shed light on the dynamics of local governance in post-1949 China. Unfortunately, currently available datasets of local ruling elites only have the biographical information of Party secretaries and government heads. I am cleaning the biographical data of district and county Party secretaries and government heads between 1949 and 2017. After I finish the cleaning, it is then possible to study local elite networks by including local Party heads and government heads across different levels.

local leadership embeddedness – namely the degree to which local leaders hold the potentials to insulate themselves from the Center's control – in two related ways. First, I focus on the instances of *concurrent appointment.* I examine whether a single cadre controls both the local Party committee and People's Government in a province at the same time. Concurrent appointment can happen if one of the two leading provincial posts is vacant. In theory, the Center would prefer two different cadres to serve as local Party secretary and government head, respectively, as appointing a single cadre to both positions risks turning him into a powerful "local emperor" against the Center's command (Goodman, 1980, 1986). When the posts are in the hands of two different cadres, I then assess the degree of local leadership embeddedness based on the biographical similarity of the Party secretary and governor in a province. Most of the original biographical data are retrieved from the CSMAR Research Data Services in China (`https://cn.gtadata.com/`) and other datasets (e.g., the Chinese Research Data Services Platform, see `https://www.cnrds.com/`). These datasets provide detailed biographical information of provincial and district ruling elites from 1949 to present, with which I can build the attribute vectors of all provincial Party secretaries and governors between 1949 and 2003.

Figure 5.3 shows the average similarity of the two ruling elites between 1949 and 2002. Again, a higher value indicates a greater degree of biographical similarity and hereby local leadership embeddedness. In the case of concurrent appointment, I assign the similarity the value of 1. Other than the decade of the Cultural Revolution, it appears that the Chinese government sought to reduce the similarity of provincial elites so that the local Party secretary and government head will be more inclined to check one other. Also, the decline in the biographical similarities of provincial elites coincided with the reform that Deng proposed in the 1980s to separate the propaganda and administrative duties of Party and government bodies (Zang, 2004).

In Figure 5.4, I compare the historical trends of central leadership fragmentation and local leadership embeddedness. The central leader appears to be more likely to appoint either a single cadre or two very similar ones to command a province when the Party center, namely the Politburo, exhibits a low degree of modularity, which suggests a relatively unified

Figure 5.3: Embeddedness of provincial ruling elites, 1949-2002.
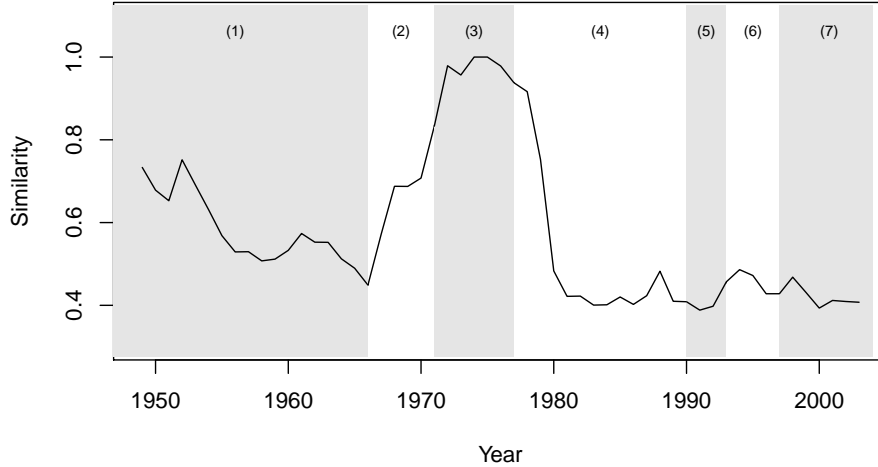
ruling inner circle. In contrast, the central leader will seek to reduce the number of concurrent appointments and place two loosely connected cadres in charge when the Party center is divided. The distinction here suggests a possible negative correlation between central leadership fragmentation and local leadership embeddedness. On the one hand, when the central leader faces a divided Politburo, he will have the incentives to increase the diversity of subnational elites as some of these local agents can be the allies of his inner-circle rivals – in line with the proposed theory of ethnic local autonomy. Nonetheless, in doing so, he also complicates the delegation chain between himself and his local agents. On the other hand, when the central leader alone can dominate the inner circle with a cohesive Politburo, he might find it more efficient to simplify the delegation relationship by permitting some extent of embedded provincial leadership with his trustworthy local agents.

5.3.3 Central-Local Connectedness

Finally, I explore the degree of *central-local connectedness*, which I define as the degree to which local leaders are connected to the central leader or the formal Party head. Huang (1996) proposes a similar concept, *bureaucratic integration*, to measure the degree to which

Figure 5.4: Central leadership fragmentation and local leadership embeddedness in post-1949 China.
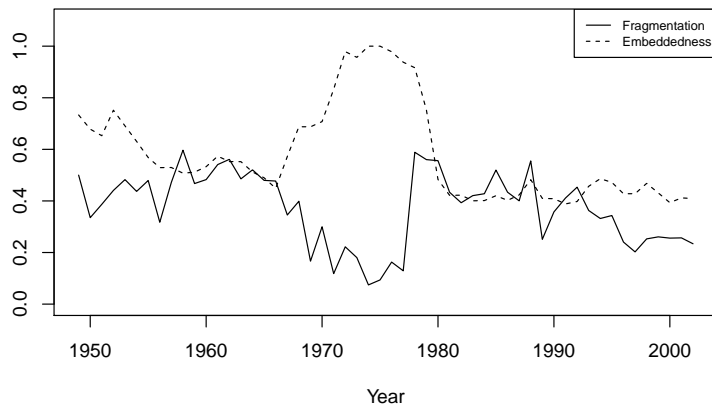
provincial leaders are present in the central government administration. In particular, he studies whether a provincial ruling cadre holds any posts in the central government or has previously served in the central ministries. In the following analysis, as suggested by Shih, Shan, and Liu (2010), I propose to study the degree of central-local connectedness by examining local leaders' biographic similarity with the formal Party head as well as his potential contenders, which can be his rivals or named successors.[35]

Figure 5.5 lists the formal Party leaders (above the line) and their potential rivals and successors (below the line) between 1949 and 2003.[36] Between 1949 and 2003, five cadres served as the Party's formal head. First, during his reign, Mao named two heir-apparents. After the September 13th Incident of 1971, Mao did not appoint any successor-designate, but MacFarquhar and Schoenhals (2008) and Shi and Li (2008) both consider Wang Hongwen,

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[35]One can certainly apply the same concept to study the degree to which local ruling cadres, perhaps Party secretaries in particular, are connected across different levels of local government jurisdictions in the same province – for instance, one can examine whether the connectedness between municipal and provincial Party secretaries can boost economic development as proposed by Jiang (2018).

[36]Figure 5.5 is very similar to Table 1 in Shih, Shan, and Liu (2010). However, after consulting MacFarquhar and Schoenhals (2008) and Shi and Li (2008), I have decided to consider Wang Hongwen, instead of Hua Guofeng, as Mao's potential successor between 1972 and 1977 because Mao did not reveal Hua as his successor until he was close to his passing. That said, the results barely change when I replace Wang with Hua in the analysis.

a member of the Gang of Four, as the most likely cadre to take over.[37] However, upon his death in 1977, Mao named Hua Guofeng as his successor. As discussed above, after Mao passed away, Hua's rule turned out to be brief. Deng and other senior cadres soon toppled him. Without being the formal Party leader, Deng ascended to become the most influential cadre within the Party. As discussed above, in 1981, the Party center established the collective leadership with Hu Yaobang as the Party's General Secretary. After the student demonstration in 1986, Hu Yaobang was forced to resign and Zhao Ziyang took over the Party leadership until the June Fourth Incident of 1989. While Jiang Zemin was appointed to be the new General Secretary, it was not until 1992 that Deng and other senior cadres compromised and facilitated Jiang's full succession in the following year. As the Party finally moved toward regular succession, Deng picked Hu Jintao in 1995 as a potential new Party head.

Figure 5.5: Formal Party heads (above) and potential challengers, including the formal Party heads' rivals or their expected successors (below).
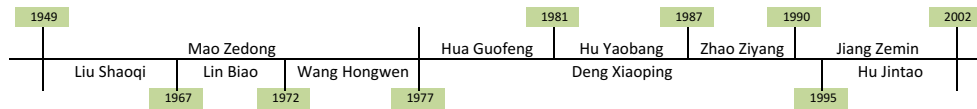
Figure 5.6 presents how the average degree of central-provincial connectedness has evolved between 1949 and 2002. I show how closely provincial Party secretaries are connected with the formal Party head *relative* to the Party head's potential inner circle contenders by taking the difference between provincial Party secretaries' connectedness with the Party head and that with the head's contenders. In doing so, a positive (negative) value will suggest that the provincial Party secretary is more (less) tied to the Party's formal head than the head's rival or successors. I mark each period in accordance with Figure 5.5.

As discussed above, Mao had explicitly named or implicitly considered four candidates to succeed his power before he passed away. In **Period 1**, Mao commanded the Party while naming Liu Shaoqi as his heir apparent in the 7th Party Congress (1945). As seen in

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[37]Wang was brought into the central leadership in 1973.

Figure 5.6: Provincial Party secretaries' relative connectedness with the Party head, 1949-2002.
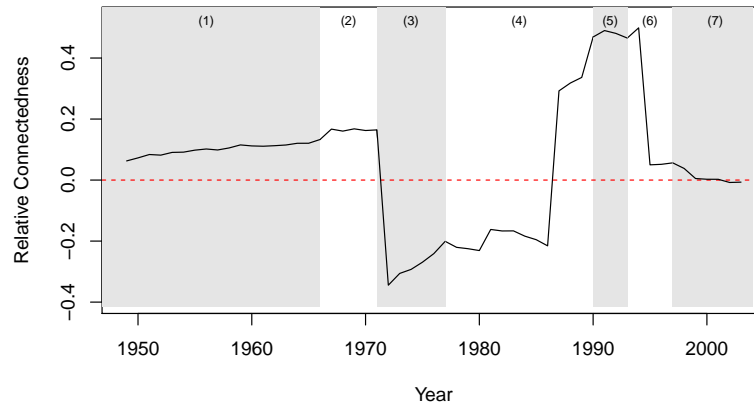
Figure 5.6, when Liu was the official future Mao's successor, provincial Party secretaries were always more connected to Mao than to Liu. It appears that Mao managed to strengthen his ties slightly in the early 1960s before the eruption of the Cultural Revolution. After the Cultural Revolution broke out, Mao continued to bolster his connectedness with provincial leaders before he officially removed Liu Shaoqi from the Party center and replaced Liu with Lin Biao as the new future successor (**Period 2**). Following the September 13th Incident (1971, the beginning of **Period 3**), which saw Lin's demise, provincial Party secretaries for the first time since 1949 seemed to become more connected with the central leader's potential successor than the central leader himself. However, the difference in provincial elites' connectedness with Mao and his potential successor – Wang Hongwen – shrank before the Cultural Revolution came to an end.[38] One possible reason for such a drastic change in **Period 3** is perhaps that Wang Hongwen was the first possible heir apparent that the Party recruited after 1949 and had accumulated some local experiences before he was promoted to the Politburo in 1973. In contrast, Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao spent more of their careers

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[38]After 1971, Mao declined to name another heir apparent although Wang Hongwen, the Party Secretary of Shanghai back then, was considered a potential candidate and was promoted to the central leadership in 1973 (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2008; Shi and Li, 2008). However, as Mao grew concerned about Wang's connection with Jiang Qing and others in the Gang of Four, he chose Hua Guofeng to succeed his leading posts, including the Chairmanship, five months before he passed away in 1976.

within the Party center in Beijing after the Party came to power in 1949, making both less connected with most post-1949 provincial leaders.[39]

In **Period 4**, Hua Guofeng became the new Party head and faced challenges from Deng and other senior cadres. Noticeably, before Zhao Ziyang became the Party Secretary in 1987, provincial leaders were always more connected to Deng, who was influential without being the Party's formal leader, compared with Hua and Hu Yaobang, who became the General Secretary in 1981. Again, this change is perhaps also expected as Deng sought to build a new group of provincial Party leaders to support and implement the market reform (Shirk, 1993). However, after Zhao became the General Secretary, provincial Party leaders once again became more connected to the Party's formal head. The same pattern continued after Jiang Zemin took over in 1989 (**Period 5**), and it was not until Jiang managed to consolidate his power in the mid-1990s (**Period 6**) that the leader's connectedness with provincial elites fell and became about the same as the strength of their ties with Hu Jintao, the future successor of Jiang. Interestingly, it might suggest that both Zhao and Jiang have strategically appointed provincial leaders that were closer to them than their inner circle contenders were as one way of maintaining their position as they just ascended to the Party's formal leader.[40]

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I combine three statistical methods from supervised machine learning and network science to construct different quantitative measures of elite connectedness in post-1949 China. These methods free scholars from imposing and justifying ad hoc assumptions about the specific foundation of elite connectedness. Drawing from a newly assembled biographical dataset of central and local political elites, I apply variable selection and the kernel

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[39]In a recent study, Liu, Shih, and Zhang (2018) also note the rise of provincial elites in the central leadership during the Cultural Revolution, as the Revolution saw the purge of many important central officials.

[40]A recent study of Zeng (2018) notes a similar pattern and shows that the central leader, as he comes to power, will appoint his supporters to economically and politically important provinces.

method to assess the degree of their connectedness based on the selected set of politically relevant biographical characteristics. Next, I employ community detection techniques from network science to demonstrate the degree of fragmentation in the Politburo.

These new measures of elite connectedness will help to study different varieties of political decisions and policy outcomes in the country, where political ties, or *guanxi*, have played a vital role in policy-making and elite interactions. In the future, I plan to incorporate Party and government officials at the district and county levels into the current analysis. In doing so, I can then explore other characteristics of local elite networks that include local cadres across different levels of local jurisdictions. I can also study the connectedness between central leaders and sub-provincial local elites. I am in the process of creating an open-source `R` package *C-PEN* (Chinese Political Elite Network). The package will include more options for machine learning (e.g., neural networks) and community detection algorithms so that researchers can generate different measures of central and local elite connectedness based on pre-formatted biographical data. I have collected raw biographical data of full and alternate Central Committee members (1921-2015), provincial Party secretaries and government heads (1947-2017), district Party secretaries and government heads (1949-2017), and county Party secretaries and government heads (2000-2017).

In the next chapter, I deploy these network measures to test the empirical implications derived from the proposed logic of ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China. In Chapter 2, I have proposed that offering ethnic local autonomy is the central leader's strategic decision to establish his dominance over provincial leaders at the presence of strong rivals within the central leadership. First, I argue that the central leader designates ethnic autonomous territories within each province to constrain the power of leading provincial cadres who are likely to resist his command. Through ethnic local autonomy, the central leader empowers selected sub-provincial non-Han cadres and creates a set of enclaves within which provincial elites only enjoy limited discretion. As provincial leaders are mostly from the dominant Han group, the difference between the Han and non-Han ethnic groups provides the central leader with group boundaries that can prevent the designation of ethnic autonomous territories from encouraging the collusion between provincial elites and their district and county

subordinates.

5.5 Appendix: Technical Details

Gaussian Kernel and Elite Connectedness

The Gaussian kernel generalizes the dot-product of two vectors into an infinite dimensional feature space. In doing so, the Gaussian kernel allows researchers to derive the similarity of two vectors without computing the exact feature map of each of them. In line with existing studies, we can use the biographic similarity between two elites to measure how connected they are. As suggested by the discussion below, if we treat elite connectedness as a function of different biographic covariates, then the Gaussian kernel relieves researchers from holding prior assumption about the exact functional form, in which different covariates can be aggregated in ways other than simple addition.

Consider the following example. Define $\phi(X_i)$ as the "feature map" of the vector X_i. A feature map of $\phi(X_i)$ is a mapping from $R^P \to R^{P'}$, where usually $P' >> P$. For a vector $[x_1, x_2]$,

$$[x_1, x_2]^T \xrightarrow{\phi} [x_1, x_2, x_1^2, x_2^2, x_1 x_2]^T. \tag{5.1}$$

To read, the equation indicates the feature map of the vector, which can include the original elements in higher dimensions as well as their product in addition to the original elements of the vector.

Formally, as a kernel is a function of $R^P \times R^P \to R$ such that $k(x_i, x_j) \to R$ for vectors x_i and x_j, the Gaussian kernel can measure the distance, or similarity, between two vectors as follows.

$$k(X_i, X_j) = k(\phi(X_i), \phi(X_j)) = e^{-\frac{||X_i - X_j||^2}{\sigma^2}}, \tag{5.2}$$

where $||X_i - X_j||$ is the Euclidean distance between vectors X_i and X_j. Following from existing studies, I set $\sigma = 1$ in my analysis. The kernal will generate a value between 0 and 1 with 1 suggesting two vectors are completely identical (i.e., with zero distance).

Adjacency Matrix and Bipartite Network

A network is a collection of points joined by lines when these points are connected. In the social science literature, each point, or *node*, can be an individual, a firm, or a country. Depending on the specific research questions, these actors can be connected in many different ways. The lines connecting these nodes are called *edges*.

One can represent a network in an $n \times n$ matrix, where n represents the number of nodes in the network. The matrix we use to represent a network is known as the *adjacency matrix* (A). Each row and each column refers to a node in the network. If we use A_{ij} to represent the entry in the i-th row and j-th column in A, then we can put $A_{ij} = 1$ when nodes i and j are connected (0 otherwise). Conventionally, we define $A_{ii} = 0$ since most social network analysis does not consider the situation such that a person is connected to itself.

The bipartite network represents the membership of different nodes in a network. As before, we can use a $g \times n$ matrix B to present a bipartite network – where g and n refer to groups and nodes, respectively. Consider the following example. Suppose a network includes three US Congress members, and the first two of them are members of the Democratic Party. Then the bipartite network of these three House members will be

$$B = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}, \tag{5.3}$$

where the rows represent the Democrats and Republicans, respectively. Each column refers to an individual House member.

For the current project, I employ network analysis to study how different groups of Chinese political elites are connected. As explained before, the edge between two nodes does not necessarily have to be binary, as some connections in a network can be more important or stronger than others. That is, depending on the degree of connectedness, $A_{ij} \in R$ instead of $A_{ij} \in \{0, 1\}$. Next, since I group individual cadres based on their shared biographic traits, so I revise the bipartite network slightly such that each row now represents a biographic

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covariate. For instance, suppose we only consider whether a cadre participated in the Long March (row 1) and the Civil War (row 2). The matrix above then suggests only the first two cadres joined the Long March while the third took part in the Civil War. The transpose of B will be an $n \times g$ matrix, such that now each row represents a cadre.

After computing the similarity between each pair of cadres in an elite network, we can construct an $n \times n$ symmetric matrix K for a network of n nodes such that

$$K = \begin{bmatrix} k(X_1, X_1) & k(X_1, X_2) & k(X_1, X_3) & \dots & k(X_1, X_n) \\ k(X_2, X_1) & k(X_2, X_2) & k(X_2, X_3) & \dots & k(X_2, X_n) \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ k(X_n, X_1) & k(X_n, X_n) & k(X_n, X_3) & \dots & k(X_n, X_n) \end{bmatrix}, \tag{5.4}$$

where $k(X_i, X_j)$ is the Gaussian kernel (see below) of the attribute vectors for two elites i and j. The kernel matrix could be treated as the weighted adjacency matrix of a group of elites, like the members of the Central Committee and Politburo. To make K a useful adjacency matrix for social network analysis, we can set all diagonal cells at zero, which suggests that the network includes no ties that connect oneself (i.e., self-edges). In other words, $k(X_i, X_i)$ for all i is set at 0. The adjacency matrix (A) of an elite network of n cadres will then be

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & k(X_1, X_2) & k(X_1, X_3) & \dots & k(X_1, X_n) \\ k(X_2, X_1) & 0 & k(X_2, X_3) & \dots & k(X_2, X_n) \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ k(X_n, X_1) & k(X_n, X_n) & k(X_n, X_3) & \dots & 0 \end{bmatrix}, \tag{5.5}$$

where $k(X_i, X_j)$ measures the connectedness between a pair of cadres i and j.

Modularity-based Community Detection

In the community detection literature, modularity-based methods propose to find the maximum to a function that indicates the *quality* of partition over the space of all possible

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partitions of a network such that 1) nodes in each cluster are closely connected with each other and 2) the connections between clusters are weak (in a weighted network) or sparse (in a binary or unweighted network).

The most known quality function (Q) to express the modularity of a network can be formally written as follows (Newman, 2004, 2006).

$$Q = \frac{1}{2m} \sum_{ij} (A_{ij} - P_{ij}) \delta(c_i, c_j), \tag{5.6}$$

where

- m is the number of ties or edges of the network (or the sum over all pairs of nodes i and j).

- A_{ij} refers to the tie between i and j in A (the adjacency matrix of a network). For a weighted network, $A_{ij} \in R^+$; for an unweighted network, $A_{ij} \in \{0, 1\}$.

- $\delta(c_i, c_j) = 1$ (also known as the Kronecker delta) if i and j are in the same community (0 otherwise).

- P_{ij} is the expected weight of the edge (for a weighted network) between i and j under a specified null model. For unweighted networks, in which each non-diagonal element in the adjacency matrix only takes the value of 0 or 1, P_{ij} is the expected number of ties between i and j of an ensemble of networks based on the randomization of the original network.[41]

The goal of modularity-based methods is to maximize Q to measure the degree to which a network can be partitioned into different communities or clusters. Alternatively, In brief, modularity shows the distance between the actual network and the average of randomized networks based on the actual network to measure how non-random the group structure of the original network is.

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[41]There exist many choices of P_{ij}. See Section F of Fortunato and Hric (2016) for advanced technical discussions.

Nonetheless, scholars have noted that modularity maximization is a non-deterministic polynomial-time (NP) hard question; that is, one can at best approximate the global maximum of Q. The optimization of the quality function in practice also suffers from other issues, one of which is known as the "resolution" problem. For instance, it is possible that modularity maximization cannot yield a result that shows the most salient community structure of a network. It is also likely that the optimization splits large clusters in a network into smaller ones. As a result, the *number* of communities generated by modularity maximization should not be taken uncritically, and it leaves the tasks of validation to scholars who are familiar with the substantive characteristics of the social networks under investigation.[42]

Despite various caveats, however, modularity maximization remains one of the most widely used methods of community detection (Fortunato and Hric, 2016). Even if the resulting number of communities can be questionable and hard to verify, the optimization process still returns a value to approximate the largest degree of which a network can be partitioned, which in turn allows us to approximate how divisiveness the network is.

In line with previous work (e.g., Zhang et al., 2008; Waugh et al., 2011; Moody and Mucha, 2013), I apply the multilevel modularity optimization (MMO) algorithm, a *greedy approach* introduced by Blondel et al. (2008) for weighted networks.[43]

Feature Selection in Supervised Machine Learning

In supervised learning, regularization is a key technique that incorporates a penalty term, namely a *regularizer*, into the loss function so that one can minimize the loss while imposing the penalty on model complexity.

One can motivate the logic behind regularization based on the Bayes rule. Consider the

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[42]That said, by the studying the community structure of Politburo during the Cultural Revolution, I am able to identify Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao, Jiang Qing, and Yao Wenyuan – namely the Gang of Four – as a distinct community.

[43]Intuitively, the greed approach attempts to solve an optimization problem by iteratively building a solution. For a technical description of MMO, see Page 29 of Fortunato and Hric (2016).

following linear model:

$$p(Y_i|X_i, \mathbf{w}) \sim N(Y_i|\mathbf{w}^\top, \sigma^2), \tag{5.7}$$

where $\mathbf{w}$ refers to the parameter vector. The posterior distribution is then defined as $p(\mathbf{w}|D) \propto p(D|\mathbf{w})p(\mathbf{w})$. Suppose $p(w_j) \sim N(w_j|0, \tau^2)$; we have

$$p(\mathbf{w}|D) \propto \prod_{i=1}^{N} N(Y_i|\mathbf{w}^\top X_i, \sigma^2) \prod_{j=1}^{P} N(w_j|0, \tau^2). \tag{5.8}$$

We need to find $\widehat{\mathbf{w}}$ that maximizes $\log(p(\mathbf{w}|D))$, which is equivalent of the minimization of prediction loss with the regularizer.

$$\begin{aligned} \widehat{\mathbf{w}} &= \operatorname{argmax} \sum \log N(Y_i|\mathbf{w}^\top X_i, \sigma^2) + \sum \log N(w_j|0, \tau^2) \\ &= \operatorname{argmin} \sum (\mathbf{Y} - \mathbf{Xw})^2 + \lambda||\mathbf{w}||_2 \\ &= (X^\top X + \lambda I_D)^{-1} X^\top Y, \end{aligned} \tag{5.9}$$

where $\lambda = \frac{\sigma^2}{\tau^2}$ and $||\mathbf{w}||_2 = \sum_j w_j^2$. In doing so, we have derived the Ridge Regression. The LASSO regression is very similar, but the penalty term is now $\lambda||\mathbf{w}||_1 = \sum |w_j|$ as we impose a Laplacian prior such that $p(\mathbf{w}) \propto e^{-\frac{||\mathbf{w}||_1}{\tau^2}}$.

While the LASSO regression does not have a closed form solution, it will choose to set many of the w_j's to be exactly 0, hence offering us sparsity over the predictors for variable (feature) selection. However, substantively, it is hard to presume any biographical covariate predictor is precisely 0, so I propose to adopt the elasticity net, which includes a weight parameter $\alpha \in [0, 1]$ such that the penalty term becomes $\lambda(\alpha||\mathbf{w}||_2 + (1 - \alpha)||\mathbf{w}||_1)$. When $\alpha = 1$, it is equivalent of the Ridge regression. When $\alpha = 0$, then it is the same as the LASSO regression. For analysis via elasticity net, one can conventionally set $\alpha = 0.5$. To determine the value of λ, I implement a simple 10-fold cross-validation. Each cross-validation marks two different λ's: λ_{min} and λ_{1se}. The former refers to λ that minimizes mean squared errors and the latter is simply one-standard-deviation above λ_{min}. While it is tempting to use λ_{min}, I choose λ_{1se} for analysis to avoid over-fitting.

CHAPTER 6

Designation of Ethnic Autonomous Territories

Thus far, I have provided some preliminary qualitative evidence in line with the main argument laid out in Chapter 2: the Chinese central leader designates ethnic autonomous territories as a means to contain his inner circle and provincial agents. In Chapter 3, I showed that EAT designations, which has focused mostly on non-Han groups that are unlikely to pursue secession, tend to happen when the Party center is divided following intense power struggles and irregular leadership changes. Studying the variation in the use of local legislative autonomy across different EATs reveals that ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties, which account for the majority of EATs in the country, serve as enclaves within which provincial leaders only enjoy limited discretion over policy-making and personnel matters. In Chapter 4, I traced the history of ethnic autonomous prefectures and find that the central government has preemptively mobilized local non-Han elites to "request" local autonomy from their respective provincials governments under the control of cadres that are either loosely tied to the central leader or hold close connections with the leader's main inner-circle challengers.

In this chapter, I apply the measures I developed in Chapter 5 to study the designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties in post-1949 China. According to the main argument, EAT designations should be more likely to take place when the central leadership is fragmented, when the provincial leadership is embedded, and when the provincial leaders have relatively loose connections with the central leader, namely the formal head of the Chinese Communist Party.

The analysis in this chapter consists of two parts. First, by focusing on three aspects

of Chinese elite politics – central leadership fragmentation, local leadership embeddedness, and central-local connectedness – I test whether the estimated coefficients of these main explanatory variables exhibit expected signs. I also study the interaction of these different measures of elite connectedness among and between different central and provincial cadres to explore how they work jointly to drive EAT designations in post-1949 China.

I then explore the mechanisms through which EATs help the central leader check the power of provincial elites through three different tests. First, drawing from an original dataset of local legislative activities, I study how the number of legislative actions in the local People's Congress of each EAT has varied during the Reform Era. EATs are granted more discretionary legislative power then their non-EAT counterparts. Second, I assemble an original dataset of district-level Party and government leaders, with which I study whether local leaders in EATs are systematically different than their colleagues in non-EAT jurisdictions. More specifically, following from the main argument, I examine whether the ruling non-Han cadres in EATs are insulated from their respective provincial elites' local networks. Lastly, in general, my argument suggests that the central leader can undermine provincial elites' discretion by strengthening selected sub-provincial jurisdictions, which do not always have to be EATs. I examine the designation of district-level municipalities, which have been granted significant policy-making discretion by Beijing in the Reform Era – as in the case of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties, district-level municipalities can also limit the scope of provincial leaders' discretion.

Overall, the findings align with the proposed theory, which considers ethnic local autonomy as the institution of agent control in post-1949 China – that is, ethnic local autonomy helps the central leader constrain the discretion of provincial elites connected to his inner-circle rivals, as EATs constitute the set of local jurisdictions in which the provincial Party secretaries can only exercise limited control. I find that EAT designation tends to take place when the Politburo is divided. I also observe more EAT designations when the provincial Party secretary and governor in a province are increasingly tied to each other. In contrast, the incidents of EAT designations decline when provincial Party secretaries are more connected to the Party's central leader than the leader's inner-circle rivals and potential challengers.

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Second, I find that the same factors that explain EAT designations can also account for the number of autonomous and special regulations passed by the local People's Congress in each ethnic autonomous prefecture and county. The analysis of district-level officials suggests that local elites in EATs are more likely to be appointed from local communities, a trend that the central government has been seeking to prevent to deter corrupt and defiant local agents. Perhaps more importantly, non-Han Party and government leaders in EATs, compared with their colleagues in non-EAT jurisdictions, are much less likely to have worked at the provincial level before their appointments. I also find that the naming of district-level municipalities and EATs appears to follow a similar logic. This finding suggests that, while previous studies have usually considered ethnic local autonomy as an exceptional institution and downplay its importance in the Chinese political system, EAT designation should be included in the broad discussion on the political logic of subnational political divisions. I argue that ethnic local autonomy allows the central leader to check the power of potentially recalcitrant and untrustworthy provincial agents by altering the delegation relationship between them as well as the delegation dynamics between provincial leaders and their district and country subordinates.

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows. In Section 2, I review the theory I have developed in Chapter 2 and list the hypotheses for the empirical analysis. In Sections 3 and 4, I introduce the data sources and the variables that I include in the statistical tests. After establishing the baseline model specification in Section 5, I present the main results in Section 6. In Section 7, I carry out a variety of robustness tests. In Section 8, I conduct additional tests to explore the mechanisms through which EATs can undermine the discretion of provincial leaders like other similar exceptional subnational jurisdictions. I conclude this chapter by discussing possible empirical tests that I plan to conduct in the future with additional data.

6.1   Recap of the Main Argument and Hypotheses

In Chapter 2, I have proposed that offering ethnic local autonomy is the central leader's strategic decision to establish his dominance over provincial elites at the presence of strong rivals within the central leadership. Before I carry out the empirical analysis, in this section, I will briefly recap the proposed theory and the derived set of empirical implications.

First, I have argued that the central leader establishes ethnic autonomous territories within each province to constrain the power of leading provincial cadres who are likely to resist his command – these provincial cadres tend to be those who are able to build an embedded local elite network while being connected with the central leader's most significant competitors in the inner circle. Under such circumstances, the central leader will have the incentives to designate EATs to empower local non-Han cadres to create a set of enclaves in which provincial elites only enjoy limited control. As provincial leaders are mostly from the dominant Han group, the difference between the Han and non-Han ethnic groups can provide the central leader with the vital group boundaries so that the designation of ethnic autonomous territories will not end up fostering collusion among local cadres across different administrative levels. In this vein, the designation of ethnic prefectures and counties helps to curb the local network-building endeavors of provincial leaders.

Empirically, I expect to observe that the central leader is more likely to name ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties in the provinces where their leaders hold the potential to defy him. In particular, such provincial leaders tend to be cadres who enjoy independent, embedded personal power base within their provinces and cadres.

Hypothesis 1 (local leadership embeddedness). *The central leader is more likely to designate ethnic autonomous territories in provinces where the provincial leaders have an independent, embedded local power base.*

Another related implication is that the central leader can find it challenging to control provincial elites who are relatively disconnected from him, as he lacks the formal and informal channels to understand these local leaders' actions on the ground and discipline them when

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necessary. In this vein, a low degree of connectedness – that is, the strength of personal ties – between the central leader and provincial ruling elites, can induce a sense of mistrust. Even worse, a provincial leader who is more connected to the central leader's competitors within the central leadership can greatly exacerbate the dilemma of delegation for the central leader. Putting both scenarios together, the central leader will have the incentives to designate ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties in provinces where his connectedness with provincial elites is low relative to provincial elites' connectedness with his most critical inner-circle contenders.

Hypothesis 2 (central-local connectedness). *The central leader is more likely to designate ethnic autonomous territories in provinces where the provincial leaders have weak connectedness with him.*

If the designation of ethnic autonomous territories can be driven by the central leader's lack of connectedness or control over provincial leaders, then under what conditions will the central leader lose his say over the appointments of these local agents at the provincial level? Following from the main argument, I propose that the naming of ethnic autonomous territories is more likely when the central leader faces credible rivals within the central leadership. These strong rivals, many of whom can have ties with the central leader's defiant provincial elites, can sabotage the central leader's appointment decisions for the provincial leadership and makes it more difficult for the central leader to appoint reliable elites. The central leader can also find it more difficult to appoint those he prefers, as these candidates may be subject to his rivals' objections. A divided central leadership can also increase the cost of removing unruly provincial elites, as these powerful local agents can be allied with the central leader's opponents or potential challengers.

In brief, a divided inner circle – the Politburo in the Chinese context – can constrain the central leader's dominance to select and monitor the ruling elites at the provincial level. The central leader thus has the incentives to empower local non-Han ethnic groups with ethnic local autonomy. Through the designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties, ethnic local autonomy effectively establishes a set of localities within a province in which

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the central leader can undermine provincial elites' local discretion. In other words, ethnic local autonomy provides the institutional opportunity of the central leader's intervention also because the central leader monopolizes the power to recognize the non-Han groups eligible for the naming of ethnic autonomous territories (Mullaney, 2011).[1]

Hypothesis 3 (central leadership fragmentation)**.** *The central leader is more likely to designate ethnic autonomous territories when the central leadership is fragmented.*

According to the main argument, each of these three conditions alone can prompt the central leader's decision of EAT designations; they can also work jointly to hinder the ruling power of the central leader as the principal of his inner-circle and provincial agents and thus encourage him to grant ethnic local autonomy in selected local jurisdictions. For instance, with central leadership fragmentation, the proposed theory suggests that the central leader will have greater incentives to constrain the power of potentially recalcitrant provincial leaders, as these provincial agents can form the alliance with the central leader's inner-circle rivals to undermine his ruling position. The central leader will then find provincial leaders who manage to create a self-contained local elite network and build relatively close ties with his inner-circle opponents particularly disturbing, as he lacks the network links to stay informed about these actions of these provincial leaders. When provincial leaders enjoy independent, embedded power bases, the dictator is more likely to establish ethnic autonomous territories when these leaders do not have a connection with the central government.

Hypothesis 4 (fragmentation and embeddedness)**.** *With a fragmented inner circle, the central leader is more likely to designate ethnic autonomous territories in provinces where the provincial leader has an embedded local power base.*

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[1]In line with the main argument, one possible implication is: the Director of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission (formerly the State Nationalities Affairs Commission) – the cabinet member in charge of ethnic policies in the central government – should be closely tied to the central leader. My interviews with retired cadres have confirmed this is the case, as the central leader himself appointed most cadres in charge of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission in post-1949 China. Some of them (e.g., Li Weihan) also had a longstanding working relationship with Mao and Deng.

Hypothesis 5 (fragmentation and connectedness). *With a fragmented inner circle, the central leader is more likely to designate ethnic autonomous territories in provinces where the provincial leader does not have a strong tie with him.*

Hypothesis 6 (embeddedness and connectedness). *With embedded local leaders, the central leader is more likely to designate ethnic autonomous territories in provinces where the provincial leader does not have a strong tie with him.*

Table 6.1 lists all the hypotheses discussed in this section. While most studies have focused on exploring how ethnic local autonomy can prevent violent conflicts between ethnic groups and maintain political stability, my proposed theory suggests that ethnic local autonomy can also sustain the central leader's power by helping him address the dilemma of delegation imposed by his inner-circle and provincial agents.

Table 6.1: Hypotheses and the expected signs of estimated coefficients on EAT designations.

	Expected Results
(1) Central leadership fragmentation	+
(2) Local leadership embeddedness	+
(3) Central-local connectedness	−
(4) Central leadership fragmentation × Local leadership embeddedness	+
(5) Central leadership fragmentation × Central-local connectedness	−
(6) Central-local connectedness × Local leadership embeddedness	−

6.2 Data and Variables

I have compiled a unique time-series cross-sectional dataset that includes different varieties of political and socioeconomic information, such as provincial Party secretary and governor, economic production, and ethnic demography, about every provincial jurisdiction in main-

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land China between 1949 and 2003.[2] In the dataset, each observation is a province-year.

I have decided to end the analysis in the year of 2003 for several reasons. First, in 2003, the Party experienced the first regular succession since 1949 as Hu Jintao peacefully took over all leading Party, government, and military positions. Second, in the same year, China also saw the most recent EAT designation in the country – the Beichuan Qiang Autonomous County in Sichuan. Finally, in the same year, Beijing completed the transition of ethnic policies toward the patronage paradigm – that is, without dismantling the institution of ethnic local autonomy, the central government decides to treat EATs as the localities for special economic assistance for the goal of ethnic assimilation more than the subnational autonomous jurisdictions. The amended Law on Ethnic Local Autonomy that Beijing, which the National People's Congress passed and released between 2001 and 2002, exemplifies these changes.

A critical follow-up question for future research is why the central government switched to treat EATs as the jurisdictions of economic patronage rather than the jurisdictions of local autonomy. However, considering several developments in the Chinese political systems that took place in the past decades, my theory does shed light on the observed changes in the nature of ethnic local autonomy. For one thing, the Politburo has been stabilized with the Party secretary as the supreme leader that also commands the government (as the President of China) and military (as the Chairman of the Central Military Commission). The system was laid down by Deng Xiaoping and other prominent cadres in 1992. Although Jiang Zemin was the first central leader that held these three positions, the Party only saw the very first incident of regular succession in 2002, when Hu Jingtao took over (Bo, 2005; Kou, 2005). Second, it is also important to note that the Party has also established various formal procedures to appoint the provincial elites in the 1990s, which have become sophisticated in the following decade (Bo, 2004b). With the "institutionalized" of elite politics, the central leader may find it less necessary to resort to EATs for agent control as

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[2]The dataset for the following analysis does not include Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan because these territories either did not return to Beijing's rule until the late 1990s or has yet to be under Beijing's *de facto* sovereign control.

he now has a more advanced system to monitor his agents, including those working with him in the Party center as well as the provincial elites. That is, the delegation problems in the Reform era are no longer the same as those in the previous decades, during which the Party lacked a clear institutional framework of elite management. Also, in the Reform era, the central leader has also started designated other distinct local jurisdictions other than EATs in each province. These distinct local jurisdictions, such as district-level municipalities, can serve a similar goal of agent control without reinforcing the group differences between the Han and non-Han people.

6.2.1 Dependent Variable

The main dependent variable is a continuous variable that indicates the number of new, suspended, and restored ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties in each province between 1949 and 2003.

I have collected the information about the designation of ethnic autonomous territories in post-1949 China from various government sources, including the historical statistics from the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the State Ethnic Affairs Commission (SEAC). I have also consulted other scholarly research (e.g., Tian, 2010) and electronic databases, including the Network of Chinese Administrative Divisions (`https://www.xzqh.org/`, in Chinese), China Data Online (`https://www.china-data-online.com/`) and China National Knowledge Infrastructure (`https://www.cnki.net`), to cross-examine the official records.[3] Walder (2014) and Walder and Lu (2017), who have compiled a unique dataset that indicates the formation of local Revolutionary Committees that replaced local Party and government apparatus across the country in the late 1960s, identify the exact timing regarding the suspension of each EAT between 1968 and 1969.[4] In the end, I have managed to uncover the informa-

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[3] In China, the Ministry of Civil Affairs is responsible for the political divisions of local government jurisdictions, and the decision to name ethnic autonomous territories has to be processed first by the State Ethnic Affairs Commission before the State Council's final approval. The National Statistical Bureau worked with SEAC to publish the first databook on ethnic autonomous territories in 1991. The 1991 databook contains various statistical information about EATs.

[4] I thank Professor Andrew Walder at Stanford University for sharing the original dataset with me.

tion about all 222 ethnic autonomous territories that have even been designated by Beijing between 1949 and 2003.

The analysis here focuses on studying the *designation* of sub-provincial EATs in a province, which effectively is the change in the number of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties from the previous year. The dependent variable can thus take both positive and negative values, which indicate the creation and suspension of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties, respectively. I argue that studying EAT designations is the ideal choice for empirical analysis than examining the total number of sub-provincial EATs. As discussed in Chapter 3, the Chinese central government has started to shrink the scope of ethnic local autonomy without suspending any EATs in recent decades. It would be misleading to infer that the *degree* of ethnic local autonomy present in a province based on the total number of EATs because EATs can be either self-rule jurisdictions or the destination of various sorts of assimilation-oriented special financial assistance arranged by Beijing, as in the case since the 1990s (Wang, 2004b; Tuttle, 2010; Fischer, 2015; Sun, 2019). In contrast, it is always clear that the central government treats every new EAT as a local autonomous jurisdiction upon its designation. The creation, suspension, and restoration of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties in a province thus provide a clear-cut signal that indicates the central leader's granting of ethnic local autonomy as the means to constrain the provincial leaders' discretion.[5]

6.2.2 Explanatory Variables

The main explanatory variables are different measures that indicate the connectedness within and between the central and provincial leadership. In the previous chapter, I have applied various statistical tools to measure the degree of elite connectedness and map the networks

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[5]I will collect historical GIS (geographic information system) data so I can consider the *land size* of each EAT as the alternative dependent variable. However, since the main theory focuses on the relationship between elite interactions and the granting of ethnic local autonomy, I have decided to focus on the *number* of EATs for the time being for now.

of prominent cadres in the Party center based on their published biographical information.[6] For each variable, I also consider alternative measures based on previous studies, which I will discuss below.

The first explanatory variable concerns the degree of central leadership fragmentation (*Fragmentation* in the regression tables). Drawing from a unique biographical dataset of all Central Committee (CC) members between 1921 and 2015, I develop an innovative measure to assess the degree to which Politburo members are connected with each other and use the derived Politburo network in each year to compute its modularity. In the network science literature, modularity is a commonly used method to detect the presence of "communities" within a network – that is, modularity-based methods seek to evaluate the degree to which a particular network can be divided into different clusters (Newman, 2006). As a continuous measure, a high value of modularity implies that one can divide those in a given network into separate communities. The value of modularity in the Politburo of each year thus helps to indicate how the degree of central leadership fragmentation has evolved since 1949. We should expect the introduction of ethnic local autonomy when the central leadership is fragmented; in other words, the modularity of the Politburo networks should be *positively* correlated with the designation of sub-provincial ethnic autonomous territories.

The second explanatory variable is the degree of local leadership embeddedness (*Embeddedness* in the regression tables), which indicates the extent to which provincial leaders can build their own local networks in a province to insulate themselves from or even defy Beijing's commands. Chinese history has seen numerous conflicts between the central leader and provincial elites as the leader's provincial agents manage to establish entrenched grassroots political forces (Goodman, 1980, 1986). I measure the degree of embeddedness of provin-

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[6]For the national elites, I have consulted an original dataset assembled by Professor Victor Shih (UCSD) and his colleagues (Shih, Shan, and Liu, 2010). The dataset lists each Central Committee member's province origin, birth year, ethnicity, gender, and educational background. The dataset also includes various career-related information, such as the year in which the CC became a Party member and his/her involvement in various major political events before 1949 (e.g., whether or not he or she participated in the Long March between 1934 and 1935) along with her or his previous Party and government posts. As for local elites, I retrieved two original datasets that include the biographical information of all provincial, district, and county Party secretaries and government heads since 1947 from China Stock Market & Accounting Research (CSMAR) and Chinese Research Data Services (CNRDS). Tsinghua University and Renmin University of China helped me access the biographical data of local elites during my fieldwork in China.

cial elites by observing the degree of biographical similarity between each pair of provincial Party secretary and governor. As explained in the previous chapter, I measure the similarity between a pair of cadres by calculating the Gaussian kernel of their attribute vectors, each of which contains a cadre's relevant demographic and career-related information. The derived measure ranges between 0 and 1, with 1 suggesting that a pair of cadres are connected to the highest degree. At the extreme, one person holds both jobs, the equivalent of a pair of cadres who have entirely identical life history. Following from the proposed theory, the connectedness between the provincial Party secretary and the governor should also be *positively* correlated with the designation of ethnic autonomous territories within a province, as the close connections between them should concern the central leader.[7]

The last explanatory variable is the degree of central-local connectedness (*Connectedness* in the regression tables). I first calculate the biographical similarity between the central leader and provincial Party secretaries. I then follow the same procedures to measure the connectedness between provincial Party secretaries and the central leader's chief rivals in the Politburo. I then take the difference between these two connectedness measures such that higher values mean that provincial Party secretaries are closer to the central leader *relative* to their connectedness with his main inner-circle competitor, and lower values indicate the opposite. As hypothesized, if EAT designations help the central leader limit the power of defiant provincial elites, then the degree of (relative) central-local connectedness should be *negatively* correlated with the naming of these EATs – either because the central leader may find closely connected provincial leaders trustworthy, or he can discipline recalcitrant provincial elites through their connections.

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[7]I plan to measure the modularity of the network that includes the provincial Party secretary and all district-level (or even county-level) Party secretaries. In this case, a lower value of modularity will suggest greater local leadership embeddedness, as it indicates that the provincial and district Party leaders are so connected with each other that they can be hardly divided into different small separated communities. I am working on cleaning the biographical information of district-level ruling elites that date back to 1949. The current analysis will only focus on the biographical similarity of provincial leaders.

6.2.3 Control Variables

Along with the explanatory variables, I control for different demographic and economic variables that can confound the proposed statistical association between elite connectedness and EAT designation. The variables that I include are based on the previous studies of provincial and other local elites in China (e.g., Zang, 1991; Bo, 1996; Landry, 2008; Jia, Kudamatsu, and Seim, 2015; Landry, Lu, and Duan, 2018; Zeng, 2018). I have retrieved the following variables from the official government census and various national and provincial statistical yearbooks. Since the 1980s, the central and local governments in China have been publishing a variety of demographic and socioeconomic statistics of each province. I pay particular attention to the databooks that each province releases to celebrate the 40th, 50th, and 60th anniversaries of the People's Republic of China because these databooks contain relatively comprehensive historical statistics.

First, I account for the size of the total population (log) in the following analysis. As the total population in a province grows large, the central government may have the incentive to divide it into more small units, which can include both EATs and non-EATs, for efficiency purposes. Some scholars have also suggested that the population size of a province can impact its leader's bargaining power with Beijing (Bo, 1996). That is, provinces with a large population usually have more political weight in the country.

I also include the relative size of the non-Han population in a province (in percent), which can affect both EAT designations and the appointments of provincial elites. In addition to the official census, which first took place in 1953 (Mullaney, 2011), I have also consulted rare historical population statistics collected by the Chinese Communist Party right after the Civil War to assemble the most comprehensive data on ethnic demography in post-1949 China.[8] Using the acquired population data, I compute the index of ethnic fractionalization, which is a standard measure of racial or ethnic diversity in the literature (Alesina et al., 2003; Posner, 2004).[9] Considering that non-Han ethnic groups are the main focus of ethnic local autonomy,

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[8] I thank the National Library of China for sharing the historical census data.

[9] Future research can look into the relationship between the spatial distribution of non-Han groups and

it is plausible that one observes a positive correlation between the percentage of the non-Han population and the designation of ethnic autonomous territories. EAT designations can also be positively associated with the degree of ethnic diversity in a province. However, it is important to note that, for most provinces, the relative size of non-Han groups in the total population has been relatively stable on paper since 1949 while the granting of ethnic local autonomy has fluctuated, thus questioning the presumed relationship between a province's ethnic demography and EAT designations. Considering that the Tibetan people have been a major secessionist non-Han in the country, I also control for the designation of Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties in the baseline analysis (e.g., Schwartz, 1994; Carlson, 2004; Henders, 2010; Tuttle, 2010; Han and Paik, 2014; Fischer, 2015; Hillman, 2016).

Finally, I consider the impact of the degree of economic development on EAT designations in the country by using logged GDP per capita, which has also been highlighted as a standard factor for the appointments of provincial elites in China (see Bo, 2002).[10] Meanwhile, the central government has started to deliver different varieties of development to ethnic autonomous territories across the country in recent decades to boost the progress of inter-group assimilation and national integration (Park, Wang, and Wu, 2002; Wang, 2004b; Shih, Zhang, and Liu, 2007). Many scholars have thus proposed a negative correlation between the presence of EATs and a province's overall economic conditions, suggesting that EAT designations tend to occur in poor provinces.

EAT designation in a province. That said, I have yet to find any official documents in which the central government discusses the importance of the spatial distribution of non-Han groups as a key factor of EAT designations.

[10]However, a recent study of local elites between 1999 and 2007 shows that economic development is only associated with the appointments of sub-provincial elites (Landry, Lu, and Duan, 2018).

6.3 Model Specification

Given that the dependent variable is a continuous variable that can take both positive and negative values, I employ ordinary least squares (OLS) in the main analysis.[11] The baseline model below includes all variables that I specify above to minimize the bias caused by omitted variables. In addition to the variables indicated above, I also include the provincial fixed effects to address unobserved location-invariant factors. I will also include the time trend to account for the long-term trend in post-1949 EAT designation.

$$
\begin{aligned}
y_{i,t} = \alpha_i &+ \beta_1 (\text{Central fragmentation})_{t-1} \\
&+ \beta_2 (\text{Local embeddedness})_{i,t-1} + \beta_3 (\text{Central-local connectedness})_{i,t-1} \\
&+ \mathbf{Z}\gamma + \tau_t^3 + \epsilon_{i,t},
\end{aligned}
\tag{6.1}
$$

where i and t refer to province and year, respectively. In Equation 6.1, the vectors of β are the main coefficients of interest. The $n \times k$ matrix $\mathbf{Z}$ represents k control variables for n observations. I include the term τ_t^3, which denotes the cubic time trend, to account for the underlying non-linear trend of EAT designations over the years that is not captured by the variables included in the model.[12] In the model, α_i indexes the provincial fixed effect. I cluster the standard errors by provinces to account for the correlation of errors within each province. To explore the joint effects of the three variables of elite connectedness, I add the interaction terms of central fragmentation with the two variables that focus on provincial ruling elites in the baseline model. I also include the interaction term of local leadership embeddedness and central-local connectedness.

Table 6.8 in the Appendix presents the summary statistics of the main analytical vari-

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[11]In one robustness check, I replace OLS with ordered logit model. In the ordered logit regression, I revise the outcome variable to take the values of -1, 0, or 1, which refer to three different situations regarding EAT designation in a given province year – suspension, no change, and creation. The use of an ordinal dependent variable in the ordered logit regression helps to mitigate the influence of extreme values in the dependent variable for the purpose of estimation. The results are very similar to the baseline results. See the Appendix.

[12]The baseline model does not include the year fixed effects because they will coincide (i.e., be collinear) with the yearly variation in the degree of central leadership fragmentation. Also, replacing the cubic time trend with quadratic time trend does not alter the estimated coefficients of the main explanatory variables.

ables. Between 1949 and 2003, the largest number of EAT designations in a single year is 11 while the largest number of EAT suspensions in a single year is 23. Next, the minimum and maximum values of *Central fragmentation* suggest that the Politburo has oscillated between nearly complete cohesion and intense fragmentation between 1949 and 2003. Meanwhile, the provincial Party secretary on average is slightly more connected with the central leader than the leader's inner-circle rivals. However, with the minimum value of *Central-local connectedness* close to −1, a provincial Party secretary can be much more connected to the leader's inner-circle rivals or his potential competitors than himself. As for *Local embeddedness*, since the mean value is about 0.6, the connectedness between the provincial Party secretary and the governor is reasonably strong.

Table 6.9 in the Appendix shows the correlation matrix of all the variables discussed above. While most explanatory and control variables are only weakly correlated with each other, the correlation coefficient between the percentage of the non-Han population and the degree of ethnic fractionalization is moderately high ($\rho = .60$), as well as the correlation coefficient between the percentage of the non-Han population and the logged total population ($\rho = -.63$). In China, non-Han ethnic groups usually reside in sparsely populated provinces. Provinces where non-Han ethnic groups account for the majority of the local population also tend to those with a high degree of ethnic diversity. The baseline results remain largely the same when I include these variables together or separately in the analysis, thus alleviating the concern of multicollinearity.

6.4   Main Results

Table 6.2 presents the main results. I first include the measures of elite connectedness separately in Models (1)-(3) before I include them together in Model 4. In Model (5), I add the interaction terms of the explanatory variables. All estimations include the control variables with standard errors clustered by provinces.

The results are largely consistent with the expectations in Table 6.1. Across all model

Table 6.2: Designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties, 1949-2003.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Central fragmentation	1.728***			2.093***	1.637**
	(0.619)			(0.692)	(0.764)
Central-local connectedness		−0.624***		−0.806***	5.621***
		(0.210)		(0.234)	(1.820)
Local embeddedness			0.090	0.343**	0.185
			(0.106)	(0.144)	(0.452)
Fragmentation x connectedness					−10.367***
					(3.012)
Fragmentation x embeddedness					0.578
					(1.227)
Connectedness x embeddedness					−4.920***
					(1.584)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,529	1,533	1,527	1,524	1,524
R^2	0.806	0.801	0.800	0.808	0.811
Adjusted R^2	0.801	0.796	0.795	0.803	0.806

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Standard errors are in the parentheses and are clustered by provinces. All estimations control for the following variables: Lagged GDP per capita, the designation of Tibetan autonomous territories, the size of total population (log), the percentage of non-Han population, and the index of ethnic fractionalization computed by the author based on historical census data. All models also include cubic time trends and province fixed effects.

specifications, EAT designations and the degree to which the Politburo is divided are always positive associated with each other. The estimated *Central fragmentation* coefficients are also always statistically significant. Holding different varieties of demographic and socioeconomic constant, the central leader appears to be more likely to name EATs in provinces controlled by those likely to defy his command, either because his provincial agents manage to create an embedded local leadership or because these agents are closely connected to his rivals in the Politburo. Without including the interaction terms, the coefficients of *Central-local connectedness* in Models (2) and (4) are both negative and statistically significant. Because the connectedness between the central leader and the provincial Party secretaries are negatively associated with the designation of EATs, the central leader appears to have fewer incentives to grant ethnic local autonomy when he is relatively close to his most important local agents – the provincial Party secretaries. The coefficients of *Local embeddedness* are positive as expected; however, it is only statistically significant in Model (4), the full baseline model. One potential explanation here is embedded provincial elites alone will not be threatening enough to trigger the central leader's decision to designate EATs, as these elites may be able to establish their local networks with the central leader's support. This

result also justifies the need to examine the interaction terms of different network variables – for instance, embedded provincial elites will only become a problem to the central leader when these elites are only weakly connected to him.[13] In general, these findings provide corroborating evidence for the proposed theory.

Using the estimated coefficients in Model (4), which includes all of the explanatory and control variables except for the interaction terms, the largest increase in the Politburo network's modularity corresponds to the designation of an ethnic autonomous prefecture or county in a province.[14] A highly fragmented Politburo, when combining a highly embedded provincial leadership connected with the central leader's inner-circle rivals, is associated with the designation of about 2 EATs in a province in a given year.[15]

The estimated coefficients of the interaction terms also largely align with the proposed theory. *Central-local connectedness* seems in particular important, as the estimated coefficients of its interaction terms with *Fragmentation* and *Embeddedness* are both negative and statistically significant. First, the negative coefficient of *Fragmentation × Connectedness* indicates that, as hypothesized, a relatively high connectedness between the leader and his provincial agents counters the pro-designation effect of central leadership fragmentation. Second, likewise, the negative coefficient of *Embeddedness × Connectedness* suggests that a relatively high connectedness between the central leader and his provincial agents can reduce the positive effect of local embeddedness on EAT designations in post-1949 China. Figure 6.1 shows the combined effect of *Connectedness* with another two explanatory variables as discussed.

Table 6.10 in the Appendix shows the complete regression table. Most of the control variables are statistically insignificant, which challenges the typical propositions about eth-

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[13]In this sense, one can say the proposed effect of *Local embeddedness* has to be moderated by *Central-local connectedness*.

[14]In history, the largest increase in the modularity of the Politburo network took place after Hua Guofeng worked with Ye Jianying and other senior cadres to take down the Gang of Four in 1976 and changed the composition of the Politburo in the following year.

[15]The largest increase in the degree of local embeddedness and the largest decrease in the degree of central-local connectedness both took place in the early 1970s after Lin Biao perished in the September 13th Incident in 1971 and the Chinese Communist Party convened the 10th Party Congress in 1973.

Figure 6.1: Interaction effect of central-local connectedness with central leadership fragmentation and local leadership embeddedness.

(a) Connectedness × central fragmentation   (b) Connectedness × local embeddedness
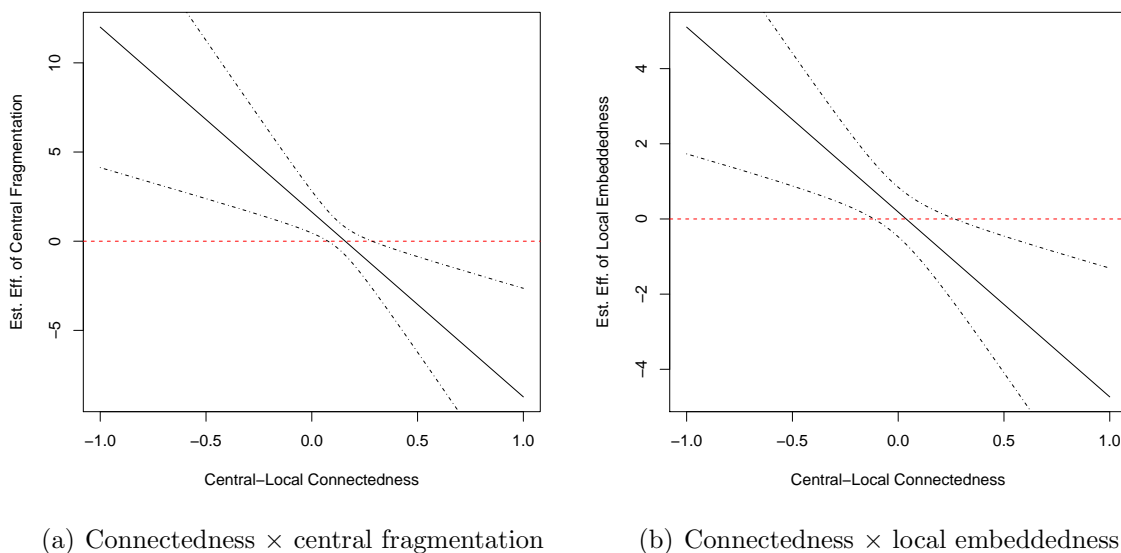
nic local autonomy in the country. For instance, while many presume that the naming of EATs is mainly determined by local ethnic demography, neither the association between EAT designations and the percentage of the non-Han population nor the association between EAT designations and ethnic fractionalization is statistically different from zero. The association between EAT designations and a province's economic conditions is also statistically insignificant. This finding questions the presumption that considers the designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties as provincial leaders seek to demand additional fiscal subsidies from the central government.

I have carried out a variety of tests to assess the robustness of the baseline findings. I start with the use of alternative dependent and independent variables to see whether or not the main findings are sensitive to any particular measurement schemes. I conduct the same analysis with ordered logit regression. The results of all robustness checks are available in the Appendix.

6.5   Heterogeneous Effects

In this section, I divide the observations to see whether I can only observe any heterogeneous effects.

6.5.1   Secession-prone Provinces

One may contend that EAT designations in post-1949 China can serve different objectives. In other words, it is possible some EAT designations do not follow the same political principle of agent control. In particular, previous existing studies have focused on Xinjiang and Tibet as they the most important sources of ethnic uprisings that challenge the legitimacy of the current Chinese government (e.g., Schwartz, 1994; Castets, 2003; Carlson, 2004; Bovingdon, 2010; Wei, 2011; Han and Paik, 2014; Hillman, 2016).[16] EAT designations in Xinjiang, Tibet, and neighboring provinces thus perhaps follow a different logic than the proposed one. That is, in those provinces, perhaps Beijing intends to appease or suppress ethnic uprisings through the granting of ethnic local autonomy.

I rerun the analysis by dividing all provinces into two groups. The first set consists of the most secession-prone provinces, including Xinjiang and the Greater Tibetan Area;[17] All other provinces are in the other set.

The results presented in Table 6.3 are striking. When I only consider all provinces except Xinjiang and the Greater Tibetan Area, the results are very similar to those in 6.2, suggesting that the baseline findings are driven by EATs located in provinces that are not immediately prone to any secession threats. However, when I only consider EAT designations in secession-

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[16]During the early 1950s, seeking to incorporate Tibet into the newly established People's Republic, Mao promised the Dalai Lama, who was the leader of the Central Tibet, political autonomy and religious freedom with a Peace Agreement (Goldstein, 1997). The same decade and the following ones also saw Beijing named another 20 Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties in the provinces next to Tibet, which did not become an ethnic autonomous region until 1965.

[17]The Greater Tibetan Area includes U-Tsang, Amdo, and Kham. These territories roughly correspond to today's Tibet, Qinghai, and Sichuan, and were under the control of the *de facto* independent Tibetan government in the early 20th century before the Chinese Communist Party established the People's Republic of China (Shakabpa, 1967; Dreyer, 1976).

prone provinces, the estimated coefficients exhibit the same signs when compared to their counterparts in Models (1) and (2). The coefficients in Models (3) and (4) even show larger size than those in the first two models. The results, again, challenge the presumption that treats ethnic local autonomy as an institution of ethnic suppression or conflict resolution in favor of the proposed theory.

Table 6.3: Designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties in secession-prone and other provinces, 1949-2003.

	Other Provinces		Secession-prone	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Central fragmentation	2.075***	1.556*	5.072**	8.211**
	(0.722)	(0.800)	(2.231)	(4.103)
Central-local connectedness	−0.837***	5.614***	−0.937	14.161
	(0.250)	(1.898)	(0.825)	(8.948)
Local embeddedness	0.276*	0.094	1.527**	3.583*
	(0.146)	(0.476)	(0.666)	(1.889)
Fragmentation x connectedness		−10.518***		−28.661*
		(3.162)		(15.892)
Fragmentation x embeddedness		0.656		−5.257
		(1.288)		(4.621)
Connectedness x embeddedness		−4.849***		−9.250
		(1.649)		(6.508)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,367	1,367	208	208
R^2	0.789	0.793	0.858	0.864
Adjusted R^2	0.783	0.787	0.849	0.853

$^*p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$. Standard errors are in the parentheses and are clustered by provinces. All estimations control for the following variables: Lagged GDP per capita, the designation of Tibetan autonomous territories, the size of total population (log), the percentage of non-Han population, and the index of ethnic fractionalization computed by the author based on historical census data. All models also include cubic time trends and province fixed effects.

6.5.2   Revolutionary Party Bases

According to the proposed theory, EATs help the central leader to undermine the discretion of untrustworthy provincial leaders. One possible implication is that the central leader will have fewer incentives to name EATs in provinces that have long been the Party's strongholds. Before 1949, the Party built several local bases across the country so it could survive the pursuit of both Chiang Kai-shek and the Japanese army. These local bases provided Mao and the Party with the organizational foundation to recruit new members while experimenting land reform in these "liberation" (*jiefang*) districts.

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In several provinces, the Party center managed to expand the local bases into regional headquarters so that these headquarters would command local bases in the neighboring provinces while maintaining regular contacts with the Party center in Yan'an (Guo, 1982). These regional headquarters can have lasting legacies for their respective provinces. As argued by Koss (2018), the locations of these pre-1949 local bases help to explain the variation in the governing capacity of the local states in post-1949 China. It is thus possible that the central leader is confident in controlling these provinces with dependable ruling elites, making EATs relatively unnecessary.

I divide up the observations with a binary variable that takes the value of 1 if a province had a regional headquarter of the Chinese Communist Party between 1936 and 1949. I expect to observe results that are similar to the main findings only in provinces that the Party *failed* to establish any pre-1949 local bases. The results in Table 6.4 are consistent with this conjecture, as we only observe statistically significant results that resemble those in Table 6.2 in the first two models.

Table 6.4: Designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties in provinces with and without pre-1949 Party bases, 1949-2003.

	Without Bases		With Bases	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Central fragmentation	3.130***	2.599**	0.614*	0.647
	(1.090)	(1.223)	(0.355)	(0.598)
Central-local connectedness	−1.208***	7.237***	−0.262	1.969
	(0.371)	(2.576)	(0.194)	(1.530)
Local embeddedness	0.413*	0.289	0.168	0.199
	(0.218)	(0.710)	(0.118)	(0.284)
Fragmentation x connectedness		−13.588***		−3.629
		(4.208)		(2.363)
Fragmentation x embeddedness		0.604		−0.051
		(1.864)		(0.806)
Connectedness x embeddedness		−6.271***		−1.790
		(2.177)		(1.599)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	957	957	567	567
R^2	0.810	0.815	0.787	0.788
Adjusted R^2	0.805	0.808	0.779	0.780

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Standard errors are in the parentheses and are clustered by provinces. All estimations control for the following variables: Lagged GDP per capita, the designation of Tibetan autonomous territories, the size of total population (log), the percentage of non-Han population, and the index of ethnic fractionalization computed by the author based on historical census data. All models also include cubic time trends and province fixed effects.

6.6 How EATs Constrain Provincial Elites

In this section, I conduct three tests to study the mechanisms through which EATs allow the central leader to constrain the personnel and policy-making discretion of provincial leaders. First, I study the factors that influence the frequency of legislative activities in EATs to see whether the same factors that drive EAT designations can also explain the variation in the use of local legislative autonomy by the local People's Congress in EATs. Second, other than EAT designations, the central leader has also seized the power to regulate and oversee the training and recruitment of non-Han cadres in the country (Liu, 2009; Sun, 2012), who will be placed to command the Party affairs and government administration in EATs. In the second analysis, I explore whether the ruling non-Han elites in EATs are systematically different than their colleagues in non-EATs. I analyze an original dataset of district Party secretaries and Party heads from Yunnan and other provinces in Southwestern China, where the majority of ethnic autonomous prefectures are located. Finally, I examine the designation of district-level municipalities during the Reform Era. When Deng Xiaoping announced the Reform and Opening Policy in December 1978, the central government began to increase the policy-making power of selected districts by turning them into municipal jurisdictions that enjoy certain legislative and fiscal powers independent of their respective provincial governments (Chung, 2016a; Donaldson, 2017). While the primary objective was to facilitate the introduction of the market economy in the country, these municipalities can serve as the similar role as EATs, as they are all sub-provincial jurisdictions in which the provincial leaders only enjoy limited discretion.

6.6.1 Autonomous Regulations in EATs

Compared with their non-EAT counterparts, EATs possess additional legislative powers bestowed to the local People's Congress upon their designation (Chao, 1994; Shen, 2013). Although the central government in the 1980s began to grant some legislative power to selected non-EAT municipalities at the district level, non-EAT municipalities can only formulate regulations to specify the details to implement laws and regulations introduced by the

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upper-level authorities. In contrast, the EATs on paper enjoy more leverage, as exemplified by the formation of the autonomous regulations (*zizhi tiaoli*). The autonomous regulations allow EATs to stipulate their granted local autonomous powers in line with the Law on Ethnic Local Autonomy (LELA).

Before the Cultural Revolution, Beijing allowed EATs to formulate their regulations to specify their unique government and legislative organizations – these regulations are known as the "organizational" (*zuzhi*) regulations. After the central government restored ethnic local autonomy following the Cultural Revolution, the National People's Congress passed LELA in 1984, in which Beijing expands the scope of local legislation for EATs. In addition to the "autonomous" (*zizhi*) regulations, which are similar to the organizational regulations in the 1950s, the local People's Congress in EATs can also formulate the supplementary (*fujia*) and special (*tebie*) regulations that allow EATs to adjust upper-level regulations and create their regulations on the policy areas of their choice.

I have assembled an original dataset of legislative activities in every ethnic autonomous prefecture and county during the Reform Era from *Beida Fabao*, a Chinese-language dataset of all laws and regulations passed by the national and local People's Congress since 1949. According to the records from *Beida Fabao*, EATs – especially ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties – have formulated more than 1,400 unique regulations since 1979. In addition to the autonomous regulations, the local People's Congress in EATs across the country have passed local regulations on different varieties of policy areas, such as natural resource management (e.g., land, water, and forest), tourism, education, migration, cultural preservation, and healthcare.

For ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties, every drafted regulation has to be passed by the local People's Congress with the approval from their respective provincial governments. These EAT regulations, according to LELA, do not require the approval from the National People's Congress, although the local People's Congress in ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties does have to submit an *ex post* copy of the approved regulations to the National People's Congress. In contrast, sub-provincial non-EAT jurisdictions can pass their regulations in the standing committee of their respective people's congress. Note that

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district-level municipalities are the only sub-provincial non-EAT jurisdictions that enjoy some legislative powers (Shen, 2013).

In the following analysis, I seek to test the factors that can impact how active the local People's Congress in an EAT is. The dataset includes all ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties after 1979; each observation is an EAT-year. In addition to the information about each EAT's legislative activities, such as the formulation and passage of autonomous and other local regulations, I have also retrieved several demographic and socioeconomic control variables from the *Yearbook of Non-Han Nationalities*. The dependent variable is a binary indicator that takes the value of 1 if the people's congress in the EAT passes or revises the autonomous regulation – the most unique legislation for the EATs in post-1979 China.

Given that the formulation of EAT regulations only involves the interactions between the provincial governments and their subordinate EATs, I focus on testing the effects of *Local embeddedness* and *Central-local connectedness*. In addition to the control variables, I also consider four binary variables that indicate the following: (1) Whether an EAT is designated to more than one non-Han group, (2) whether an EAT is designated to the Tibetan people,[18] (3) whether an EAT is an ethnic autonomous prefecture, and (4) whether an EAT falls under the jurisdiction of an ethnic autonomous region.

Table 6.5 presents the results based on the logit regression.[19] First, the formulation of the autonomous regulations is positively associated with the degree of *Local embeddedness*, which again is consistent with the proposed logic that EATs serve to constrain provincial leaders' policy-making discretion.[20] Next, the *Central-local connectedness* coefficients are

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[18]Note that the dataset only includes Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties, all of which are located outside the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

[19]Given that the passage of the autonomous regulations, as well as their revisions, are relatively uncommon – among all EAT-year observations, the mean of the dependent variable is only 0.20 – I carry out the same analysis but employ the rare events logit regression, the estimator designed to account for a binary outcome such that one of the two outcomes of the binary indicator (i.e., 0 and 1) rarely occurs (King and Zeng, 2001). The results resemble those in Table 6.5.

[20]Some may argue the findings can also suggest provincial leaders' attempt to incorporate EAT elites into their clientelistic networks by allowing them to pass their autonomous regulations. However, this is unlikely the case as personal conversations with current and retired cadres all suggest that provincial leaders are usually against the making of autonomous regulations and consider these regulations as EATs' pursuit of "within-province independence" (*shennei duli*).

negative in the first three model specifications; despite being statistically insignificant, the negative sign is consistent with the notion that the central leader may have fewer incentives to check a province governed by a cadre closely tied to him.

Table 6.5: Formulation of autonomous regulations in ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties, 1979-2003.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Local embeddedness	1.241***	1.238***	1.096**	1.730***
	(0.474)	(0.478)	(0.483)	(0.611)
Central-local connectedness	−0.873	−1.050	−0.921	3.640
	(0.713)	(0.691)	(0.696)	(3.612)
Multiple-group EAT (=1)		−0.211	−0.256	−0.266
		(0.169)	(0.170)	(0.171)
Tibetan EAT (=1)		0.374	0.651**	0.652**
		(0.266)	(0.292)	(0.291)
Ethnic autonomous prefecture (=1)		1.167***	0.723**	0.718**
		(0.174)	(0.288)	(0.288)
Under ethnic autonomous region (=1)		−1.219***	−1.263***	−1.303***
		(0.248)	(0.259)	(0.258)
Embeddedness x connectedness				−10.932
				(8.945)
Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,656	1,656	1,625	1,625
Log Likelihood	−783.962	−731.660	−718.190	−716.009
AIC	1,585.924	1,489.320	1,468.379	1,466.018

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Standard errors are in the parentheses and are clustered by provinces. All estimations control for the following variables: Lagged GDP per capita, the size of total population (log), and the percentage of non-Han population. All models also include province fixed effects.

In the analysis, I include several binary indicators to see whether different types of EATs exhibit any variations in the use of their granted legislative autonomy. The estimated coefficients for *Multi-group EATs* are negative while being insignificant – it is possible that the formulation of autonomous regulations can take more time due to a higher coordination cost between different non-Han ethnic groups entitled to the granted local autonomy. The coefficients of *Tibetan EATs*, in contrast, are positive and statistically significant in Models (3) and (4) – considering that the Tibetans are secession-prone, their use of autonomous legislative power may serve both the goal to appease potential non-Han uprisings as well as to help the central leader limit the scope of their respective provincial leaders' discretion. Moreover, the positive and statistically significant coefficients for *Ethnic autonomous prefectures* suggest that EAT legislation has largely taken place right under the provincial jurisdictions, once again consistent with the previous discussion that treats EATs as the

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institution to resolve the central leader's delegation dilemma. Finally, it appears that an EAT will be much less likely to use its granted legislative autonomy when it is under an ethnic autonomous region, which has been under the central leader's tight control and failed to pass any autonomous regulations since 1984.

6.6.2 Ruling non-Han Cadres in EATs

While the central government has delegated the personnel decisions at the district and county levels to provincial leaders in the 1980s (Kou, 2005), the appointment of non-Han leaders in EATs, as well as their recruitment and training in the Party, are subject to LELA and various regulations imposed by the central government (Liu, 2009; Sun, 2012). For instance, LELA specifies that the government head of an EAT must come from the corresponding non-Han group – for example, a Tibetan EAT should have a Tibetan government head.[21] In other words, while the provincial leaders enjoy the discretion to appoint district and county officials to build the "clientelistic" networks with their district and county subordinates (Jiang, 2018), the central leader has created additional hurdles for them to do the same in EATs. As the central government is responsible for designating EATs and regulating the appointments of non-Han cadres, provincial leaders face additional hurdles for personnel matters in ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties, which in turn can impede the network-building endeavors of local elites in a province.

I have assembled an original dataset of district-level Party secretaries and government heads. The goal here is to study whether leading officials in EATs and non-EATs exhibit any systematic differences. According to the main argument, I focus on the following two comparisons. First, local officials in EATs should be *more* likely to be appointed from local communities. To establish their embedded local networks, provincial leaders enjoy the discretion to reshuffle officials within their respective provinces as they wish, but such flexibility is limited due to Beijing's specific regulations about the appointment decisions in

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[21]When an EAT is designated more than one non-Han group, often the government head will alternate between different groups for different terms although there is no specific rule about this.

EATs. Second, compared with non-EAT officials, leading cadres in ethnic autonomous pre-fectures should be *less* likely to have worked at the provincial level before they are appointed. In other words, EATs officials should be very likely to be located *outside* the networks of provincial leaders as the result of various constraints imposed by Beijing.

Results in Table 6.6 are consistent with both expectations. In the first two models, the dependent variable is a binary variable that set to the value of 1 if the district officials are appointed from the local communities; in Models (3) and (4), the outcome of interest is another binary variable that indicates whether or not an official has worked in the provincial government before he or she is promoted to govern the district (=1). The main explanatory variable is *EAT*, a binary indicator that takes the value of 1 if a district is designated as an ethnic autonomous prefecture. The *EAT* coefficients, statistically significant across all models, suggest that non-Han officials in ethnic autonomous prefectures are much more likely to come from their hometowns than their colleagues in non-EAT jurisdictions. Perhaps more importantly, EAT ruling cadres are much less likely to have worked in the provincial government along with their respective provincial superiors before their appointments.

Table 6.6: Party secretaries and government heads of district-level jurisdictions, 1979-2003.

	Home Rule		Provincial Ties	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
EAT (=1)	1.275***	1.097***	−2.774***	−2.617***
	(0.230)	(0.245)	(0.467)	(0.472)
First term (=1)	0.435	−0.133	−0.262	−0.165
	(0.289)	(0.386)	(0.326)	(0.339)
EAT x First term		0.856**		−13.927***
		(0.422)		(0.416)
Observations	909	909	909	909
Log Likelihood	−412.011	−410.175	−400.881	−399.198
AIC	842.022	840.350	819.761	818.395

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Standard errors are in the parentheses and are clustered by provinces. All estimations control for the following variables: Lagged GDP per capita, the size of total population (log), and the percentage of non-Han population. All models also include cubic time trends and province fixed effects.

In the analysis, I add *First term*, a binary variable to take the value of 1 if the central leader is in power for five years or less. The interaction of *EAT* and *First term* for both dependent variables is noteworthy. First, the positive interaction regarding home rule in Model (2) suggests that EATs are more likely to see a local non-Han leader when the central

leader recently ascends to power in the Party. As the central leader consolidates his ruling position in the Party center, he will begin to appoint non-Han cadres that belong to the titular groups of respective EATs but come from other local jurisdictions.[22] While the ruling non-Han elites are less likely to have any prior working experiences in the provincial government than their colleagues in non-autonomous jurisdictions, the negative interaction for the second outcome variable in Model (4) implies that the chance to see non-Han elites in EATs with any co-worker ties with their provincial superiors is even lower when the Party welcomes a new leader.[23]

The results are consistent with my argument, which considers ethnic local autonomy as an institution of agent control. Sub-provincial EATs, in particular, can help the central leader constrain defection-prone provincial elites with the creation of a group of non-Han cadres who have their separate local networks in which provincial cadres are barely present. The results also suggest that EATs can allow the central leader to bypass the provincial elites to counter their local influence while he seeks to build and maintain his dominance in the Party center.[24]

It is also important to highlight that the findings of the appointments of ruling elites in ethnic autonomous prefectures cast broader insight about how ethnic local autonomy contributes to nation-building in post-1949 China. While Beijing stipulates that the ruling elites in EATs must come from the respective non-Han groups, the results in Table 6.6 suggest that the central government also considers a cadre's *territorial* identity when selecting

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[22]For instance, as informed by the local cadres during the interviews, the central leader can, and has, appointed Miao cadres to lead Miao EATs that are not their hometowns (e.g., Miao EATs from a different province).

[23]An alternative is to use *First term* to divide all observations into two groups to see whether the central leader being in power for more or less than five year will lead to any statistically significant differences. The results are also consistent with the results with the interaction term. For the first outcome variable, while the estimated odds-ratios of seeing home rule in EATs are above 1 in both groups, the odds-ratios are much greater when the central leader is only in power for five years or less. For the second outcome variable, while the estimated odds-ratios of seeing non-Han elites who have worked in the provincial government before their appointments are always smaller than 1, the odds-ratios are slightly greater when the central leader is only in power for more than five years.

[24]In a recent study, Zeng (2018) shows that a new central leader is likely to increase the portion of supporters in the provincial Party committees across the country after he comes to power.

the Party and government leaders for EATs, and the central leader can strategically adjust the relative importance of a cadre's *territorial* and *ethnic* identities under different circumstances. In doing so – as observed by and Brubaker (1996) and Kaup (2002) – ethnic local autonomy provides with the institutional means to hinder the rise of non-Han ethnicities as the source of political mobilization because EAT designations have intertwined non-Han ethnicities with regional identities at the same time. As a result, non-Han elites and citizens sharing the same ethnicity will not only consider themselves belonging to the same non-Han group; instead, they will include their native places as another component of their political identities.

6.6.3   District-level Municipalities

In this section, I study whether the designation of district-level municipalities (*dijishi*) during the Reform Era follows a similar logic as the designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties. In the early 1950s, the central government divided up a province into several districts, each of which was under the direct command of provincial leaders. By this design, district local officials do not have any independent decision-making powers, as Beijing only expects them to only serve as the agents of provincial elites, who are then the agents of the central leader. In the following decades, however, Beijing started elevating the importance of districts by turning them into district municipalities. When Deng Xiaoping announced the market reform after Beijing concluded the Cultural Revolution, the central government released the Law on the Organization of Local Governments in 1979. The 1979 Organization Law grants these municipalities at the district level some policy-making or legislative discretion (Donaldson, 2017).[25]

Nonetheless, compared with ethnic autonomous prefectures, provincial leaders, who are granted the power to appoint their subordinates in the same provinces in the early 1980s, still control the appointments of ruling cadres in these municipalities. Also, district-level

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[25]Some of the most famous examples took place in the 1980s, during which Beijing named several selected "large" municipalities and granted them some independent power of economic policy-making as the country opened its door to external investments and capitalist exchanges.

municipalities do not have the power to adjust the regulations imposed by their superiors. Their legislative powers focus more on specifying the details of policy implementation than adjustment and the creation of regulations in new policy areas.

Despite these notable differences, as in the case of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties, provincial leaders also do not exercise full discretion over these district-level municipalities. District-level municipalities can thus serve as the potential institution to help the central leader address the delegation dilemma in the provinces where it is difficult to identify or even "construct" non-Han ethnic groups.

Table 6.7 presents the analysis for the designation of district-level municipalities and EATs between 1977 and 2003. For Models (1) and (2), the dependent variable is the designation of district-level municipalities; the outcome of interest for the remaining models is the designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties. The similarities between the estimated coefficients of these two different outcome variables are striking. Despite some minor differences in the level of statistical significance, the estimated coefficients exhibit identical signs, which suggest that the designation of these two unique local jurisdictions appears to follow the same political logic – that is, they provide the central leader with the opportunity to change the delegation dynamics within the provinces to impose his checks over provincial elites.

6.7 Conclusion

Drawing from a unique dataset of local administrative divisions and innovative measures of elite connectedness, I test how the degrees of central leadership fragmentation, local leadership embeddedness, and central-local connectedness work together to determine the designation of sub-provincial EATs in China between 1949 and 2003.

The results are consistent with the proposed theory, which suggests that the granting of ethnic local autonomy allows the central leader to tackle the delegation dilemma by constraining the power of provincial elites who are prone to defection – especially those who

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Table 6.7: Designation of district-level municipalities and ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties, 1977-2003.

	District Municipalities		EATs	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Central fragmentation	2.393***	−1.792*	3.172***	−1.174
	(0.464)	(1.067)	(0.993)	(1.096)
Central-local connectedness	−0.738**	2.564	−0.335*	3.211*
	(0.367)	(1.631)	(0.171)	(1.705)
Local embeddedness	0.819***	−1.509***	0.380**	−1.823**
	(0.282)	(0.510)	(0.183)	(0.799)
Fragmentation x connectedness		−4.436		−7.177**
		(2.718)		(3.008)
Fragmentation x embeddedness		5.553***		5.457***
		(1.534)		(2.062)
Connectedness x embeddedness		−3.218**		−1.268
		(1.538)		(1.968)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	805	805	800	800
R^2	0.133	0.179	0.658	0.677
Adjusted R^2	0.092	0.138	0.640	0.659

$^*p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$. Standard errors are in the parentheses and are clustered by provinces. All estimations control for the following variables: Lagged GDP per capita, the designation of Tibetan autonomous territories, the size of total population (log), the percentage of non-Han population, and the index of ethnic fractionalization computed by the author based on historical census data. All models also include cubic time trends and province fixed effects.

manage to embed themselves in the local network while hold ties to the central leader's most formidable rivals in the Party center. As EATs enjoy the power to formulate their autonomous regulations while having the central leader controlling the appointments of their ruling non-Han cadres, ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties become enclaves within which provincial leaders can only exercise limited discretion. I find that EATs are more likely to pass or revise their autonomous regulations against an embedded provincial leadership; moreover, the non-Han cadres in charge of EATs are more likely to be distant from provincial leaders' co-worker networks.

The empirical findings offer two broader insights about local governance and nation-building in post-1949 China. First, I demonstrate that EATs can work in a similar way as other unique sub-provincial jurisdictions which Beijing introduced in the Reform Era to bolster the central leader's control over the provincial elites. The similarity in the set of factors that drive the designation of EATs and district-level municipalities challenges the presumption in previous studies, which have long treated EATs as exceptions in the Chinese political system and excluded them from the discussion (Li, 2010; Chung, 2016a; Donaldson,

2017). This finding also calls more future studies to uncover the political logic of other changes in local government administration during the Reform Era. Another crucial change that has been taking place since the 1980s is the elevation of counties in the administrative hierarchy so that provinces can govern them directly without doing so through the districts or district-level municipalities (Pu, 2005).

Second, the joint consideration of non-Han cadres' territorial and ethnic identities in their appointments allows the central leader to strategically focus on one over the other under different conditions. When the central leader seeks to use EATs to constrain potentially unruly provincial elites, the findings suggest that he will focus on non-Han cadres' territorial identity by having them selected from the local non-Han communities. As the central leader manages to consolidate his ruling position, then he will downplay the importance of territorial identity, presumably because he seeks to increase the efficiency of the principal-agent interactions within a province after he can control the provincial elites across the country. The strategic salience of an individual's territorial and ethnic affiliations under ethnic local autonomy, as characterized by Brubaker (1996), shapes the political identity of the non-Han cadres in post-1949 China and helps to prevent the rise of group-based non-Han mobilization against the Party and government.

Future studies will extend the current analysis in three ways. First, I will collect historical GIS data that map the changes in the boundary of Chinese local administrative units to incorporate the *land size* of EATs into the analysis. The current analysis only considers the *number* of EATs, which treats all EATs equally capable of countering the provincial leaders' entrenched power although it is possible that larger EATs can pose greater constraints on the provincial leaders. Second, the current analysis only considers provincial Party secretaries and governors when measuring the degree of local leadership embeddedness; I plan to include the Party and government heads at the district and county levels to map the network of local elites to create alternative measures local embeddedness. One possible alternative is to include all district and county Party secretaries along with the provincial Party secretary as a single network and study how strong they are connected in a province. In a similar vein, while current analysis only studies the connectedness between the provincial Party

secretaries and their district subordinates, future research will seek to measure the strength of district officials' ties with the central leader. We can then study whether districts or counties are more likely to become EATs when their Party local are more connected to the central leader compared with their respective provincial superiors. Finally, I plan to collect more fine-grained local demographic and socioeconomic statistics so that I can extend the level of analysis to the district and county level and have each observation as a district-year or even county-year.

6.8 Appendix: Descriptive Statistics and Additional Results

Summary Statistics

Table 6.8: Summary statistics.

	Num. obs.	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
EAT designation	1,695	−0.543	2.750	−23.000	11.000
Central fragmentation	1,649	0.375	0.137	0.074	0.597
Central-local connectedness	1,695	0.025	0.128	−0.799	0.396
Local embeddedness	1,618	0.576	0.285	0.368	1.000
Total population (log)	1,699	7.624	0.990	4.737	9.176
Percentage of non-Han population	1,631	0.137	0.227	0.0002	1.000
Ethnic fractionalization	1,631	0.149	0.185	0.000	0.649
GDP per capita (log)	1,594	6.352	1.563	−6.908	10.476

Table 6.9: Correlation matrix.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(1) EAT designation	1							
(2) Central fragmentation	0.31	1						
(3) Central-local connectedness	0.12	0.14	1					
(4) Local embeddedness	−0.24	−0.24	−0.27	1				
(5) Total population (log)	−0.01	−0.10	−0.003	−0.09	1			
(6) Percentage of non-Han population	−0.12	0.02	−0.05	−0.002	−0.63	1		
(7) Ethnic fractionalization	−0.25	−0.003	−0.02	−0.01	−0.41	0.60	1	
(8) GDP per capita (log)	0.13	−0.27	0.13	−0.29	0.11	−0.09	−0.07	1

Full Regression Table

Table 6.10: Designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties, 1949-2003.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Central fragmentation	1.728***			2.093***	1.637**
	(0.619)			(0.692)	(0.764)
Central-local connectedness		−0.624***		−0.806***	5.621***
		(0.210)		(0.234)	(1.820)
Local embeddedness			0.090	0.343**	0.185
			(0.106)	(0.144)	(0.452)
Total population (log)	0.007	−0.233	−0.115	−0.198	−0.395*
	(0.207)	(0.206)	(0.204)	(0.206)	(0.230)
Percentage of non-Han population	1.117	0.899	1.138	0.748	0.842
	(0.848)	(0.855)	(0.845)	(0.863)	(0.855)
Ethnic fractionalization	−0.593	−0.485	−0.419	−0.683	−0.603
	(0.779)	(0.773)	(0.770)	(0.793)	(0.783)
Lagged GDP per capita (log)	−0.043	−0.019	−0.036	−0.033	−0.028
	(0.027)	(0.019)	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.027)
Fragmentation x connectedness					−10.367***
					(3.012)
Fragmentation x embeddedness					0.578
					(1.227)
Connectedness x embeddedness					−4.920***
					(1.584)
Observations	1,529	1,533	1,527	1,524	1,524
R²	0.806	0.801	0.800	0.808	0.811
Adjusted R²	0.801	0.796	0.795	0.803	0.806

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Standard errors are in the parentheses and are clustered by provinces. All models include cubic time trends and province fixed effects.

Different Types of EATs

In the main analysis, I consider the designation of all ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties between 1949 and 2003. One may contend that EAT designations in post-1949 China can serve different objectives. For instance, while some are named to address the central leader's delegation dilemma as I have argued, other EATs may be introduced to suppress or soothe non-Han ethnic mobilization. In the following checks, I redefine the outcome variable of interest by only focusing on the designation of some specific types of EATs while treating EATs that are not in these categories as non-autonomous local jurisdictions. The types of EATs of particular interest here are those that were unlikely to be designated to prevent or appease non-Han uprisings. The objective of doing so is to see if I can observe similar findings as those in Table 6.2.

First, I focus on the set of EATs that are named for non-Han groups that receive the central government's official recognition *after* 1949. Before coming to power, Mao Zedong and many other political elites had acknowledged several historically well known non-Han groups, such as the Tibetans (*zang*), the Hui, and the Mongols (Dreyer, 1976). By creating "ethnic autonomous governments" for these groups in the 1940s, Mao and the Chinese Communist Party sought to win their support while preventing these groups from joining foreign countries to seek secession.[26] Since the EATs for these well-known groups were prompted by the Party's need to build inter-group alliances while maintaining territorial integrity, I revise the dependent variable by only considering the designation of EATs for groups that receive the minority status after the Party came to power (see Mullaney, 2011). As carefully documented by Kaup (2000), the Zhuang is one of such non-Han ethnic groups – the post-1949 Chinese government constructed the Zhuang identity and granted the "Zhuang" people the minority status in the 1950s by merging multiple linguistically related non-Han groups in Southwestern China. Another example is the Tujia, which many consider as no

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[26]Upon the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War, the Party announced the plan to create several Hui autonomous governments in the Shan-Gan-Ning Border Region. For instance, the granting of ethnic local autonomy to the Mongols, which led to the creation of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR) in 1947, took place as the Party sought to impede the unification of Inner and Outer Mongolia. Outer Mongolia acquired independence in the early 20th century.

different from the Han.

Second, I revise the dependent variable by considering the set of EATs in which only a single non-Han group enjoys the granted local autonomy. Previous studies have suggested that it is likely that Beijing seeks to suppress non-Han groups by offering local autonomy to more than one group at the same time to have these groups compete with each other for local dominance. In doing so, the central government attempts to prevent a single group from becoming overwhelmingly strong, thus possibly constraining the scope of ethnic local autonomy, as the in the case of Xinjiang (Bovingdon, 2010). In other words, unlike their single-group counterparts, multi-group EATs perhaps focus more on suppression than agent control.[27]

Third, I focus on the set of EATs named right below the provincial jurisdictions. In addition to ethnic autonomous prefectures, Beijing has also designated several ethnic autonomous counties under provincial jurisdictions in the 1950s.[28] As my theory proposes that EATs allow the central leader to check the power of potentially recalcitrant provincial elites that are not in his network, I should observe similar findings when I only consider the designation of EATs named to be directly governed by the provincial governments.

Figure 6.2 shows the percentage of these three different types of EATs across all provinces. The red line indicates the 50% to show if a given set of EATs accounts for the majority of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties in the country. The gray bar refers to the suspension of ethnic local autonomy during the Cultural Revolution.

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[27]During my fieldwork, many local officials hinted that Beijing in the late 1950s strategically recognized the minority status of the Tujia people – a group "with no historical foundation" in their words – to undermine the political power of other historically known non-Han ethnic groups.

[28]At present, Chongqing and Hainan, two provinces established in the Reform Era, both have ethnic autonomous counties directly below them.

Figure 6.2: Percentage of different types of EATs among all ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties.
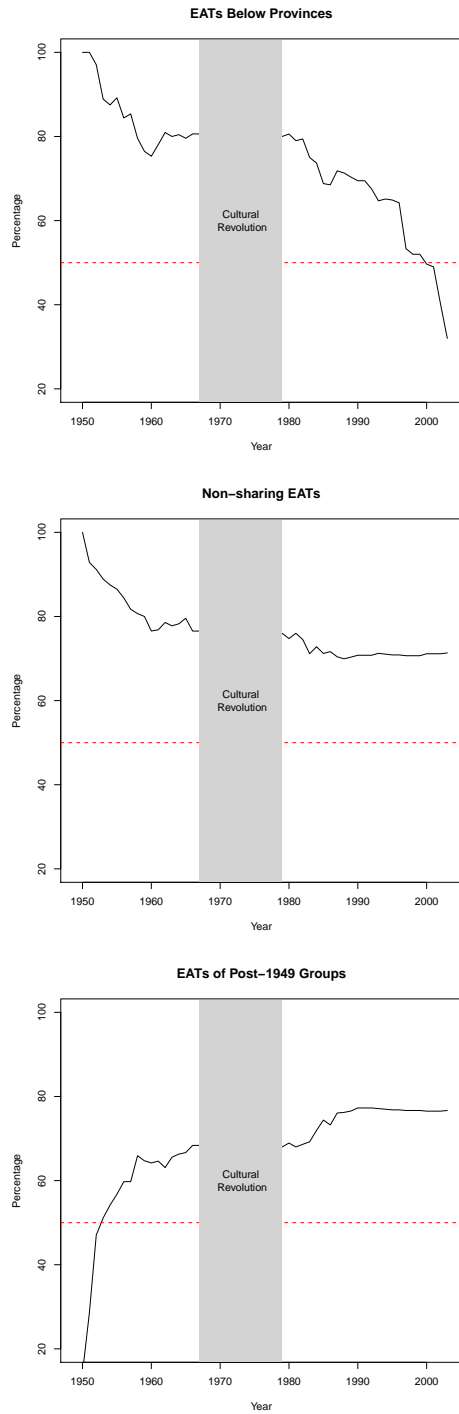
First, EATs that were designated below the provincial jurisdictions have accounted for the majority of post-1949 EATs; in the early 1950s, nearly every EAT was named to be directly governed by the provinces. It is not until the late 1990s, during which the Party establishes regular succession procedures with Jiang Zemin in power, that the percentage of "directly below" provinces falls under 50%. Second, most EATs have been named to a single non-Han ethnic group. Finally, while Beijing in the PRC's early years largely named EATs to groups that have long been recognized, such as the Tibetans and the Hui, the percentage of EATs for other non-Han ethnic groups rise to become the majority of EATs in the following years. Before Hu Jintao came to power in 2002, nearly 80% of EATs were designated for non-Han groups that became official "minority" (*shaoshu*) ethnic groups after 1949.

Table 6.11 presents the results with these different dependent variables. Models (1) and (2) are the baseline results based on all ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties between 1949 and 2003. Overall, the results are very similar to the main findings. However, the smaller estimated coefficients suggest that EATs designated for historically known groups and multiple non-Han ethnic groups as well as EATs designated below the districts also serve the purpose of agent control.

Table 6.11: Designation of various types of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties, 1949-2003.

	Baseline		Post-1949 Groups		Below Provinces		Single Group	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Central fragmentation	2.093***	1.637**	1.659***	1.213*	1.853***	1.532**	1.674***	1.320**
	(0.692)	(0.764)	(0.615)	(0.665)	(0.613)	(0.723)	(0.528)	(0.643)
Central-local connectedness	−0.806***	5.621***	−0.638***	4.014***	−0.622***	5.828***	−0.611***	4.634***
	(0.234)	(1.820)	(0.208)	(1.534)	(0.214)	(1.685)	(0.167)	(1.511)
Local embeddedness	0.343**	0.185	0.232*	0.058	0.374**	0.286	0.447***	0.328
	(0.144)	(0.452)	(0.120)	(0.399)	(0.148)	(0.415)	(0.140)	(0.368)
Fragmentation x connectedness		−10.367***		−7.551***		−10.337***		−8.456***
		(3.012)		(2.489)		(2.765)		(2.555)
Fragmentation x embeddedness		0.578		0.570		0.402		0.447
		(1.227)		(1.081)		(1.134)		(1.007)
Connectedness x embeddedness		−4.920***		−3.538***		−4.972***		−4.016***
		(1.584)		(1.362)		(1.476)		(1.224)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,524	1,524	1,524	1,524	1,524	1,524	1,524	1,524
R^2	0.808	0.811	0.059	0.071	0.048	0.065	0.051	0.067
Adjusted R^2	0.803	0.806	0.034	0.045	0.023	0.039	0.026	0.041

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Standard errors are in the parentheses and are clustered by provinces. All estimations control for the following variables: Lagged GDP per capita, the designation of Tibetan autonomous territories, the size of total population (log), the percentage of non-Han population, and the index of ethnic fractionalization computed by the author based on historical census data. All models also include cubic time trends and province fixed effects.

Alternative Measures of Elite Power Dynamics

In this section, I consider other variables employed by previous studies to approximate very similar concepts of central leadership fragmentation, local leadership embeddedness, and central-local connectedness. For the purpose of comparison, I present the baseline results (Models (4) and (5) in 6.2) in Table 6.12.

Table 6.12: Baseline results (Models (4) and (5) in Table 6.2).

	(1)	(2)
Central fragmentation	2.093***	1.637**
	(0.692)	(0.764)
Central-local connectedness	−0.806***	5.621***
	(0.234)	(1.820)
Local embeddedness	0.343**	0.185
	(0.144)	(0.452)
Fragmentation x connectedness		−10.367***
		(3.012)
Fragmentation x embeddedness		0.578
		(1.227)
Connectedness x embeddedness		−4.920***
		(1.584)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,524	1,524
R^2	0.808	0.811
Adjusted R^2	0.803	0.806

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Standard errors are in the parentheses and are clustered by provinces. All estimations control for the following variables: Lagged GDP per capita, the designation of Tibetan autonomous territories, the size of total population (log), the percentage of non-Han population, and the index of ethnic fractionalization computed by the author based on historical census data. All models also include cubic time trends and province fixed effects.

First, I replace *Central fragmentation* with *Dispersion*. The variable *Dispersion* is based on a new index of authoritarian personalism constructed by (Wright, 2017). Using the item response theory, Wright (2017) aggregates a variety of institutional indicators that can demonstrate the extent to which a dictator monopolizes his ruling power in the inner circle into a single continuous measure. In my analysis, I multiply the original measure of personalism by −1 such that now it reflects the degree to which the dictator's power is *dispersed*. In other words, a higher value will suggest a greater degree of power dispersion in the authoritarian regime. Table 6.13 shows the results based on the analysis in which I replace *Fragmentation* with *Dispersion* – the *Dispersion* coefficients are positive and statistically significant, similar to the baseline results.

Table 6.13: Results using the index of power dispersion as the measure of central leadership fragmentation.

	(1)	(2)
Dispersion	1.340***	1.078*
	(0.342)	(0.618)
Embeddedness	0.109	0.161
	(0.104)	(0.164)
Connectedness	0.136	0.859**
	(0.184)	(0.436)
Dispersion x Embeddedness		0.348
		(0.886)
Dispersion x Connectedness		1.319
		(2.443)
Embeddedness x Connectedness		−0.813
		(1.092)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,527	1,527
R^2	0.812	0.812
Adjusted R^2	0.807	0.807

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Standard errors are in the parentheses and are clustered by provinces. All estimations control for the following variables: Lagged GDP per capita, the designation of Tibetan autonomous territories, the size of total population (log), the percentage of non-Han population, and the index of ethnic fractionalization computed by the author based on historical census data. All models also include cubic time trends and province fixed effects.

Next, for *Local embeddedness*, I consider a binary variable that takes the value of 1 if the provincial Party secretary also holds the appointment in the regional military bases at the same time – another indicator of a powerful provincial ruling elite who has the potential to resist the central leader's supreme authority (Whitson, 1973). I replace *Embeddedness* with *Embeddedness (PLA)* and carry out the same analysis. The results are available in Table 6.14. The estimated coefficient of *Embeddedness (PLA)* in Model (1) is of marginal statistical significance while the interaction terms that include it are all statistically insignificant. Given that it has become uncommon that provincial leaders hold military posts after the Cultural Revolution in the late 1970s, this variable perhaps has become less relevant. Beijing has separated regional military command and subnational administrative responsibilities between different cadres in the Reform Era (Harding, 1981).

Finally, in line with Kung and Chen (2011), who consider provincial leaders' chance of political promotions based on their membership in the Central Committee, I replace *Central-local connectedness* with a binary variable to indicate whether or not a provincial

Table 6.14: Results using provincial military command as the measure of local leadership embeddedness.

	(1)	(2)
Fragmentation	1.877***	1.509**
	(0.632)	(0.705)
Embeddedness (PLA)	0.180*	−0.031
	(0.094)	(0.231)
Connectedness	−0.872***	1.137
	(0.248)	(0.700)
Fragmentation x Embeddedness (PLA)		0.546
		(0.623)
Fragmentation x Connectedness		−4.873**
		(1.977)
Embeddedness (PLA) x Connectedness		−1.432
		(0.912)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,524	1,524
R^2	0.808	0.809
Adjusted R^2	0.803	0.804

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Standard errors are in the parentheses and are clustered by provinces. All estimations control for the following variables: Lagged GDP per capita, the designation of Tibetan autonomous territories, the size of total population (log), the percentage of non-Han population, and the index of ethnic fractionalization computed by the author based on historical census data. All models also include cubic time trends and province fixed effects.

Party secretary is also a full member in the Central Committee. The results in Table 6.15 similarly indicate that a provincial elite's connection with the central leader – now indirectly measured by whether or not a provincial Party secretary is also a member of the Party's Central Committee – can counter the central leader's incentives to designate EATs as the means of agent control. That said, compared with the baseline results, the interaction terms are no longer statistically significant.

Table 6.16 shows the results with these alternative measures. Overall, the results in the first four models are very similar to their counterparts in Table 6.2, exhibiting expected signs. However, contrary to the results in Table 6.2, all interaction terms now all cease to be statistically significant.

Table 6.15: Results using the Central Committee membership of provincial Party secretaries as the measure of central-local connectedness.

	(1)	(2)
Fragmentation	2.036***	0.624
	(0.681)	(0.740)
Embeddedness	0.411***	−0.271
	(0.148)	(0.463)
CC member (=1)	−0.350**	0.058
	(0.159)	(0.591)
Fragmentation x Embeddedness		1.886
		(1.328)
Fragmentation x CC member		0.725
		(1.040)
Embeddedness x CC member		−1.228
		(0.916)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,524	1,524
R^2	0.807	0.809
Adjusted R^2	0.802	0.803

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Standard errors are in the parentheses and are clustered by provinces. All estimations control for the following variables: Lagged GDP per capita, the designation of Tibetan autonomous territories, the size of total population (log), the percentage of non-Han population, and the index of ethnic fractionalization computed by the author based on historical census data. All models also include cubic time trends and province fixed effects.

Table 6.16: Results using alternative measures of elite politics.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Dispersion	1.318***			1.307***	0.963***
	(0.330)			(0.334)	(0.269)
Connectedness (CC)		−0.286*		−0.287**	0.044
		(0.151)		(0.144)	(0.128)
Embeddedness (PLA)			0.193**	0.132	0.306***
			(0.095)	(0.096)	(0.114)
Dispersion x Connectedness (CC)					1.474
					(1.097)
Dispersion x Embeddedness (PLA)					0.814
					(0.647)
Connectedness (CC) x Embeddedness (PLA)					−0.393
					(0.535)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,533	1,527	1,527	1,527	1,527
R^2	0.812	0.801	0.801	0.813	0.815
Adjusted R^2	0.808	0.796	0.796	0.808	0.809

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Standard errors are in the parentheses and are clustered by provinces. All estimations control for the following variables: Lagged GDP per capita, the designation of Tibetan autonomous territories, the size of total population (log), the percentage of non-Han population, and the index of ethnic fractionalization computed by the author based on historical census data. All models also include cubic time trends and province fixed effects.

Ordered Logit Regression

While the original dependent variable accurately records all changes in the number of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties in a province between 1949 and 2003, the variable suffers potential issues of outliers – in some provinces, the size of changes can be quite drastic, up to 23. I conduct the same analysis but replace OLS with ordered logit regression. In the ordered logit regression, the outcome variable is now an ordinal variable that takes the value of −1, 0, and 1. The values of −1 and 1 refer to the suspension and creation of EATs in a province respectively; 0 means no change.

Table 6.17 presents the results based on ordered logit regression. Most results resemble the main findings, the estimated coefficients of *Connectedness* and *Embeddedness* in Models (2)-(4) are no longer statistically significant. However, the estimated coefficient of *Fragmentation* in Models (1) and (4) are still positive and statistically significant – in ordered logit regression, the coefficients are proportional odds ratios; that is, for a one unit increase in the degree of central leadership fragmentation, the odds of seeing the creation of a new EAT versus "no change" or the suspension of EATs combined are about 90 greater, given that all of the other variables in the model are held constant. Moreover, given that the interaction terms that include *Connectedness* in Model (5) are both negative and statistically significant, it appears that central-local connectedness does counter the proposed positive effect of central leadership fragmentation and local leadership embeddedness.

Table 6.17: Results using ordered logit regression.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Fragmentation	4.396***			4.584***	2.677
	(0.620)			(0.708)	(1.763)
Connectedness		−0.134		−0.631	5.523**
		(0.564)		(0.608)	(2.398)
Embeddedness			−0.253	0.272	−0.557
			(0.398)	(0.416)	(0.881)
Fragmentation x Connectedness					−12.024**
					(5.435)
Fragmentation x Embeddedness					2.206
					(1.828)
Connectedness x Embeddedness					−3.488*
					(1.808)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,529	1,533	1,527	1,524	1,524
AIC	1046.71	1087.11	1082.04	1046.32	1045.27
Log Likelihood	−515.35	−535.55	−533.02	−513.16	−509.64

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Standard errors are in the parentheses and are clustered by provinces. All estimations control for the following variables: Lagged GDP per capita, the designation of Tibetan autonomous territories, the size of total population (log), the percentage of non-Han population, and the index of ethnic fractionalization computed by the author based on historical census data.

CHAPTER 7

Ethnic Local Autonomy in Comparative Perspective

I have focused on explaining ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China and illustrate the proposed theory with a variety of quantitative and qualitative evidence from the country. I have demonstrated that the designation of ethnic autonomous territories in the country usually takes place when the central leader has to take actions to tackle the delegation dilemma in the face of strong inner-circle rivals and defiant local ruling elites. I thus depart from existing studies, which have primarily considered ethnic local autonomy as an institutional instrument of separatism appeasement or political repression toward non-Han groups in the country.

In this chapter, I address the following question: How does the proposed theory in this dissertation speak to the dynamics of political centralization in other political contexts? In Section 2, I dive into the history of China to examine how the Imperial and Republican Chinese rulers attempt to build their central supremacy with effective local control. I focus on two well-known cases taking place in the Western Han Dynasty (BC 202-AD 8) and the Nationalist Government (1928-1949). As in the case of Mao and the CCP in the early 1950s, the central leaders in both historical cases faced a similar task of power consolidation after winning the central state authority after years of political struggles and military conflicts. They had to extend their authority to various local jurisdictions so as to start mobilizing and accumulating the required resources to rebuild the infrastructure as well as the political order disrupted by the civil wars. Before they were able to do so, the new central leaders needed to contain ambitious inner-circle members, many of whom contributed to the leaders' military success in the civil wars and reaffirmed their supremacy in the central leadership.

The central leaders in these two cases, while taking place in different historical periods, introduced very similar institutional changes. Both the early Han emperors and Chiang Kai-shek, who confirmed his leadership in the Nationalist Government in the early 1930s (Jin, 2016), planned to strengthen their ruling positions through the creation of direct vertical commands over grassroots jurisdictions below their most immediate local agents. These newly empowered grassroots jurisdictions allowed the central leader to undermine the integrity of top-level local elites' networks, from which the central leaders were excluded during the civil wars. The changes proposed by these leaders undermined the power of top local elites, many of whom were also connected to their rivals in the central ruling circle, without causing a violent confrontation between the central leader and his formidable central and local agents. These reforms thus resemble the granting of ethnic local autonomy under the Chinese Communist Party in post-1949 China. The discussion here also suggests that ethnic local autonomy in China has broader implications of state building beyond the governance of ethnic diversity.

In Section 3, I extend the focus of inquiry outside China. Building on the logic of post-1949 Chinese ethnic local autonomy, I propose that other post-WWII autocrats will also have the incentives to introduce regional ethnic autonomy and other institutional forms of ethnic accommodation when their dominance in the regime is compromised. Drawing from an innovative measure of authoritarian personalism and other cross-national databases, I assemble a cross-national dataset to study the statistical association between the dictator's inner-circle power dispersion and different forms of institutional ethnic accommodation, including federation, ethno-federation, and regional autonomy. Holding a variety of political and socioeconomic variables constant, I find that on average an increase in central leader power dispersion by one standard deviation corresponds to a doubling of the relative probability of seeing the granting of regional autonomy in authoritarian regimes than no accommodation. The increase in the relative probability will reach 3 if I only consider dictatorships that never experience any democratic intermission between 1945 and 2010. The onset of ethnic conflicts, in contrast, does not exhibit any statistically significant association with the introduction of institutional ethnic accommodation.

7.1 Local Decentralization and Political Centralization in Imperial and Republican China

In this section, I examine the history of Imperial and Republican China to search for similar reforms through which a new central leader seeks to rebuild the political order and consolidate his vertical commands over ambitious inner-circle and local elites that are prone to defection. In doing so, I argue that one can view the granting of ethnic local autonomy and its political implications – in particular, how the designation of ethnic autonomous territories alters the delegation dynamics between the central leader and his local agents across different levels of subnational jurisdictions from the historical perspective.

Throughout Chinese history, the central state has adopted different forms of institutional decentralization when the central leader sought to achieve political centralization. Here, I will focus on two examples, in both of which one can find political leaders in an urgent need to accomplish the task of political centralization upon claiming the central state power after lengthy civil wars, which resembles the case of Mao and the CCP in the early 1950s. The first example took place in the Western Han Dynasty (BC 202-AD 8). After winning the Chu-Han contention, Liu Bang – now Emperor Gao of the Han Dynasty – decided to combine the feudal system and the district-county system. On the one hand, Emperor Gao rewarded his followers that helped him claim the throne by granting them the title of feudal kings and a piece of the territory outside the central court. On the other hand, Emperor Gao named marquis states in several kingdoms that were independent of the feudal kings' control (Zhou, 1984; Ma, 2013). It would take four Han emperors to fully establish the central court's direct control over the local jurisdictions. The second example occurred in the early 20th century, during which China embarked on the journey toward the modern nation-state. After Sun Yat-sen and his fellow revolutionary forces of Koumingtang (KMT) toppled the Qing court and built the Republic of China (ROC), the Chinese central government for decades remained weak and did not have the capacity to exercise vertical commands. During the early years of ROC, the central government was first under the control of different military warlords, and it was not until the mid-1920s that the KMT successfully subdued or co-

opted different local warlords in the country and established a new central government in Nanjing. Under the commands of Chiang Kai-shek, the KMT government in Nanjing, which is known as the Nationalist Government (*guomin zhengfu*), introduced the Self-government Movement (*zizhi yundong*) at the county level to bypass the influence of strong provincial warlords and strengthen its grassroots control. By introducing direct elections of the county councilors and seizing the appointments of the county magistrates – the executive heads of the county government – Chiang sought to weaken the power of military warlords, many of whom remained dominant in their respective provinces and connected to Chiang's rivals in the central government during the early 1930s (see Hsu, 1971; Liu, 2015).

7.1.1   Western Han: From Feudal States to Districts and Counties

As in the case of Europe during the Middle Ages, the ancient Chinese rulers for centuries chose to govern their territory through feudal states, each of which acted as an independent political and military entity. Existing historical records as well as recent archaeological discoveries both suggest that the central government in ancient China had little control over the feudal states and could only maintain its supremacy through symbolic tributes and ceremonial rituals. While several central leaders considered the introduction of direct rule, it would take at least two centuries before China became a centralized empire.

During the Zhou Dynasty (c. 1046-256 BC), the central government, with only a tiny portion of land under its direct control, designated more than 50 feudal states after the Duke of Zhou, the founder of the Zhou Dynasty, overthrew the Shang Dynasty (16th century-c. 1046 BC) with other feudal elites. In the subsequent centuries, many of these feudal states grew to challenge the Zhou ruler's leading position. In 771 BC, Zhou met its first critical downfall as the feudal states refused to provide defense forces in time to guard the central court against the invasion of foreign tribes. While the Zhou court managed to rebuild as Eastern Zhou (770-256 BC), many feudal states no longer considered Zhou as the legitimate ruler and began to compete for dominance. For about three hundred years, no feudal state could claim universal dominance. Several powerful feudal states attempted to create different

alliances with each other to reach some power balance through mutual deterrence and inter-state marriages.

In 221 BC, Qin, the feudal state located in today's Shaanxi, defeated all other rival states and created a unified empire. Striving to preserve his victory, the First Emperor of Qin decided to replace the feudal system, through which the central court could only exercise indirect control over the majority of the territory, with the district-county (*jun-xian*) system. Under the district-county system, the Qin court first divided the entire empire into separate districts and counties, and then appointed the officials of districts and counties to carry out various administrative and military tasks assigned by the emperor. With the introduction of the district-county system, scholars of ancient Chinese history usually consider Qin (221-206 BC) as the first centralized dynasty in Imperial China.

However, Qin's rule quickly fell apart, as many political and social elites of former feudal states refused to accept the Qin court's direct rule. In the end, Qin failed to stretch its direct control over the entire territory. After the First Emperor passed away (247 BC), many formal feudal states organized to rebel against the Qin court; later on, these rebels rallied around two influential military forces, Liu Bang and Xiang Yu, who commanded Han and Western Chu, respectively. After Liu Bang and Xiang Yu allied to throw out Qin in 206 BC, they turned against each other. The Chu-Han contention lasted about four years and was ended with the victory of Liu Bang.

After Xiang Yu accepted his failure and committed suicide, Liu Bang established the Han Dynasty in 202 BC. Known as Emperor Gao in the historical records,[1] Liu Bang faced a difficult dilemma when he seized the central state power. While he found the district-county system appealing, as the system would allow him to exercise his direct rule so as to prevent the rise of strong local political and military forces, a feudal system appeared to be more feasible, as the central court did not have the required communication and transportation technology to maintain regular contacts to monitor its local agents. Meanwhile, his allies during the Chu-Han contention expected large political and economic rewards when they

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[1] *Gao* is the posthumous title designated to Liu Bang by his successors.

agreed to join his side. Granting these followers the title of feudal kings was thus perhaps the most appropriate option.

After carefully contemplating the pros and cons of each system, Emperor Gao decided to mix both systems. First, in line with the district-county system introduced by Qin, Emperor Gao divided the Han empire into separate districts, each of which contained a different number of counties. After reserving several districts around the capital city under its direct control, next, the central court following Zhou's feudal system and allocated the remaining districts to about ten different feudal kingdoms. Emperor Gao promised each feudal king tremendous independent power (see Koo, 1920; Chen, 2004). For instance, the king would enjoy the power to collect local revenues and appoint all government and military officials in his kingdom. Emperor Gao only required each king to submit regular tributes to the court and travel to the capital city every five years to demonstrate their loyalty to him.

Emperor Gao bestowed the title of kings to his close family members (brother, sons, and brothers-in-law) as well as those who contributed to his victory against Xiang Yu in the Chu-Han contention. Knowing that someday these kingdoms would rise to challenge the central court, Emperor Gao introduced several precautionary measures. First, before he passed away, Gao managed to eliminate every king outside the royal family and settled the principle that the feudal kings could only have the surname of Liu (Koo, 1920; Pu, 2005). Also, the emperor held the power to revoke the titles under various conditions. For instance, the central court would annex the lands of any kings who passed away without any eligible heirs. The central court could also terminate any designated titles when the king and his sons committed serious crimes (e.g., rebellion against the central court). Finally, as recent studies have suggested (see Ma, 2013), the central court also granted the title of marquis states (*liehou*), which enjoy independent power within one or a small number of counties in a kingdom, presumbly to counter the power of feudal kings. Figure 7.1 summarizes the hierarchy of government administration under Emperor Gao's reign.

After Emperor Gao passed away, his consort Empress Lv and her family dominated the central court for about eight years. Archaeological discoveries show that Empress Lv also followed her husband's footsteps and sought to constrain the rise of feudal kingdoms (Chen,

Figure 7.1: Hierarchy of government administration under Emperor Gao. Source: Zhou (2017).
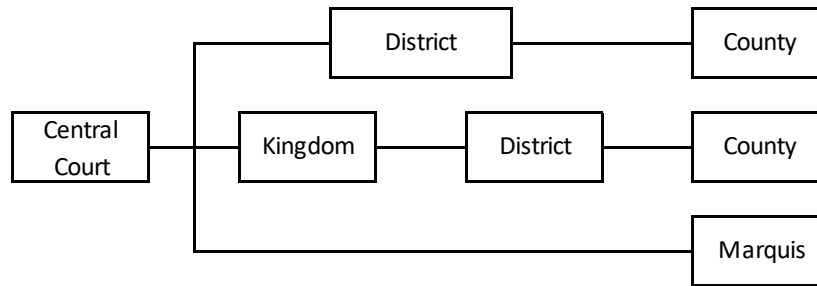
2004; Pu, 2005), as exemplified by the creation of border control between the central court's territories and the feudal kingdoms.[2] With the border control in place, the central court imposed fairly tight restrictions over migration as well as the transfer of horses, golds, and other important commodities out of the districts under the central court's direct control.

Despite these precautionary measures, Emperor Gao's successors were still troubled by the rising tension between the central court and the feudal kingdoms. A number of kingdoms, most of which controlled crucial natural resources (e.g., iron and salt), accumulated enormous wealth and armed forces to jeopardize the emperor's leading position. Emperors Wen (180-157 BC) and Jing (157-141 BC) thus began to contain the political strength of the feudal kingdoms through a variety of means. First, Emperor Wen restricted the king's power to appoint local officials by having the central court name the chief executive of each kingdom (Chen, 2004). Meanwhile, as highlighted by Zhao (2015), both Emperors Wen and Jing increased the total number of kingdoms and reduced the size of large kingdoms by naming their sons as the new kings. The central court also tried to redraw the boundary between the central court and kingdoms to increase the number of districts below the emperor's direct rule.

These measures, while helping to curtail the feudal kings' ambition, also exacerbated the kings' grievances against the central court. The tension led into the the Rebellion of Seven

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[2]In fact, before Emperor Gao passed away, Empress Lv helped him murder one of the non-Liu feudal kings.

Kingdoms in 154 BC during the reign of Emperor Jing. The Rebellion, starting with the most powerful king executing all officials appointed by the central court in his kingdom, almost led to the disintegration of the nascent Han Dynasty. Facing seven recalcitrant kings, Emperor Jing only had his brother, who ruled one of the feudal kingdoms, on his side.[3] With clever military tactics, Emperor Jing vanquished all unruly kings and rescinded the power of all rebelling kings. He also demoted the rank of chief executives in the kingdoms by placing them under the prime minister in the central court (Zhu, 2013). After gaining complete control over the kingdoms involved in the Rebellion, Emperor Jing also began to move the marquis states back to the districts under the central court's control (Ma, 2013). Figure 7.2 shows the hierarchy of government administration after Emperor Jing subdued the Rebellion of Seven Kingdoms.

Figure 7.2: Hierarchy of government administration after the Rebellion of Seven Kingdoms. Source: Zhou (2017).
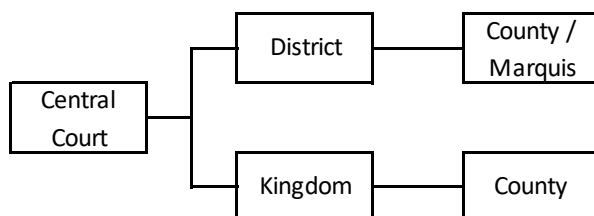
Building on his predecessors' efforts, Emperor Wu (141-87 BC) reached another milestone of political centralization through the Order of Tui'en, which demanded the feudal king to distribute a portion of land to every adult son with the title of marquess in addition to transferring his title to his first son after he died. Contrary to the kings, all marquesses were subject to the emperor's direct commands. Meanwhile, as before, if a king passed away without any eligible heir, the central court would abolish the kingdom and incorporated it into the central court's territory. As a result, the kingdoms could only control a small amount of land, losing any political influence compatible with the emperor in the central court, while more districts were now controlled by the emperor directly. Meanwhile, Emperor

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[3]When the Rebellion broke out, Emperor Jing's brother was the King of Liang. Emperor Jing and the King of Liang are both the sons of Empress Dou, the consort of Emperor Wen.

Wu introduced another two laws that deter his subjects in the capital city from moving to feudal kingdoms to advise the kings and punish the kings who sought to bribe officials in the capital city for private gains (Zhu, 2013; Zhao, 2015). Before Emperor Wu passed away, districts officially became the first tier of local government administration in the empire. The central court also moved the focus of administrative tasks from counties to districts (Zhou, 2006; Kamiya, 2009).

Early Han emperors' institutional engineering of the feudal kingdoms and marquis states resembles the PRC's granting of ethnic local autonomy in several ways. First, both cases took place during times in which political leaders sought to build the central state's supremacy following a relatively long period of civil wars. Both Liu Bang and Mao Zedong, after defeating their strongest rivals – Xiang Yu and Chiang Kai-shek respectively – planned to create an institutional framework that will help them extend their control beyond the capital city while consolidating their power in the inner circle.

Next, we can also see the central leader's attempt to alter the delegation relationship between top-level local leaders, the feudal kings and provincial elites respectively, and their subordinates in both cases. Between Emperors Wen and Wu, the central court constantly sought to undermine the feudal kings' power by controlling the power to appoint the chief executive in every feudal kingdom and other local officials while creating independent marquis states in the kingdoms. Future research will have to study how the Han emperors' appointments of chief kingdom executives relate to their relationship with individual feudal kingdoms. For instance, in line with the proposed theory of ethnic local autonomy, the imperial court may have been more likely to engage in these appointments when the feudal kings held strong potential to threaten the emperor's supremacy. The imperial court may also have attempted to do so when the feudal kings were connected to the emperor's main political rivals in the court.

Finally, the pursuit of political centralization in the early years of the Han Dynasty and the People's Republic of China involved the creation of new political entities below the top subnational political entities. In the case of Western Han, the central court created more than 800 independent marquis states while designating feudal kingdoms across the empire.

Figure 7.3: Number of feudal kingdoms during the early Western Han Dynasty. Source: Ma (2013).
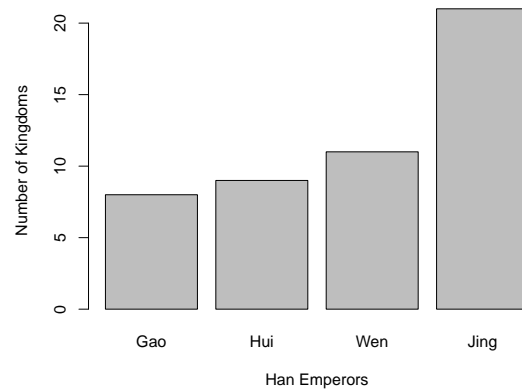
Researchers still have to clarify the relationship between the kings and the marquesses in their kingdoms. Historians have recently completed the task of locating each marquess based on various historical records (Zhou, 1984; Ma, 2011, 2013; Zhou, 2017; Zhou, Li, and Zhang, 2017). This information can be used to study the timing as well as the conditions for the designation of marquis states up to the Rebellion during the reign of Emperor Jing.

Figure 7.3 shows the number of kingdoms under the first four Han emperors – Gao, Hui, Wen, and Jing – before Emperor Wu.[4] It is consistent with the hypothesis that a major strategy taken by the early Han court to counter the strong feudal forces was to increase the number of kingdoms.

In Figure 7.4, I compare the number of districts and marquis states that were located in the central court's territory and the feudal kingdoms, respectively. The original information about the districts and marquis states during the Western Han is retrieved from the Appendix of Ma (2013), which lists 787 marquis states in the Western Han Dynasty based on verified historical records; the data for Emperor Jing in Figure 7.4 are taken after the Rebellion of Seven Kingdoms.

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[4]Emperor Hui is the second emperor after Gao. He is considered less important than other emperors due to his relatively short reign. During Hui's reign (195-188 BC), Empress Lv, his birth mother and Emperor Gao's wife, dominated the imperial court.

Figure 7.4 illustrates early Han emperors' collective endeavor toward political centralization. These emperors gradually expanded their territory by annexing more districts under the central court's direct rule. After Emperor Jing successfully defeated the Rebellion of Seven Kings, the majority of districts were under his control (see Figure 7.4(a)). Moreover, consistent with the conjecture that marquis states play a similar role as EATs in post-1949 China, the first three emperors all placed the majority of them within individual feudal kingdoms (see Figure 7.4(b)), and it was not until Emperor Jing survived the Rebellion that the imperial court began to relocate them outside the now significantly weakened kingdoms (see Ma, 2011, 2013; Zhou, 2017).[5]

Figure 7.4: Number of districts and marquis states in the central court's territory and the feudal kingdoms during the early Western Han Dynasty. Source: Ma (2013).

(a) Districts

(b) Marquis States
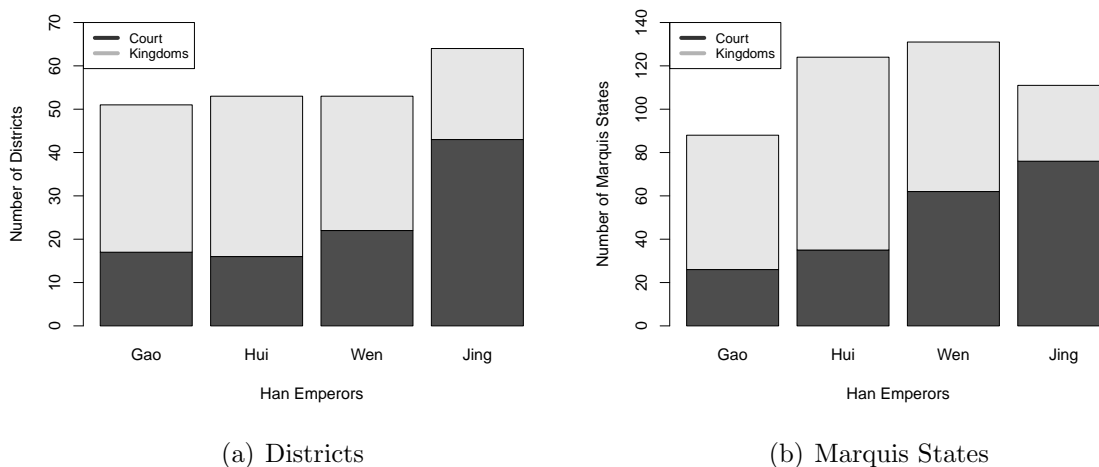
7.1.2 Republican China: County Self-Government Movement

In 1911, the military garrison in Wuchang mutinied, spurring 15 provinces to declare independence (see Meisner, 1999). The last Qing emperor Puyi was forced to abdicate his

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[5]A future project of mine plans to assemble a dataset of the feudal kings and marquesses to see how their connections with each other and their relationship the emperor relates to their designation and locations in the empire. As suggested by Zhou (2006), who sought to compiled the list of district executive heads during the Han Dynasty, I will also explore how the characteristics of district executive heads change as the emperor strengthened his control over the feudal kingdoms.

throne in the following year, bringing about the dawn of the Republican Era (1911-1949) in China.[6] In the same year, Sun Yat-sen and his fellow revolutionaries formed the Nationalist Party (Kuomingtang, or KMT) and sought to create a new central government in Nanjing. However, their plans soon derailed as the KMT's alliance with the former Qing court's New Army, which played an important role in forcing Puyi to give up his throne, fell apart. While the New Army, under Yuan Shikai's command, supported the revolutionaries in the 1911 Uprising, Yuan seized the presidency and named Beijing as the capital. In 1913, Sun retreated to Southern China to search for potential political allies and build his military forces.

The breakup between the KMT and the late Qing's New Army resulted in a weak Chinese central government in the first two decades of the Republican Era. The central government in Beijing, known as the Beiyang Government (1913-1928), fell prey to different warlords as they competed for control. After Yuan passed away in 1916, the Beiyang Government experienced a series of constitutional crisis and alternated between the presidential and parliamentary systems under different warlords. With the ongoing political turmoils in Beijing, the central government's rule could barely reach beyond the capital city. As noted by many scholars (e.g., Feng, 2008), most provinces enjoyed *de facto* independence under the control of powerful local warlords. Some were ruled by non-Han groups, as in the case of Tibet (see Shakabpa, 1967; Dreyer, 1976). Outer Mongolia acquired independence in the early 1920s.

Seeing a weak central state with local strongmen in the country, many began to consider turning China into a federal state.[7] Despite the proposal's popularity among many warlords and intellectuals, Sun Yan-sen firmly condemned the idea of creating a federal Chinese state, arguing that doing so would only prolong political instability given that the present central government was too weak to form and maintain any contractual arrangements with the

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[6]It should be pointed about that the political divide between the Nationalist Party (aka KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (aka CCP) have caused many disagreements about several historical facts during the Republican Era. I will focus on events of which both sides have shared understandings and try to explain any crucial differences if necessary.

[7]The debate regarding a federal Chinese state started before the Qing's demise. Many historians considered Liang Qichao as one of the pioneering federalists in China. For more discussion, see Chen (2001).

provinces (Leng, 1935; Dong, 1937; Wei, 2004; Zeng, 2012). To end the "local dictatorships" of provincial warlords, Sun suggested a unitary Chinese state while turning counties into self-government jurisdictions. After arriving at Guangdong, Sun at first sought the support from Chen Jiongming, the warlord controlling the province. After their alliance collapsed in a military confrontation, Sun turned to the Soviet Union for help in 1923 and formed the United Front with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to bolster the KMT's organizational capacity. With the help from the Soviet Union, Sun built his own armed forces – the Nationalist Army – and established the Whampoa Military Academy in Guangzhou. Sun named Chiang Kai-shek, who received his military training in Japan, as Whampoa's first principal.

Early Republican China was in a near civil-war status with the absence of a strong central state authority in command. In 1926, one year after Sun's death, Chiang launched the Northern Expedition (1926-1928) from Guangdong, seeking to unify the country. Within less than a year, Chiang successfully defeated several warlords in the neighboring Southern provinces and recovered Nanjing. After eliminating his rivals and the Communist forces in the KMT in 1927, he continued the Expedition and subdued the warlords in Northern China.[8] In December 1928, the Northern Expedition ended with the surrender of Zhang Xueliang, the strongest warlord in the North.[9]

After the Northern Expedition, the KMT achieved its nominal control over all of China and created a new central government in Nanjing, which is known as the Nationalist Government (1928-1949). Upon its establishment, the Nationalist Government faced a variety of challenges to its ruling power. First, while Chiang Kai-shek managed to secure his ruling position within the KMT after undermining his rivals from the same party and purging the Communist forces during the Northern Expedition, his leadership in Nanjing remained

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[8]In 1927, Chiang first ordered to expel the CCP members out of the KMT's Central Committee. Later in April of the same year, he started arresting and executing the CCP members in Shanghai, which was known as the Shanghai Massacre for the CCP. Chiang's decision to purge the Communist forces in the KMT also led to the creation of another competing KMT leadership in Wuhan.

[9]It is said that Zhang agreed to surrender after he learned that the Japanese Army was responsible for his father's death in Shenyang.

unconsolidated. As documented by many scholars (e.g., Tien, 1972; Liu, 2014; Jin, 2016), Wang Jingwei and Hu Hanmin, each of whom had provincial military allies, were some of Chiang's most formidable rivals in Nanjing. Although Wang and Chiang agreed to work together,[10] their alliance was fragile as they were divided about whether the Nationalist Government should focus its economic and military resources on resisting the Japanese invasion or pursuing the CCP in the country.

The Nationalist Government's control over most provinces was also shaky. For one thing, Chiang's purges against the Communist forces led to the first Civil War between the KMT and the CCP, which managed to build small bases in several provinces through guerrilla warfare. Meanwhile, many provinces were controlled by warlords, who remained sufficiently powerful to defy the Nationalist Government and Chiang (Liu, 2015). Lastly, the Japanese invasion in Northeastern China posed daunting challenges to the Nationalist Government's sovereignty.

These challenges forced Chiang to take immediate actions to secure his ruling position in Nanjing and build his vertical commands over various parts of the country, which became increasingly important after Japan grew aggressive and began to occupy various territories in the early 1930s (Yang and Yin, 2006). In 1928, the National Government decided to implement Sun Yat-sen's proposal of self-government at the county level. In line with Sun's plan, the Nationalist Government at first sought to strengthen the county administration by creating elected councils in each county with the county magistrate appointed by Nanjing. While the central government in Nanjing maintained that the Self-government Movement would help to pave the foundation of democratic governance by offering the Chinese citizens the opportunity to elect accountable councilors to address various local matters, recent historical studies have suggested that the Movement by and large aimed to stretch Nanjing's direct control over grassroots jurisdictions. Counties, which divided up a province, were responsible for various administrative tasks assigned by Nanjing; existing historical records show that the county administration had to verify residential records, cultivate wasteland

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[10]The alliance between Wang and Chiang was marked by Wang serving as the Premier of the Executive Yuan and Chiang controlling the Nationalist Army.

and set land prices, and build roads and schools (Wang, 2001; Huang, 2017).

Before the Anti-Japanese War broke out in 1937, the Nationalist Government introduced several important changes in the county administration. Through the Self-government Movement, Nanjing reorganized the county administration by merging different offices into four or five bureaus, each of which was responsible for a single policy area, such as public security, government finances, construction, and education. Nanjing then sought to place these bureaus under the county magistrate's direct command (Wei, 2004; Chang, 2015). Perhaps more importantly, the Nationalist Government attempted to control the appointment of county magistrates, turning them into Nanjing's direct agents (Wang, 1999, 2003). Although the Nationalist Government first planned to create a professional examination system to select county magistrates, Chiang added that all candidates for the post of county magistrate had to demonstrate their allegiance to the KMT and Nationalist Government. In practice, those who sought to become county magistrates had to submit two recommendation letters from the KMT's Central Committee members. A candidate could also become eligible if she or he had previously passed any other civil service exams held by the KMT and Nationalist Government, had served any other posts in the Nationalist Government, or had achieved remarkable military honors for the Nationalist Army. While the provincial Civil Affairs Bureau held the power to appoint the county magistrates within its jurisdiction, in 1931, Chiang added that the appointment of all county magistrates must receive the formal approval from the Nationalist Government. The Nationalist Government would also be responsible for selecting and training the county magistrates' subordinates to head county bureaus and offices.

Existing historical studies indicate that the Self-government Movement only reached mild success, as many of Chiang's proposed reforms faced a strong backlash from provincial political and military elites. Many county magistrates, still the lackeys of provincial warlords, were captured by powerful socioeconomic elites in the local community.[11] As a result, between

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[11]According to a former county magistrate (Shen and Shen, 1998), (1) he was appointed in 1930 by the provincial civil affairs bureau without the Nationalist Government's final approval; (2) he could bring his colleagues with him to fill in the county bureaus and offices. That said, he was considered for the post because he had previously served as the Political Officer at the Republic of China Military Academy in

1928 and 1937, it is perhaps unsurprising that Chiang faced three major rebellions staged by powerful provincial warlords (i.e., the Fujian Incident in 1933, the Guangdong-Guangxi Incident in 1935, and the Xi'an Incident in 1936). Historians have suggested that Chiang's inner-circle rivals in Nanjing were responsible for mobilizing the Guangdong-Guangxi Incident (Liu, 2014, 2015).[12]

The Self-government Movement between 1928 and 1937 is worth attention here because the Movement, as least in terms of Chiang's design, demonstrates a central leader's attempt to extend his direct influence when he is confronted by connected strong inner-circle rivals and defiant local strongmen. Both of these political forces become immense threats to the central leader as they yield severe agency loss and impede the leader's ruling endeavors. As in the cases of the Western Han's reform toward the district-county system and the post-1949 Chinese government's introduction of ethnic local autonomy, it appears that Chiang also sought to bolster his grassroots control while undermining the influence of powerful top-level local leaders. In particular, the bulk of the Self-government Movement aimed to interfere with the established delegation link between provincial and county jurisdictions by placing the county administration under Nanjing's direct commands through the appointments of the county magistrates and his subordinates.

While the Nationalist Government's Self-Government Movement before the Anti-Japanese War has been studied by many scholars of post-1900 Chinese history, most existing historical studies focus on a single province. Whereas these studies have provided many rich details about Nanjing's reform, a comprehensive comparative study remains to be done in the future to clarify how the introduction of the Self-government Movement and its progress vary across different provinces between 1928 and 1937.[13] Future work would do well to study the inter-

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Nanjing. He also obtained the letters from two KMT Central Committee members prior to his appointment.

[12]In the the Xi'an Incident, Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng, both of which commanded the Northeast Army and the Northwest Army respectively, detained Chiang in Xi'an and forced him to end the Civil War and declare war against Japan.

[13]While Wei (2004) considers several Southern provinces in his work, historians usually focus on one or two provinces that can "best" exemplify Chiang's reform attempts for them. For instance, many have highlighted the analytical importance of Jiangxi, where the CCP managed to establish the first Chinese Soviet Republic in the early 1930s and thus presumably demanded Chiang's tremendous attention to create effective grassroots

actions between Chiang and different provincial warlords under the Nationalist Government (e.g., Wang, 2003; Liu, 2015) and collect the information on the reorganization of county administration as well as the appointments of provincial and county officials from different archived sources.[14]

7.2 Institutional Accommodation of Subordinate Ethnic Groups in Post-WWII Authoritarian Regimes

In the previous section, I returned to the history of China to explore the historical counterparts of post-1949 ethnic local autonomy in Imperial and Republican China. In this section, I turn to the PRC's contemporary counterparts in the world by conducting a cross-national analysis to study the conditions for the institutional accommodation of subordinate ethnic groups in non-democratic states between 1945 and 2010. The main objective here is to examine whether I can extend the empirical implications of my proposed theory in Chapter 2. More specifically, can ethnic local autonomy in other post-WWII authoritarian regimes be similarly prompted by the autocrat's pursuit of power consolidation against rivals in the ruling circle?

The literature on the politics of authoritarian governance has shed light on the introduction of nominally democratic institutions under dictatorships, which many scholars consider as an endeavor of competitive and power-sharing authoritarianism (Levitsky and Way, 2002; Svolik, 2009). In light of the prevalence of competitive and power-sharing autocracies, recent

control to counter the Communist guerrilla forces by strengthening the county administration (e.g., Zeng, 2012; Chang, 2015). After the Nationalist Government moved to Chongqing during the Anti-Japanese War, many move to focus on the Sichuan province, where the city is located (e.g., Huang, 2010).

[14]In addition to local government archives in China, most important historical records on the Chiang family, the KMT, and the Nationalist Government in Nanjing can be found in the Hoover Institution Library & Archives, where one can find Chiang Kai-shek's personal diaries, the KMT's Party History Archive in Taipei, which was not open to the public until 2016, and the Second Historical Archives of China in Nanjing, where the current Chinese government keeps the documents of the Nationalist Government following the Civil War. One source particularly worth exploring is perhaps Chiang's diaries because it is possible that Chiang discussed his thoughts about the Self-government Movement. I plan to visit the Hoover Archives after it finishes its construction and renovation project in early 2020.

studies further posit that different varieties of nominally democratic institutions maintain authoritarian rule by facilitating the distributive allocations of state patronage and reducing the communication cost within the dictator's ruling circle. Doing so helps to preserve elite cohesion and impede opposition collaboration (e.g., Lust-Okar, 2006; Gandhi, 2007; Magaloni, 2006; Blaydes, 2011).

Many studies aim to understand why some autocracies have introduced these institutions while others have not (see Pepinsky, 2014). In this regard, the literature on power-sharing and competitive authoritarianism has identified a credible threat of rebellion or coup as the primary factor that compels authoritarian power-sharing and co-optation. Many have suggested that the dictator will have the incentive to "share" power with those who possess the greatest threats against him, and these threats can come either from the inner-circle rivals or from the masses who successfully mobilize against the dictator. By giving access to government decision-making to the disgruntled, power-sharing is a means to appease threats that can either lie within the authoritarian inner circle or civil society (Gandhi, 2007; Svolik, 2009).

In line with the existing literature, the dictator's decision to introduce ethnic local autonomy can also be seen as an attempt of institutional co-optation for his survival. If this is the case, then we should observe the dictator's offer takes place when his power is relatively weak.

Hypothesis 1. *A dictator is more likely to grant ethnic local autonomy when his dominance is compromised in the inner circle.*

However, the proposed theory suggests a different dynamics of co-optation and power-sharing under dictatorships. Departing from existing studies, my argument suggests that authoritarian leaders do not necessarily grant ethnic autonomy when minorities are threatening. Instead, the dictator may seek to recruit previously marginalized societal forces and expand his power base through nominally democratic institutions.

Simply put, the decision to grant ethnic local autonomy is not necessarily triggered by the

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threats of ethnic mobilization. Instead, dictators will have the incentive to offer subordinate ethnic groups institutional accommodation when challenges from their rivals in the inner circle are so great that internal purging becomes an option too costly for them to maintain their dominance. Dictatorships are often entangled in such a scenario when the military or other repressive state apparatus is divided along with leadership splits. In this situation, the dictator lacks adequate arms to rid himself of the rival competition, and purging his rivals might even provoke tremendous political turmoil that would not only jeopardize his leadership but also destabilize the entire regime.

Hypothesis 2. *A dictator is not more likely to grant ethnic local autonomy when he sees the onset of ethnic conflicts.*

To undermine his rivals without causing a destructive confrontation in the central leadership, the dictator searches for allies outside the inner circle. Ethnic local autonomy serves as an institutional instrument for the dictator to ally with local ethnic minorities. By granting ethnic local autonomy, the dictator devolves some decision-making authority to selected subnational autonomous jurisdictions, where minority leaders can exercise the devolved powers to maintain their indigenous, languages, religions, family customs, and subsistence economic production. Given that ethnicity often provides an efficient label to formulate a set of beliefs for collective political action (Birnir, 2007; Hale, 2008), ethnic local autonomy allows the dictator to muster and tighten political support through ethnic bonds.

Granting ethnic local autonomy can certainly be a costly concession. Very often, autonomous powers can incite ethnic separatism, as suggested by Roeder (2010) and others. However, ethnic local autonomy can also bolster the dictator's central dominance by sharing the burden of grassroots surveillance with his local ethnic allies. As the dictator uses local autonomy to recruit compliant minority ethnic agents, who possess better information about their ethnic communities than the central state, he acquires additional leverage to locate the presence of grassroots grievances and disobedience. The dictator can thus concentrate his attention on competing with his inner rivals while effectively deploying his limited coercive resources at the local level. Ethnic elites will find the offer of autonomy appealing, as the

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granted autonomy powers not only maintain their pre-existing community leadership but also strengthen their positions to compete with their (radical) co-ethnic rivals. With the dictator's "acknowledgment" as the legitimate leaders of their groups, minority leaders of autonomous areas can request arms and material support from the central government to sabotage their internal competitors.[15]

I have built a formal model of ethnic local autonomy to summarize the discussion above (see **Appendix I**), which generates two key testable hypotheses proposed above. The model has two players – the dictator and the elites of a subordinate ethnic group – and explores the conditions under which their strategic interactions lead to the granting of institutional ethnic accommodation, which can take the form of ethnic local autonomy. In addition to the hypotheses presented above, I also show that it requires that the dictator wields a certain degree of power in the inner circle for him to introduce any institutional accommodation for subordinate ethnic groups. In a broad vein, it suggests that authoritarian power-sharing and co-optation, while contributing to the dictator's survival and consolidation, cannot take place when the dictator is extremely weak in the inner circle.

To test this implication, I examine whether or not the likelihood of observing any institutional ethnic accommodation in an authoritarian regime will vary by the means through which a dictator claims his power. Theoretically, I expect that the dictator will hold a certain degree of dominance when he can acquire if he comes to power through the regular means, such as elections, as he does not have to spend additional efforts to establish his ruling power. In contrast, the dictator is tasked to build his institutional capacity, which is often the case when he comes to power through violent or irregular means, such as civil wars and assassinations. Following from the discussion above, we should only observe the first hypothesis when the dictator takes control of the inner circle through regular institutional means.

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[15]In fact, even when there is not a sufficient number of moderates to accept the offer of autonomy, the dictator may remain advantaged since he could use the introduction of ethnic local autonomy to identify the lack of compliance and convince his central rivals to work together to quell "ethnic rebellion" under the cause of national crisis.

Hypothesis 3. *A dictator is more likely to grant ethnic local autonomy when his dominance is compromised in the inner circle if he comes to power through regular means.*

7.2.1 Empirical Analysis

Drawing from several existing cross-national databases, I assemble a county-year dataset that contains a variety of political and socioeconomic measures for every post-WWII authoritarian regime included in the GWF Autocracy Dataset (Geddes, Wright, and Frantz, 2014, 2018).[16] In this section, I will employ the dataset to test the hypotheses derived above.

7.2.1.1 Variables

The outcome of interest is a categorical variable that shows three different types of institutional accommodation the central leader in an authoritarian regime can provide to the subordinate ethnic groups. As defined by Roeder (2010), first, the autocrat can grant regional autonomy by establishing non-federal autonomous local jurisdictions for ethnic minorities, as in the case of post-1949 China. Second, the autocrat can create a federation to tackle the interest of different regional interests and designate *some* states to ethnic groups clustered in particular areas within the country. Third, the autocrat can create a ethno-federation in which he designates *every* federal state to a specific ethnic group.[17]

In line with **Hypotheses 1**, I use a continuous measure of authoritarian personalism in dictatorships recently constructed by Wright (2017) as the key explanatory variable. Taking various behavioral and institutional indicators into account, Wright (2017) employs the techniques of item response theory (IRT) to aggregate these indicators into a single numerical measure that can indicate the degree to which the dictator monopolizes the political and

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[16]I exclude monarchies and oligarchies, which only account for a small portion of observations in the GWF dataset, in the following the analysis because they are unique.

[17]Unlike my previous analysis on the designation of ethnic autonomous territories in post-1949 China, the current analysis does not distinguish the administrative level of institutional ethnic accommodation. I will leave this to future research.

military commands in the regime.[18] In the analysis below, I first normalize the variable to have a mean of 0 with a standard deviation of 1 to provide easily interpretable coefficients. I then multiply the normalized measure of personalism by -1 to create the variable *central leader power dispersion*, with greater values now indicating a *lower* degree of power concentration. As hypothesized, I expect to observe a positive association between the degree of power dispersion and institutional ethnic accommodation.

I include a binary variable to indicate whether a country sees any onset of ethnic conflicts in the previous year ($=1$) to test the rival explanation, the one suggesting that the introduction of any special institutional arrangement for subordinate ethnic groups is primarily driven by the occurrence of ethnic secessionist uprisings. Ethnic conflicts can also be correlated with the degree of the dictator's power concentration, as the presence of conflicts either signals the dictator's failure to maintain his control over the security forces in the regime or poses a serious challenge to the dictator's dominance in the inner circle. I have retrieved the conflict data from the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) Dataset. [19] I also control for the percentage of population from subordinate ethnic groups being excluded from the executive power, a key driving force of ethnic uprisings as indicated by Cederman, Wimmer, and Min (2010).

Finally, I control for a variety of political and economic variables that can confound the proposed association between the dictator's inner-circle power dispersion and his decision of institutional ethnic accommodation. First, I add a binary variable to indicate whether the regime saw at least one leadership turnover in the previous year ($= 1$) based on the Archigos Dataset (Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza, 2009) because a nascent leader often brings about major policy and institutional changes to consolidate his newly acquired power

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[18]The original dataset and programming script for the IRT analysis can be found at `https://sites.psu.edu/dictators/how-dictatorships-work/`. The indicators considered by Wright (2017) primarily focus on the dictator's behaviors in the inner circle, such as whether he controls the security apparatus, whether he purges senior officers, whether he builds a paramilitary, and whether he promotes generals in the military. The current analysis does not consider the dictator's grasp over top-level subnational elites. In future work, I plan to extend the approaches developed by Wright (2017) to create a similar measure of authoritarian personalism outside the inner circle.

[19]The original dataset was released in 2010 and has been updated by a research team in ETH Zurich. See `https://icr.ethz.ch/data/epr/`.

(Bunce, 1980; Treisman, 2014). I will also use the same dataset to test **Hypothesis 3**. In the Archigos Dataset, Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza (2009) also identify the nature of leadership turnover, which can take place through regular and irregular means. According to their definition, new autocratic and democratic leaders can come to power through regular means, which do not cause any violent disruptions to the existing institutional framework of political selection and succession. With regular free elections in place, regular turnovers are very common in democratic countries. Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza (2009), in contrast, consider any leadership changes that involve the destruction of existing political orders *irregular*. After presenting the baseline results, I will divide all observations into two categories based on the nature of leadership turnover to examine whether institutional ethnic accommodation is only associated with authoritarian power dispersion where the dictators come to power through regular means.[20]

I also control for different types of authoritarian regimes as indicated by the GWF Autocracy Dataset. Since the following analysis only considers hegemonic party, personalist, and military authoritarian regimes, I include two binary indicators for personalist (= 1) and a military regime (= 1) in my analysis. With the hegemonic party regime as the omitted category, the estimated coefficients later indicate the likelihood of institutional accommodation for subordinate ethnic groups in personalist and military autocracies relative to a hegemonic party regime. In addition to regime types, I have also obtained the information about prior democratic experiences of each authoritarian regime, defined by the number of years in the past that a non-democratic state was a democracy, from the same dataset. These variables of political institutions are important because they can shape the dictator's decision to offer any co-optation to his subjects, including subordinate ethnic groups. Geddes (2009) models a different dynamics of inner-circle elite interactions for each type of authoritarian regimes, concluding that military regimes are most prone to collapse as military juntas prioritize the army's organizational integrity and tend to "return to the barracks" through negotiations once the inner circle is divided. An authoritarian regime's past democratic experiences can

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[20]Svolik (2012) has also created a similar dataset of leadership changes in dictatorships and makes the distinction between peaceful and violent turnovers. Using his dataset does not change the results.

influence the formation and rise of the seizure group that establishes the regime and determines the dictator's power balance relative to his subjects and others in the inner circle (Geddes, Wright, and Frantz, 2018).

Having controlled for the regime type dummies, the following analysis will not include country-fixed effects to avoid collinearity; most authoritarian regimes remained in the same category over time. Instead, I control for a set of regional dummies assembled by Ross (2012). The regional dummies are largely based on the World Bank's definitions. Meanwhile, I add another binary variable that takes the value of 1 for the post-Cold War era, during which many scholars have noted the prevalence of authoritarian regimes that have nominally democratic institutions, such as elections, opposition political parties, and multiparty legislature (Levitsky and Way, 2002, 2010).

Lastly, I include several demographic and economic controls, including total population (log), lagged average income (GDP per capita), and lagged economic growth rate. The first two are retrieved from the EPR Dataset while the economic variables are provided by the Maddison Project (Bolt and van Zanden, 2013; Bolt et al., 2018).[21] Tables 7.4 and 7.5 in **Appendix II** present the summary statistics and correlation matrix of the main analytical variables.

7.2.1.2 Model Specification

The baseline model includes all the variables discussed above.

$$y_{itr} = \alpha_r + \mathbf{X}_{i,t-1}\beta + \mathbf{Z}_{i,t}\gamma + \mathbf{L}_{i,t-1}\kappa + \epsilon_{itr}, \tag{7.1}$$

where y_{itr} refers to the choice of institutional ethnic accommodation of country i in year t within region r. The $n \times 2$ matrix $\mathbf{X}$ refers to the two explanatory variables – the normalized

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[21]The current Maddison Project dataset is under the Groningen Growth and Development Centre (GGDC) at the Economics Department of the University of Groningen. See `https://www.rug.nl/ggdc/historicaldevelopment/maddison/releases/maddison-project-database-2018`.

degree of central leader power dispersion and the onset of ethnic conflict, making β the coefficients of main interest. The $n \times k$ matrices $\mathbf{Z}$ (not lagged) and $\mathbf{L}$ (lagged) represent the control variables. The term α_r refers to the region-fixed effects with ϵ_{itr} denoting the error term.

Since the outcome of interest here is a categorical variable that contains four discrete choices of institutional ethnic accommodation, including no accommodation, ethno-federation, federation, and regional autonomy, I employ multinomial logit regression. The estimated coefficients presented below will indicate the association between a one-unit change in the explanatory variables and the corresponding changes in the logged relative probability of offering any accommodation related to the baseline, which I define as the scenario in which the dictator offers no accommodation at all. The estimated coefficient β_1 for central leader power dispersion is the main coefficient of interest here, as it indicates how a one standard-deviation increase in the (normalized) degree of power dispersion is correlated with the increase in the logged relative probability of seeing the introduction of a particular type of accommodation (i.e., ethno-federation, federation, and regional autonomy) compared with the scenario in which the dictator offers no special institutional arrangements that cater to the subordinate ethnic groups.

Formally speaking, the baseline model can be written as follows:

$$\ln \left(\frac{P(\text{Accommodation})}{P(\text{No Accommodation})} \right) = \alpha_r + \mathbf{X}_{i,t-1}\beta + \mathbf{Z}_{i,t}\gamma + \mathbf{L}_{i,t-1}\kappa + \epsilon_{itr}, \qquad (7.2)$$

where $\text{Accommodation} = \{\text{ethno-federation}, \text{Federation}, \text{Regional Autonomy}\}$. As accommodation can take one of three different forms, the regression tables will have three columns, each of which corresponds to a particular type of institutional ethnic accommodation.[22]

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[22]It is important to note that the multinomial logit regression, which allows researchers to model the outcome of discrete choices, assumes the independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA). In the context of current project, the IIA assumption basically says the odds that the dictator chooses any type of accommodation over another type do not depend on the absence or presence of other "irrelevant" options. For instance, the relative probability of a dictator decides to introduce regional autonomy to subordinate ethnic groups will not change if federation is added or removed as a possible alternative. Formally speaking, the IIA assumption allows the decision to choose from K alternatives to be modeled as a set of $K-1$ independent binary choices relative to the baseline alternative one at a time.

7.2.2 Results

In Table 7.1, each column represents the estimation of the probability of a particular type of institutional ethnic accommodation relative to the probability of the baseline scenario – no accommodation at all. As indicated by the column names, Columns (1) to (3) show the estimates for a different type of institutional ethnic accommodation.[23]

Table 7.1: Institutional ethnic accommodation in authoritarian regimes, 1945-2010.

	Ethno. Fed.	Federation	Autonomy
Central leader power dispersion	0.868***	−0.004	0.967***
	(0.119)	(0.113)	(0.176)
Onset of ethnic conflicts (=1)	−0.267	−1.279	0.328
	(0.437)	(1.349)	(0.557)
Leadership change (=1)	0.121	0.177	−0.116
	(0.276)	(0.325)	(0.443)
Personalist regime (=1)	−0.293	1.461***	4.741***
	(0.349)	(0.313)	(0.763)
Military regime (=1)	0.145	2.314***	−23.522***
	(0.325)	(0.434)	(0.000)
Former democratic experiences	−0.005	0.086***	0.082***
	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.014)
Post-Cold War (=1)	0.062	−0.820**	1.015**
	(0.211)	(0.254)	(0.315)
AIC		2,091.313	
BIC		2,331.939	
Log Likelihood		−1,006.656	
Deviance		2,013.313	
Num. obs.		3,533	

***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$. Standard errors are in the parentheses. Coefficients are estimated by multinomial logit regression. In this analysis, the baseline category is no institutional ethnic accommodation at all. Therefore, for each estimated coefficient, a one-unit increase in each covariate refers to the increase (when positive) or decrease (when negative) in the log odds of the autocrat introducing ethnofederation (Column 1), federation (Column 2), and regional autonomy (Column 3), respectively vs. no institutional accommodation at all. The model controls for total population (log), lagged GDP per capita (log), lagged growth rate (percent), and region-fixed effects.

The estimated coefficients of *Central leadership power dispersion* are positive and statistically significant when the outcomes of interest are the logged relative probabilities of seeing ethno-federation and regional autonomy in authoritarian regimes. More specifically, a one standard-deviation increase in the degree of inner-circle power dispersion is associated with the increase in the relative probability of both types of institutional ethnic accommodation in the amount of about 2 and 3, respectively. In other words, the granting of ethno-federation and regional autonomy is now twice or thrice as likely to occur than the situation of no

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[23]The results in Table 7.1 remain robust after I remove China from the dataset.

accommodation at all.[24] While the results suggest that the dictator is indeed more likely to introduce some forms of institutional accommodation to the subordinate ethnic groups as his power grip declines in the ruling circle, it is interesting to note that the coefficient on the same variable turns out to be insignificant in the case of federation. The contrast here is perhaps unsurprising. For one thing, the introduction of federation can take place for a variety of reasons that have nothing to do with ethnic accommodation. In some cases, the central leaders can introduce a federal system to improve the efficiency of economic governance. The same system can also be in place as the dictator seeks to reward his followers with subnational policy-making discretion and economic rents.

The coefficients in Table 7.1 also suggest the lack of a clear statistical association between ethnic conflicts and institutional ethnic accommodation in authoritarian regimes, suggesting that any institutional accommodation toward the subordinate ethnic groups in authoritarian regimes may not have much to do with the onset of ethnic conflicts. Putting together, the introduction of etho-federation and regional autonomy is more likely to take place when the dictator's power is compromised as hypothesized.

With respect to the types of authoritarian regimes, both personalist and military regimes are more likely to see a federal state compared with their hegemonic-party counterparts (see Column 2). The contrast between personalist and military regimes, however, is not statistically significant as their estimates are similar in terms of the size as well as the degree of statistical significance. Based on the estimated coefficients in Column 3, dictators in the personalist regimes seem more likely to grant regional ethnic autonomy than their hegemonic-party and military counterparts. With a significant negative coefficient, it appears that regional autonomy is least likely in military regimes. Former democratic experiences are positively associated with institutional ethnic accommodation, but only in the cases of federation and regional autonomy, as we only observe statistically significant positive coefficients in Columns 2 and 3. While many scholars note the rise of competitive or hybrid authoritarian regimes in the Cold War Era, only the estimated coefficient for regional

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[24]To see why: $e^{0.868} \cong 2.382$ and $e^{0.967} \cong 2.630$.

autonomy (Column 3) is positive and statistically significant. In fact, the end of the Cold War appears to be more related to the decrease in authoritarian federalism.

In Table 7.2, to test **Hypothesis 3**, I divide all observations into two groups based on the nature of leadership turnovers to explore whether different means through which the dictator comes to power can influence his decision of institutional ethnic accommodation. Overall, the results align with the proposed hypothesis. Comparing the coefficients of *Central leader power dispersion* in both panels, only those in **Panel A** are consistently positive with $p <$ 0.001. Note that a weak dictator is also associated with the introduction of federation when his rise does not involve any violent destruction of the established institutional framework of the regime. In **Panel B**, we see the only statistically significant association between the eruption of ethnic conflicts and institutional ethnic accommodation takes place when a dictator, who acquires his power through irregular channels, makes the decision to introduce the federal system. The significant negative coefficient in **Panel B** suggests that ethnic conflicts can in fact prevent a dictator from doing so.

The GWF Autocracy Dataset contains authoritarian regimes that switched back and forth between autocracy and democracy in the post-WWII period. Including them in the regression analysis can be problematic since the factors that drive regime transitions may be correlated or even identical with those that prompt the dictator's decision to introduce some form of institutional ethnic accommodation. In other words, the baseline analysis risks the conflation of the dynamics of institutional ethnic accommodation and democratization. Therefore, I carry out another analysis that only considers countries that remained authoritarian regime between 1945 and 2010. Table 7.3 presents the results.

Once I only focus on countries that stayed non-democratic during the entire post-WWII period, the dictator's compromised dominance is only positively associated with the introduction of regional autonomy. The coefficients in Column 3 suggest that, holding other variables constant, it is three times as likely to see the dictator grants regional autonomy than offering nothing when we increase the degree of power dispersion by one standard deviation. The results in both Tables 7.1 and 7.3 warrant further research on the introduction of federal systems, including ethno-federation, in authoritarian regimes. However, the pro-

Table 7.2: Institutional ethnic accommodation in authoritarian regimes, 1945-2010 (regular vs. irregular leadership transitions).

Panel A: Regular leadership change			
	Ethno. Fed.	Federation	Autonomy
Central leader power dispersion	0.602***	0.437**	1.699***
	(0.146)	(0.154)	(0.270)
Onset of ethnic conflicts (=1)	0.604	−0.357	0.539
	(0.553)	(1.234)	(0.680)
AIC		1,426.005	
BIC		1,629.049	
Log Likelihood		−677.002	
Deviance		1,354.005	
Num. obs.		2,080	

Panel B: Irregular leadership change			
	Ethno. Fed.	Federation	Autonomy
Central leader power dispersion	2.532*	0.457	−0.592
	(1.194)	(0.545)	(0.400)
Onset of ethnic conflicts (=1)	−1.392	−1.394***	−0.341
	(2.714)	(0.050)	(1.202)
AIC		274.542	
BIC		464.473	
Log Likelihood		−101.271	
Deviance		202.542	
Num. obs.		1,445	

***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$. Standard errors are in the parentheses. Coefficients are estimated by multinomial logit regression. In this analysis, the baseline category is no institutional ethnic accommodation at all. Therefore, for each estimated coefficient, a one-unit increase in each covariate refers to the increase (when positive) or decrease (when negative) in the log odds of the autocrat introducing ethnofederation (Column 1), federation (Column 2), and regional autonomy (Column 3), respectively vs. no institutional accommodation at all. In addition to the political variables (i.e., type of authoritarian regimes, former democratic experiences, post-Cold War dummy, and the percentage of excluded minorities), the model controls for total population (log), lagged GDP per capita (log), lagged growth rate (percent), and region-fixed effects.

posed theory aligns with the presence of regional autonomy in authoritarian regimes, the main focus of my dissertation.

7.3 Conclusion

Having developed a new logic of ethnic autonomy and tested it with a variety of Chinese qualitative and quantitative evidence, I extend my focus beyond post-1949 China in this chapter. First, I explore how the proposed theory helps to understand the dynamics of local decentralization and political decentralization in early Imperial and Republican China. In

Table 7.3: Institutional ethnic accommodation in authoritarian regimes with no democratic intermission, 1945-2010.

	Ethno. Fed.	Federation	Autonomy
Central leader power dispersion	0.271	0.049	1.034**
	(0.200)	(0.160)	(0.322)
Onset of ethnic conflicts (=1)	0.583	0.039	0.974
	(1.021)	(2.327)	(1.393)
Leadership change (=1)	0.519	0.574	−0.286
	(0.439)	(0.442)	(0.820)
Personalist regime (=1)	−1.421	3.566***	8.884***
	(0.840)	(0.451)	(1.329)
Military regime (=1)	0.803	8.391***	−7.272***
	(0.549)	(0.807)	(0.001)
Former democratic experiences	−0.013	0.180***	0.128***
	(0.012)	(0.017)	(0.027)
Post-Cold War (=1)	−0.184	−0.621	4.178***
	(0.324)	(0.339)	(0.810)
AIC		1,076.600	
BIC		1,270.779	
Log Likelihood		−502.300	
Deviance		1,004.600	
Num. obs.		1,626	

$^{***}p < 0.001$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$. Coefficients are estimated by multinomial logit regression. Standard errors are in the parentheses. In this analysis, the baseline category is no institutional ethnic accommodation at all. Therefore, for each estimated coefficient, a one-unit increase in each covariate refers to the increase (when positive) or decrease (when negative) in the log odds of the autocrat introducing ethnofederation (Column 1), federation (Column 2), and regional autonomy (Column 3), respectively vs. no institutional accommodation at all. The model controls for total population (log), lagged GDP per capita (log), lagged growth rate (percent), and region-fixed effects.

the Western Han Dynasty, the early Han emperors strategically designated kingdoms and marquis states to counter the former's rise along with other policy measures. In the early 20th century, Chiang Kai-shek, facing the challenges from connected inner-circle rivals and local warlords, introduced the County Self-government Movement. In both cases, the central leader similarly introduced a series of institutional changes that allow them to stretch his rule at the grassroots level while undermining the influence of powerful subnational political forces connected with the leader's competitors in the central ruling group.

Next, I study the dynamics of institutional ethnic accommodation in post-WWII non-democratic states. Building on the proposed theory, I employ a newly constructed index of authoritarian personalism to examine the statistical association between inner circle power dispersion and the granting of any institutional accommodation toward subordinate ethnic groups, including federation, ethno-federation, and regional autonomy, in authoritarian regimes between 1945 and 2010. Taking a variety of economic and political variables into

account, I find that an autocrat is more likely to introduce regional autonomy when his power in the ruling group faces any constraints.

These findings suggest that the proposed logic of ethnic local autonomy offers broad implications to understand how different central leaders approach the task of political centralization through local decentralization. Existing studies have treated ethnic local autonomy in China as a unique institution solely prompted by the Chinese leader's need to prevent or suppress ethnic uprisings. The findings here indicate a different aspect of ethnic local autonomy that has been neglected in the literature. That is, one can consider the granting of ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China within a broad context of the central leader's pursuit of political centralization. Furthermore, the empirical evidence also shows a similar dynamics in other contemporary authoritarian regimes, which bolster the previous contention that ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China is not merely the product of the Soviet political system.

7.4 Appendix I: A Model of Ethnic Local Autonomy

Model Setup

To illustrate my argument, I construct a dynamic game of incomplete information. The game includes two players: the dominant elite (D), which refers to the dictator and his partners that constitute the ruling faction within the central leadership, and the ethnic minority elite (M). Before the game begins, suppose that the ruling faction controls a share of power $\pi \in [0,1]$ within the central leadership. The parameter π indicates the level of D's influence over his rivals, who command a $1 - \pi$ share of influence in the ruling circle. In a similar vein, I use $\omega \in [0,1]$ to represent M's influence within its group. As ω grows larger, M can more effectively mobilize his co-ethnics for any collective gains.[25] Both π and ω are common knowledge.

The game starts by Nature (N) choosing the probability that M loses the potential conflicts with D. Denoting this probability as $\delta \sim U[0,1]$, I treat δ as D's private information since the ruling faction, compared with M, presumably controls more administrative resources and security apparatus that allow the dictator to assess the chance of winning the conflicts, although part of δ is still determined by other stochastic shocks in the real world. Whereas M does not know its exact value, the uniform distribution of δ is also common knowledge.

The primary strategic parameter, the level of ethnic autonomy (a), is defined as a continuous variable between 0 and 1, where $a = 1$ suggests that M attains full independence. To proceed, after N realizes the value of δ to D, M proposes his desired level of autonomy. After receiving the request, D decides whether or not to accept it.

If D accepts M's proposal, the dictator co-opts minorities into the ruling faction and fulfills the request of autonomy by offering the latter an a share of state spoils, denoted by $T \in \mathbb{R}_+$. With M by his side, D can increase his chance of winning the competition

---

[25]The religious leaders of many ethnic minorities, such as the Dalai Lama for the Tibetan people (Schwartz, 1994), usually command a relatively high level of influence among their titular groups.

against his rivals within the central leadership. I assume the probability that D wins such competition is determined by his updated share of power within the central leadership, $\pi + \omega$, and the extended power base $1 + \omega$: $\frac{\pi + \omega}{1 + \omega}$. D can only realize the autonomy agreement when he wins the struggle against his rivals. As a result, the expected payoffs from D's acceptance (A_i where $i \in \{M, D\}$) are

$$A_M = \left(\frac{\pi + \omega}{1 + \omega} \right) aT.$$
$$A_D = \left(\frac{\pi + \omega}{1 + \omega} \right) (1 - a)T.$$

(7.3)

Should D reject M's proposal, the dictator mobilizes his co-ethnics or others in the central leadership to repress M, which allows D to fortify his mandate and prevent the central power struggle.[26] After the conflict, I suppose the winner can retain a share of T that is proportional to his established strength, namely π or ω, while treating the rest of it as destroyed during the struggle as the cost of the conflicts. The defeated player will then receive a payoff of 0 as he loses access to state spoils. Given that D wins with the probability δ, the expected utilities from fighting for both players (R_i where $i \in \{M, D\}$) are

$$R_M(\delta) = (1 - \delta)\omega T.$$
$$R_D(\delta) = \delta \pi T.$$

(7.4)

Without the loss of generality, the subsequent reasoning assumes $T = 1$. Figure 7.5 summarizes the timing of this game.

For ethnic autonomy to be a viable survival strategy in equilibrium, however, the ruling faction needs to maintain a certain level of dominance in the central leadership. With a certain level of dominance, dictators can be sure that their rivals are not strong enough to block the introduction of ethnic autonomy. They can be also confident that they can adequately

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[26]While the mobilization against non-coethnic groups can be a more attractive strategy to consolidate the ruling faction's dominance than granting ethnic autonomy, it is not always feasible as the payoff from conflict is a function of δ.

Figure 7.5: Timing of the dynamic game.

N

Nature chooses δ ~ U[0,1].

M

M demands a ∈ [0,1].

D

D decides to accept or not.

CONFLICT

FACTIONAL
COMPETITION WITHIN
THE CENTER

D wins

M wins

D wins
Autonomy granted

D loses
Autonomy canceled
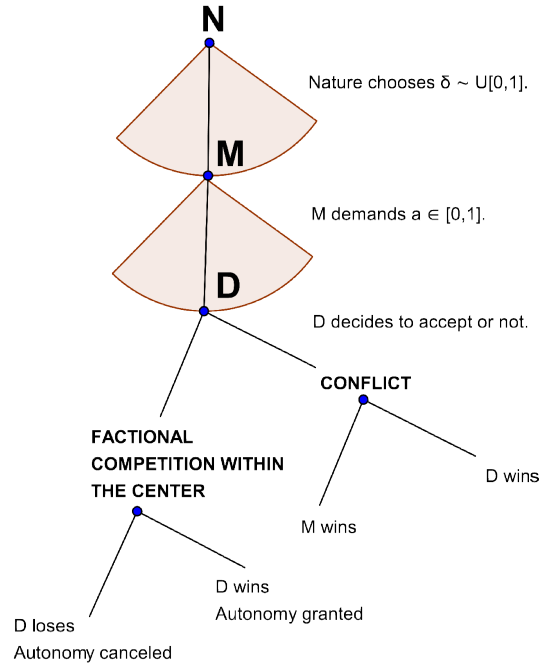
command the state apparatus to implement ethnic autonomy and deter any resistance or excessive demands from ethnic minorities. Therefore, I impose the following two conditions.

Condition 1. $\pi > \frac{\omega}{2}$ such that $\pi = \frac{\omega}{2} + \epsilon$ with small $\epsilon > 0$.

Meanwhile, in order to form an effective alliance with D, M also needs to enjoy a certain level of influence within his titular group. If this condition does not hold, granting ethnic autonomy will incur more turbulence as the subgroups within M may reject the autonomy agreement and continue their struggle against D.

Condition 2. $\omega > \frac{1}{2}$. In other words, D would prefer to grant autonomy to ethnic groups in which their own elites exercise sufficient influence to mobilize the collective action of the groups.

Equilibrium

To obtain the equilibrium, I apply weak perfect Bayesian Equilibrium (wPBE) as the solution concept. Based on the requirements introduced by Gibbons (1992), a wPBE consists of a sequentially rational strategic profile and a system of beliefs such that (1) the player with the private information chooses his strategy to maximize his utility subject to the other player's strategy and (2) the player with no knowledge of the private information, whenever possible, can update his belief based on the probability distribution of the private parameter with the Bayes' Rule to maximize his payoff.

By generalized backward induction, I start by considering D's best response. For D, accepting M's proposal is at least as good as rejecting it if and only $A_D \geq R_D(\delta)$. Based on (7.3) and (7.4),

$$\delta \leq \frac{(\pi + \omega)(1 - a)}{\pi(1 + \omega)} \equiv \hat{\delta}(a). \tag{7.5}$$

where $\hat{\delta}(a)$ indicates the threshold below which D always accepts M's proposal. This further suggests that D will always accept M's request when $\hat{\delta}(a) \geq 1$ and $a \leq \hat{a}$ where $\hat{a} = \frac{\omega(1-\pi)}{(\pi+\omega)}$. Like $\hat{\delta}$, $\hat{a}$ suggests the threshold below which D always accepts the request of autonomy. By the same token, D will always reject M's proposal when $\hat{\delta} \leq 0$, which implies $a = 1$. When $a > \hat{a}$, together it follows that D will accept M's proposal if and only if $\delta < \hat{\delta}$.

Proposition 1. When $a \leq \hat{a}$, D always accept M's requested level of autonomy (see below).

Based on $\hat{a}$, we need to consider two cases to derive M's best response. First, when $a \leq \hat{a}$, D always accepts M's demand of a, which implies $EU_M(a \leq \hat{a}) = A_M$. Following from (7.3), since A_M increases in a, M should propose $\hat{a}$ to maximize his utility.

Proposition 2. When $a \leq \hat{a}$, M proposes $\hat{a} = \frac{\omega(1-\pi)}{(\pi+\omega)}$, and D will always accept it (see below).

Second, when $a > \hat{a}$, D takes the proposal if and only if $\delta < \hat{\delta}$. Based on $\delta \sim U[0,1]$, M can update his belief on the probability that D will accept his demand.

$$
\begin{aligned}
EU_M(a > \hat{a}) &= \int_0^1 \left[Pr(\text{D accepts})A_M + Pr(\text{D rejects})R_M \right] f(\delta)d\delta \\
&= \int_0^{\hat{\delta}} A_M d\delta + \int_{\hat{\delta}}^1 R_M d\delta \\
&= \left(\frac{\pi + \omega}{1 + \omega} \right) a\hat{\delta} + \omega \left(\frac{1}{2} - \hat{\delta} + \frac{\hat{\delta}^2}{2} \right).
\end{aligned}
\tag{7.6}
$$

where $\hat{\delta} = \frac{(\pi+\omega)(1-a)}{\pi(1+\omega)}$. I set the first order condition of $EU_M(a > \hat{a})$ at 0 to find the value of a that maximizes $EU_M(a > \hat{a})$.

$$
\begin{aligned}
\frac{\partial EU_M(a > \hat{a})}{\partial a} &= a \left(\frac{\pi + \omega}{1 + \omega} \right) \left(\frac{\partial \hat{\delta}}{\partial a} \right) + \hat{\delta} \left(\frac{\pi + \omega}{1 + \omega} \right) - \omega \left(\frac{\partial \hat{\delta}}{\partial a} \right) (1 - \hat{\delta}) \\
&= \frac{(1 - 2a)\pi(\pi + \omega)^2 + \omega(\pi + \omega)[a(\pi + \omega) - \omega(1 - \pi)]}{[\pi(1 + \omega)]^2} = 0.
\end{aligned}
\tag{7.7}
$$

where $\frac{\partial^2 EU_M(a>\hat{a})}{\partial a^2} = -\frac{(2\pi-\omega)(\pi+\omega)}{[\pi(1+\omega)]^2} < 0$. Solving (7.7) yields

$$
a = \frac{(\pi^2 - \omega^2) + \pi\omega(1 + \omega)}{(2\pi - \omega)(\pi + \omega)} \equiv \tilde{a}.
\tag{7.8}
$$

Proposition 3. When $a > \hat{a}$, M proposes $\tilde{a} = \frac{(\pi^2-\omega^2)+\pi\omega(1+\omega)}{(2\pi-\omega)(\pi+\omega)}$ to maximize his expected payoff. D accepts it if and only if $\delta < \hat{\delta}$ (see below).

To determine the equilibrium, I compare M's expected payoffs at $\hat{a}$ and $\tilde{a}$, respectively. In the end, I find that $EU(a \leq \hat{a}|a = \hat{a}) > EU(a > \hat{a}|a = \tilde{a})$ (see below). Therefore, in the wPBE

$$
a^* = \hat{a} = \frac{\omega(1 - \pi)}{\pi + \omega}.
\tag{7.9}
$$

where $\pi > \frac{\omega}{2}$ and $\omega > \frac{1}{2}$.[27] We can thus derive two comparative statics with respect to π and ω. On the one hand, the level of autonomy granted decreases in π.

$$\frac{\partial a^*}{\partial \pi} = \frac{-\omega(\pi + \omega) - \omega(1 - \pi)}{(\pi + \omega)^2} = -\frac{\omega(1 + \omega)}{(\pi + \omega)^2} < 0. \tag{7.10}$$

On the other hand, the level of autonomy increases in ω.

$$\frac{\partial a^*}{\partial \omega} = \frac{(1 - \pi)(\pi + \omega) - \omega(1 - \pi)}{(\pi + \omega)^2} = \frac{\pi(1 + \pi)}{(\pi + \omega)^2} > 0. \tag{7.11}$$

With (7.10) and (7.11), we derive the following proposition.

Proposition 4. When $\pi > \frac{\omega}{2}$ and $\omega > \frac{1}{2}$ (Figure 7.6), there exists a weak perfect Bayesian equilibrium in which the dominant elite grants ethnic autonomy and recruits minority groups into the ruling faction within the central leadership. The level of autonomy, a, increases with ω and decreases as π grows large.

Figure 7.6: Equilibrium region.

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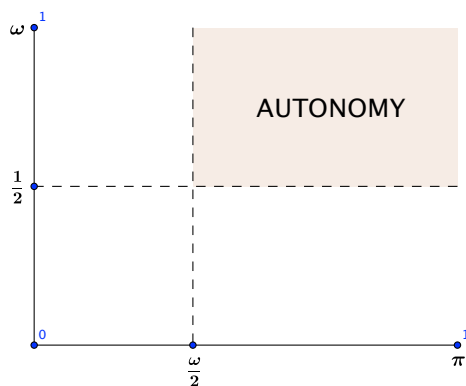
[27]Relaxing these assumptions will lead to another possible, yet implausible, equilibrium as it suggests the dictator can still grant autonomy even when he completely loses his command in the inner circle.

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Proofs

Proposition 1. When $a \leq \hat{a}$, D always accept M's requested level of autonomy.

By backward induction, we start by considering D's best response. For D, accepting M's proposal is at least as good as rejecting it if and only if

$$\left(\frac{\pi + \omega}{1 + \omega}\right)(1 - a) \geq \delta\pi$$

$$\Rightarrow \delta \leq \frac{(\pi + \omega)(1 - a)}{\pi(1 + \omega)} \equiv \hat{\delta}(a). \tag{7.12}$$

where $\hat{\delta}(a)$ indicates the threshold below which D always accepts M's proposal. Therefore, D will always accepts M's request when $\hat{\delta}(a) > 1$:

$$\frac{(\pi + \omega)(1 - a)}{\pi(1 + \omega)} \geq 1 \Rightarrow (\pi + \omega)(1 - a) \geq \pi(1 + \omega)$$

$$\Rightarrow -a(\pi + \omega) \geq \pi(1 + \omega) - (\pi + \omega)$$

$$\Rightarrow -a(\pi + \omega) \geq -\omega(1 - \pi) \tag{7.13}$$

$$\Rightarrow a \leq \frac{\omega(1 - \pi)}{(\pi + \omega)} \equiv \hat{a}.$$

Given that all parameters included lie between 0 and 1, it follows that

- $\hat{a} \geq 0$ always holds.

- $\hat{a} \leq 1$ also always holds because $\omega(1 - \pi) - (\pi + \omega) = -\pi(1 + \omega) \leq 0$.

Proposition 2. When $a \leq \hat{a}$, M proposes $\hat{a} = \frac{\omega(1-\pi)}{(\pi+\omega)}$, and D will always accept it.

When $a \leq \hat{a}$, D always accepts the proposal a. M's expected payoff is hence the same as A_M.

$$EU_M(a \leq \hat{a}) = A_M = \left(\frac{\pi + \omega}{1 + \omega}\right)a. \tag{7.14}$$

Since EU_M increases in a, to maximize his utility M should propose $\hat{a}$.

$$EU_M(a \le \hat{a}) = \left(\frac{\pi + \omega}{1 + \omega}\right)\hat{a} = \left(\frac{\pi + \omega}{1 + \omega}\right)\left[\frac{\omega(1 - \pi)}{\pi + \omega}\right] = \frac{\omega(1 - \pi)}{1 + \omega}. \tag{7.15}$$

Proposition 3. When $a > \hat{a}$, M proposes $\tilde{a} = \frac{(\pi^2 - \omega^2) + \pi\omega(1+\omega)}{(2\pi - \omega)(\pi + \omega)}$ to maximize his expected payoff. D accepts it if and only if $\delta < \hat{\delta}$.

When $a > \hat{a}$, D takes M's if and only if $\delta < \hat{\delta}$; given that $\delta \sim U[0, 1]$,

$$
\begin{aligned}
EU_M(a > \hat{a}) &= \int_0^1 \left[Pr(\text{D accepts})A_M + Pr(\text{D rejects})R_M\right] f(\delta)d\delta \\
&= \int_0^{\hat{\delta}} A_M d\delta + \int_{\hat{\delta}}^1 R_M d\delta \\
&= a\left(\frac{\pi + \omega}{1 + \omega}\right)\int_0^{\hat{\delta}} d\delta + \omega \int_{\hat{\delta}}^1 (1 - \delta)d\delta \\
&= \left(\frac{\pi + \omega}{1 + \omega}\right)a\hat{\delta} + \omega\left(\frac{1}{2} - \hat{\delta} + \frac{\hat{\delta}^2}{2}\right)
\end{aligned}
\tag{7.16}
$$

where $\hat{\delta} = \frac{(\pi + \omega)(1 - a)}{\pi(1 + \omega)}$. The F.O.C. with respect to a yields

$$
\begin{aligned}
\frac{\partial EU_M(a > \hat{a})}{\partial a} &= a\left(\frac{\pi + \omega}{1 + \omega}\right)\left(\frac{\partial\hat{\delta}}{\partial a}\right) + \hat{\delta}\left(\frac{\pi + \omega}{1 + \omega}\right) - \omega\left(\frac{\partial\hat{\delta}}{\partial a}\right)(1 - \hat{\delta}) \\
&= \frac{-a(\pi + \omega)^2}{\pi(1 + \omega)^2} + \frac{(\pi + \omega)^2(1 - a)}{\pi(1 + \omega)^2} + \frac{\omega(\pi + \omega)[a(\pi + \omega) - \omega(1 - \pi)]}{[\pi(1 + \omega)]^2} \\
&= \frac{(1 - 2a)\pi(\pi + \omega)^2 + \omega(\pi + \omega)[a(\pi + \omega) - \omega(1 - \pi)]}{[\pi(1 + \omega)]^2}.
\end{aligned}
\tag{7.17}
$$

where $\frac{\partial^2 EU_M(a > \hat{a})}{\partial a^2} = -\frac{(2\pi - \omega)(\pi + \omega)}{[\pi(1+\omega)]^2} < 0$. To find the argument a that maximizes $EU_M(a > \hat{a})$,

$$(1 - 2a)\pi(\pi + \omega)^2 + \omega(\pi + \omega)[a(\pi + \omega) - \omega(1 - \pi)] = 0$$

$$(1 - 2a)\pi(\pi + \omega)^2 + a\omega(\pi + \omega)^2 - \omega^2(\pi + \omega)(1 - \pi) = 0$$

$$(\pi + \omega)^2[(1 - 2a)\pi + a\omega] - \omega^2(\pi + \omega)(1 - \pi) = 0$$

$$(\pi + \omega)[(1 - 2a)\pi + a\omega] - \omega^2(1 - \pi) = 0 \qquad (7.18)$$

$$\pi(\pi + \omega) - a(2\pi - \omega)(\pi + \omega) - \omega^2(1 - \pi) = 0$$

$$\pi(\pi + \omega) - \omega^2(1 - \pi) = a(2\pi - \omega)(\pi + \omega)$$

$$(\pi^2 - \omega^2) + \pi\omega(1 + \omega) = a(2\pi - \omega)(\pi + \omega)$$

$$\frac{(\pi^2 - \omega^2) + \pi\omega(1 + \omega)}{(2\pi - \omega)(\pi + \omega)} = a \equiv \tilde{a}.$$

We have to check the corners.

- Given that $\pi > \frac{\omega}{2}$, $\tilde{a} > 0$ always holds.

- $\tilde{a} < 1$ also always holds since

$$\tilde{a} < 1 \Leftrightarrow \pi^2 - \omega^2 + \pi\omega + (1 + \omega) - (\pi + \omega)(2\pi - \omega) < 0$$

$$\Leftrightarrow \pi^2 - \omega^2 + \pi\omega + \pi\omega^2 - (2\pi^2 - \omega\pi + 2\omega\pi - \omega^2) < 0 \qquad (7.19)$$

$$\Leftrightarrow -\pi^2 + \pi\omega^2 = -\pi(\pi + \omega^2) < 0.$$

Meanwhile, we also need to check whether $\tilde{a} > \hat{a}$.

$$
\begin{aligned}
\tilde{a} - \hat{a} &= \frac{(\pi^2 - \omega^2) + \pi\omega(1 + \omega)}{(\pi + \omega)(2\pi - \omega)} - \frac{\omega(1 - \pi)}{(\pi + \omega)} \\
&= \frac{(\pi^2 - \omega^2) + \pi\omega(1 + \omega) - \omega(1 - \pi)(2\pi - \omega)}{(\pi + \omega)(2\pi - \omega)} \\
&= \frac{\pi^2 - \omega^2 + \pi\omega + \pi\omega^2 - \omega(2\pi - \omega - 2\pi^2 + \pi\omega)}{(\pi + \omega)(2\pi - \omega)} \\
&= \frac{\pi^2 - \omega^2 + \pi\omega + \pi\omega^2 - 2\pi\omega + \omega^2 + 2\pi^2\omega - \pi\omega^2}{(\pi + \omega)(2\pi - \omega)} \\
&= \frac{\pi^2 - \pi\omega + 2\pi^2\omega}{(\pi + \omega)(2\pi - \omega)} \\
&= \frac{\pi(\pi - \omega + 2\pi\omega)}{(\pi + \omega)(2\pi - \omega)} > 0.
\end{aligned}
\tag{7.20}
$$

Since

$$
\pi - \omega + 2\pi\omega > 0 \Rightarrow \pi > \frac{\omega}{1 + 2\omega},
\tag{7.21}
$$

this always holds with $\omega > \frac{1}{2}$ and $\pi > \frac{\omega}{2}$.

$$
\frac{\omega}{2} - \frac{\omega}{1 + 2\omega} = \frac{\omega(1 + 2\omega) - 2\omega}{2(1 + 2\omega)} = \frac{\omega(2\omega - 1)}{2(1 + 2\omega)} > 0.
\tag{7.22}
$$

Proposition 4. When $\pi > \frac{\omega}{2}$ and $\omega > \frac{1}{2}$, there exists a weak perfect Bayesian equilibrium in which dominant elite grants ethnic minority and recruits minority groups into the ruling faction within the central leadership. The level of autonomy, a, increases with ω and decreases as π grows large.

To find the equilibrium, we need to compare M's expected payoff at $\hat{a}$ and $\tilde{a}$. On the one hand,

$$
EU_M(a \leq \hat{a}|a = \hat{a}) = \left(\frac{\pi + \omega}{1 + \omega}\right)\hat{a} = \left(\frac{\pi + \omega}{1 + \omega}\right)\left[\frac{\omega(1 - \pi)}{\pi + \omega}\right] = \frac{\omega(1 - \pi)}{1 + \omega}.
\tag{7.23}
$$

On the other hand,

$$
\begin{aligned}
EU_M(a > \hat{a}|a = \tilde{a}) &= \left(\frac{\pi + \omega}{1 + \omega} \right) \tilde{a}\hat{\delta} + \omega \left(\frac{1}{2} - \hat{\delta} + \frac{\hat{\delta}^2}{2} \right) \\
&= \frac{(\pi - \omega^2)[(\pi^2 - \omega^2) + \pi\omega(1 + \omega)]}{(1 + \omega)^2(2\pi - \omega)^2} \\
&\quad + \omega \left\{ \frac{1}{2} - \frac{\pi - \omega^2}{(1 + \omega)(2\pi - \omega)} + \frac{(\pi - \omega^2)^2}{2(1 + \omega)(2\pi - \omega)} \right\}.
\end{aligned}
\tag{7.24}
$$

The difference between (7.23) and (7.24) can be expressed as

$$
\begin{aligned}
EU_M(a \le \hat{a}|a = \hat{a}) - EU_M(a > \hat{a}|a = \tilde{a}) &= \left\{ \frac{\omega(1 - \pi)}{1 + \omega} - \frac{(\pi - \omega^2)[(\pi^2 - \omega^2) + \pi\omega(1 + \omega)]}{(1 + \omega)^2(2\pi - \omega)^2} \right\} \\
&\quad - \omega \left\{ \frac{1}{2} - \frac{\pi - \omega^2}{(1 + \omega)(2\pi - \omega)} + \frac{(\pi - \omega^2)^2}{2(1 + \omega)^2(2\pi - \omega)^2} \right\} \\
&\equiv \Psi_1(\omega, \pi) - \omega\Psi_2(\omega, \pi).
\end{aligned}
\tag{7.25}
$$

Given that $\omega > \frac{1}{2}$ and $\pi > \frac{\omega}{2}$, set $\pi = \frac{\omega}{2} + \epsilon$ with small $\epsilon > 0$,

$$
\begin{aligned}
\Psi_1(\omega, \pi) &= \frac{\omega(1 - \pi)(1 + \omega)(2\pi - \omega)^2 - (\pi - \omega^2)[(\pi^2 - \omega^2) + \pi\omega(1 + \omega)]}{(1 + \omega)^2(2\pi - \omega)^2}. \\
\Psi_2(\omega, \pi) &= \frac{(1 + \omega)^2(2\pi - \omega)^2 - 2(1 + \omega)(2\pi - \omega)(\pi - \omega^2) + (\pi - \omega^2)^2}{2(1 + \omega)^2(2\pi - \omega)^2}.
\end{aligned}
\tag{7.26}
$$

It follows that

$$\Psi_1(\omega, \pi) - \omega\Psi_2(\omega, \pi) \cong \frac{-2(\pi - \omega^2)[\pi^2 - \omega^2 + \pi\omega(1+\omega)] - \omega(\pi - \omega^2)^2}{2(1+\omega)^2(2\pi - \omega)^2}$$

$$= \frac{2(\omega^2 - \pi)[\pi^2 - \omega^2 + \pi\omega(1+\omega)] - \omega(\omega^2 - \pi)^2}{2(1+\omega)^2(2\pi - \omega)^2}$$

$$= \frac{(\omega^2 - \pi)[2\pi^2 - 2\omega^2 + 2\pi\omega(1+\omega) - \omega(\omega^2 - \pi)]}{2(1+\omega)^2(2\pi - \omega)^2}$$

$$= \frac{(\omega^2 - \pi)(2\pi^2 - 2\omega^2 + 3\pi\omega + 2\pi\omega^2 - \omega^3)}{2(1+\omega)^2(2\pi - \omega)^2}$$

$$= \frac{\left[\omega^2 - \left(\frac{\omega}{2} + \epsilon\right)\right]\left[2\left(\frac{\omega}{2} + \epsilon\right)^2 - 2\omega^2 + 3\left(\frac{\omega}{2} + \epsilon\right)\omega + 2\left(\frac{\omega}{2} + \epsilon\right)\omega^2 - \omega^3\right]}{2(1+\omega)^2(2\pi - \omega)^2}$$

$$= \frac{\left[\omega^2 - \left(\frac{\omega}{2} + \epsilon\right)\right]\left[\left(\frac{\omega^2}{2}\right) + 4\omega\epsilon + 2\epsilon^2 - 2\omega^2 + \left(\frac{3\omega^2}{2}\right) + 3\omega\epsilon + \omega^3 + 2\omega^2\epsilon - \omega^3\right]}{2(1+\omega)^2(2\pi - \omega)^2}$$

$$= \frac{\left[\frac{\omega(2\omega - 1)}{2} - \epsilon\right](2\epsilon^2 + 7\omega\epsilon + 2\omega^2\epsilon)}{2(1+\omega)^2(2\pi - \omega)^2} > 0.$$

$$(7.27)$$

Following from (7.27), in the wPBE

$$a^* = \hat{a} = \frac{\omega(1 - \pi)}{\pi + \omega}. \tag{7.28}$$

This allows us to derive the following two comparative statics. First, the level of autonomy granted decreases in π.

$$\frac{\partial a^*}{\partial \pi} = \frac{-\omega(\pi + \omega) - \omega(1 - \pi)}{(\pi + \omega)^2} = -\frac{\omega(1 + \omega)}{(\pi + \omega)^2} < 0. \tag{7.29}$$

Second, the level of autonomy increases in ω.

$$\frac{\partial a^*}{\partial \omega} = \frac{(1 - \pi)(\pi + \omega) - \omega(1 - \pi)}{(\pi + \omega)^2} = \frac{\pi(1 + \pi)}{(\pi + \omega)^2} > 0 \tag{7.30}$$

where $\pi > \frac{\omega}{2}$ and $\omega > \frac{1}{2}$.

7.5   Appendix II: Additional Statistical Tables

Table 7.4: Summary statistics of the variables in the cross-national analysis.

	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Central leader power dispersion	3,886	−0.003	1.000	−1.987	1.449
Onset of ethnic conflicts (=1)	3,882	0.025	0.155	0.000	1.000
Personalist regime (=1)	3,996	0.288	0.453	0	1
Military regime (=1)	3,996	0.145	0.352	0	1
Former democratic experiences	3,996	31.570	19.408	1	85
Percentage of excluded minorities	3,882	0.209	0.261	0.000	0.980
Total population (log)	3,670	9.197	1.377	6.054	14.102
GDP per capita (log)	3,537	7.885	0.851	5.817	11.022
Growth rate (percent)	3,536	0.021	0.080	−0.639	1.735
Post-Cold War (=1)	3,996	0.290	0.454	0	1
Asia (=1)	3,996	0.162	0.369	0	1
Sub-Saharan Africa (=1)	3,996	0.387	0.487	0	1
MENA (=1)	3,996	0.101	0.301	0	1

Table 7.5: Correlation matrix of the variables in the cross-national analysis.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
(1) Central leader power dispersion	1								
(2) Onset of ethnic conflicts (=1)	−0.005	1							
(3) Personalist regime (=1)	−0.375	0.031	1						
(4) Military regime (=1)	0.232	0.038	−0.280	1					
(5) Former democratic experiences	0.059	−0.060	−0.306	−0.401	1				
(6) Percentage of excluded minorities	−0.070	0.073	0.074	0.048	−0.077	1			
(7) Total population (log)	0.101	0.120	−0.101	0.137	0.165	0.025	1		
(8) GDP per capita (log)	0.077	−0.048	−0.133	−0.012	0.296	−0.113	0.113	1	
(9) Growth rate (percent)	0.069	−0.035	−0.070	0.033	0.036	−0.064	0.062	0.016	1

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

8.1 How Ethnic Local Autonomy Leads to Political Centralization

In this study, I seek to understand why the Chinese Communist Party decided to introduce ethnic local autonomy after 1949. Compared with other institutions in the Chinese political system, ethnic local autonomy has received scant attention, and the prevailing views have dismissed its importance or considered it as an institution of ethnic appeasement or repression.

I develop and test a new political logic of ethnic local autonomy. Contrary to previous studies, my argument considers ethnic local autonomy as an institution of agent control. In this brief conclusion, I will review the theory, as well as the qualitative and quantitative evidence I have provided in the previous chapters. Altogether, I have accounted for not only the *timing* of the granting of ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China but also the *mechanisms* through which ethnic autonomous territories (EATs) contribute to political centralization in the country. My argument illuminates the variation in the granting of ethnic local autonomy, as exemplified by EAT designations, over time and across different parts of the country. The proposed theory also explains the variation in the use of autonomous powers across the EAT jurisdictions and the appointments of non-Han ruling cadres in EATs.

In brief, I contend that ethnic local autonomy is by no means a window-dressing institution in post-1949 China. The designated EATs have played a crucial role in contributing to the progress of state building and national integration in contemporary China. Both state building and national integration pave the foundation of political centralization in the

country.

First, I argue that ethnic local autonomy helps the central leader consolidate his ruling position in the regime by countering the threats imposed by his defection-prone inner-circle and local agents. The EATs allow the central leader to exercise his direct influence over a set of local jurisdictions so he can constrain the power of provincial elites. The presence of EATs is especially crucial when provincial elites have managed to grow their own networks in the provinces as an embedded local power base while holding close ties with the central leader's rivals in the Politburo.

More specifically, ethnic local autonomy allows the central leader, who holds the power to name EATs in the country and cultivate the team of non-Han cadres in the Party state, to interrupt the principal-agent relationships between the provincial elites and their district and county subordinates, which in turn can curb the growth of the provincial elites' local elite networks. In doing so, the central leader extends his authority over such vast and diverse territory, which is essential for him to accomplish the task of state building and mobilize the human and financial resources in the country.

My theory also speaks to several notable changes in the Chinese government's policies toward non-Han ethnic groups since the 1990s, during which Beijing downplays ethnic local autonomy and focuses on assimilation through economic development (Dreyer, 2001; Tuttle, 2010; Fischer, 2015; Sun, 2019). These changes coincide with the fact that the Party has managed to build the institutional framework that facilitates peaceful political succession and allows the central leader to consolidate his ruling power and control his provincial elites (Bo, 2004b; Kou, 2005). With the creation of other institutional tools of agent control, the central leader perhaps no longer has the incentive to employ EATs to constrain the unruly provincial elites connected with his inner-circle rivals.

Next, the Chinese Communist Party's decision to grant ethnic local autonomy, which began nearly a decade before the Party won the Civil War, also has crucial implications for nation building. In the 1920s, the Party first adopted the Leninist model and promised non-Han ethnic groups the right to secede from China or become a federal unit in the Chinese

ethno-federation. During the Long March, as Mao Zedong rose to dominate the Party's central leadership, the Party abandoned the initial promise of self-determination and turned to self-rule or self-government, through which the Party promised non-Han ethnic groups several autonomous powers in their own local jurisdictions. Before Mao defeated Chiang Kai-shek and conquered all of mainland China, the Party established ethnic local autonomy as the main principle of the new government's policies toward non-Han ethnic groups.

The Party's change toward granting ethnic local autonomy, instead of ethnic autonomy, was by no means trivial. The post-1949 Chinese government no longer considered a non-Han group as a whole when granting ethnic local autonomy. Rather, Beijing would only grant the stipulated autonomous powers to selected jurisdictions with a cluster of non-Han citizens. Post-1949 China has seen multiple EATs for the same groups, and the EATs for the same groups were usually not granted at the same time. As in the case of the former Soviet Union (Brubaker, 1996), ethnic local autonomy makes individuals' political identity the joint product of their ethnic and territorial affiliations. Individuals of the same ethnicity no longer consider themselves as a cohesive group, rather, they combine their territorial affiliations with their ethnic ones when declaring their identities in public. In this vein, ethnic local autonomy reduces the likelihood of non-Han ethnic mobilization in the country. As non-Han and Han Chinese citizens can share the same territorial affiliations, the post-1949 Chinese government manages to incorporate ethnic diversity into the broad Chinese national identity, which in turn sustains the nascent Chinese nation-state.

The qualitative and quantitative evidence drawing from archival research, elite interviews, and statistical analysis is in line with these conjectures. To begin, the descriptive overview of ethnic autonomous territories (EATs) in post-1949 China indicates the lack of association between ethnic uprisings and the granting of ethnic local autonomy, which many scholars have questioned as an institution of conflict resolution. With EATs being named for non-Han ethnic groups that are not prone to secession, I then demonstrate that sub-provincial EATs, as exemplified by the formulation of the autonomous regulations, have been more active in exercising the granted autonomous powers in their jurisdictions compared with their provincial counterparts – ethnic autonomous regions. A glance at the history also

shows that EAT designations tend to take place when the Party center sees the eruption of intense power struggles in the absence of a clear succession scheme.

By tracing the process that leads to the designation of individual ethnic autonomous prefectures, I offer a nuanced picture for the granting of ethnic local autonomy in post-1949 China. While the Chinese government claims that the offer of local autonomy has been driven by the demand of local non-Han communities, I find that Beijing preemptively mobilized local non-Han elites to "request" to become ethnic autonomous jurisdictions with their respectively provincial superiors. When it seems that the provincial elites are attempting to stall the process, the central government will interfere and impose the decision of EAT designations despite provincial elites' protests.

I also develop a unified framework to construct innovative measures of central and provincial elite connectedness based on different statistical tools of supervised machine learning and network science. With these innovative measures, I find that the designation of sub-provincial EATs – ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties – is more likely to take place when the central leader faces a fragmented Politburo with recalcitrant provincial leaders connected with his competitors in the Party center. I also discover that EATs are more likely to exercise their granted autonomous powers when their respective provincial elites are prone to defection. The non-Han ruling elites are also more likely to be out of the provincial elites' reach. The central leader has seemed to strategically focus on the salience of non-Han cadres' ethnic and territorial identities for their appointments. More crucially, EAT designations appear to follow a similar logic that drives the designation of other unique sub-provincial jurisdictions, such as district-level jurisdictions, over which the provincial elites have limited control.

Finally, I move my focus beyond post-1949 ethnic local autonomy. I first show that the Chinese leaders in Imperial and Republican eras, after winning civil wars, adopted similar institutional changes to consolidate their ruling power over powerful inner-circle elites and local political and military forces. Despite not turning to subordinate ethnic groups, both early Han emperors and Chiang Kai-shek elevated the political importance of grassroots jurisdictions to counter defiant local elites who are capable of challenging their supreme

authority while allying with others in the central administration. I then apply a newly created index of authoritarian personalism to show that post-WWII dictators are also more likely to grant regional autonomy when their power declines in the ruling circle.

My research certainly has yet to exhaust all related plausible theoretical and empirical implications. In the next section, I will discuss several directions for future work, which seek to advance the current project and explore the implications of my proposed argument in different political contexts.

8.2 Future Research

8.2.1 Extension of Current Project

Future research will assemble additional local historical social and economic statistics of post-1949 China to study whether the designation of ethnic autonomous territories influences policy implementation across different provinces. According to the proposed theory, ethnic local autonomy constrains the discretion of the ruling elites in a province. It is thus possible that the designation of ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties allows the central leader to better enforce his policy initiatives, such as land reform in the early 1950s, agricultural collectivization in the late 1950s and 1960s, and statistical transparency and birth control in the 1980s. However, it is also possible that a province will experience some difficulties in policy implementation, as the provincial elites face a more complicated delegation relationship with their subordinates at the district and county levels with the presence of sub-provincial EATs. One can follow Koss (2018), who studies how the Party's effort of organizational building before 1949 impacts the implementation of major policies and the magnitude of policy failures and political purges at the local level after the Party came to power. Also, since the most recent revision of the Law on Ethnic Local Autonomy in 2001 highlights the preservation of natural resources, one can explore how decentralization and political empowerment of local indigenous or minority groups shape environmental governance in China.

Second, future research can study the legislative activities of EATs and other local jurisdictions. In line with Huang (2014), who conducts a qualitative discourse analysis of the autonomous regulations formulated by the local People's Congress in ethnic autonomous prefectures, one can conduct computer-assisted text analysis to study the customization of national regulations in ethnic autonomous prefectures and counties to illustrate additional nuances that influence the use of granted autonomy across different EATs. This project can become part of a large collaborative program to study variation in the legislative behaviors of local People's Congress across the country.

8.2.2 Data Collection

Building on my dissertation project, I am creating an open-source `R` statistical package *C-PEN* (Chinese Political Elite Network) that will allow researchers to generate different measures of elite connectedness in post-1949 China with pre-processed biographical data of political elites. I have collected raw biographical data of the full and alternate Central Committee members (1921-2015), provincial Party secretaries and governors (1947-2017), district Party secretaries and government heads (1949-2017), and county Party secretaries and government heads (2000-2017). These data will be useful in the analysis of the local elite networks in a province and allows additional tests of the proposed theory. For instance, one can examine how the designation of EATs alters the structure of the local elite network that includes both the provincial elites and their subordinate cadres.

One can also consult historical GIS and other rare historical materials, such as literacy and history materials (*wenshiziliao*) and local gazetteers to finish an event dataset that documents all post-1949 Chinese local political divisions. The dataset will include information about the timeline and actors involved in the designation of ethnic autonomous territories and other unique subnational jurisdictions, such as district-level municipalities. The dataset will help me and other researchers explore the evolution of central-local relations and the politics of local governance in the country.

8.2.3 Beyond Post-1949 China

Other scholars can continue my research on the political logic of ethnic local autonomy and other decentralizing measures in multi-ethnic non-democratic and democratic states (e.g., India and Indonesia) and its political and economic implications. One can study how multilevel decentralization shapes the building of central state capacity around the world. One can also extend and analyze existing cross-national datasets (e.g., Dataset on Political Institutions, Dataset on Ethnic Power Relations, and Dataset on Regional Authority) on state capacity, ethnic diversity, and political institutions, which include various measures of administrative and political decentralization across different levels of subnational government jurisdictions.

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