



Research on Border Governance Policies of the Silk Road Economic Belt under Historical Evolution: Taking the Cross border Ethnic Issues in China as an Example

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a historical analysis of the Silk Road, highlighting its economic and cultural influence on world civilization. It also examines the evolution of China's frontier governance policies and their impact in different periods. Furthermore, it addresses contemporary cross-border ethnic issues in the context of the Silk Road Economic Belt. By drawing on historical governance practices, it sheds light on the Chinese government's policy dynamics, offering insights for optimizing governance approaches and constructing a suitable framework for the Silk Road Economic Belt's future development. This article contributes valuable perspectives and ideas for resolving cross-border ethnic issues.

Keywords: Silk Road Economic Belt, Border Governance, Cross Border Ethnic Groups, Historical Evolution.

INTRODUCTION

The significance of silk in the realm of economics is a topic of enduring importance. Throughout history, the Silk Road, an intricate web of trade routes, has been a nexus of cultural exchange, economic prosperity, and the transmission of ideas (McLaughlin, 2016). Its profound historical significance has left a lasting imprint on world civilizations. Amid the backdrop of sluggish global economic recovery, reinforcing regional cooperation stands as a pivotal impetus for propelling world economic development and has emerged as a prevailing trend (Ghosh, 2012). In September 2013, during his diplomatic visit to the amicable neighboring nation of Kazakhstan, Chinese President Xi Jinping unveiled the strategic concept and proposal for the Silk Road Economic Belt (Aoyama, 2016; Yu, 2020). Given the strategic geographical advantages, abundant natural resources, and promising development prospects along the regions of the Silk Road, pertinent major nations have also put forth strategic visions for this area, as indicated in Table 1, albeit with limited tangible outcomes (Rakhmangulov, Śladkowski, Osintsev, Kopylova, & Dyorina, 2018).

Table 1. Various Countries' Plans to Implement the Silk Road

Nation	Plan Name	Proposed/Implemented Time
America	New Zhongye Strategy	1997
	The Greater Central Asia Plan	2005
	The New Silk Road Plan	2011
	Asia Pacific Rebalance Strategy	2012
Russia	The New Silk Road	2009
	Eurasian Economic Union	2011

Nation	Plan Name	Proposed/Implemented Time
Japan	The Diplomatic Conception of the Silk Road	1998
Iran	China Railway Connectivity Plan	2011
Kazakhstan	The New Silk Road Project	2012
	Bright Road New Economy Plan	2014
China	The Silk Road Economic Belt	2013
	The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road	2013

China, as the birthplace of the Silk Road, holds the distinction of being the largest developing nation among those nations situated along its route and concurrently boasts the world's most sizable economy (Gu, Chen, & Haibin, 2016). Empowered by its cultural heritage and robust economic foundation, China actively advocates for and guides cooperative efforts among the nations along the route (Tarr-Whelan, 2009; Rössler, & Lin, 2018). In April 2019, the second "Belt and Road" International Summit Forum convened, culminating in the formulation of 283 achievements across six distinct categories, signifying a momentous stride toward fostering regional and international collaboration (Lam, Cai, Dai, & Li, 2020). Over the course of more than six years, the "Silk Road Economic Belt" initiative has reaped substantial dividends through collective endeavors between China and the nations along its route, exemplified by trade transaction volumes (Wu, 2018), depicted in Figure 1. These empirical realities underscore the resonance of the Silk Road Economic Belt initiative with the contemporary theme of peaceful development, its alignment with the historical tide of globalization, and its capacity to benefit the developmental trajectories of nations spanning its path, thereby offering exceptionally vast prospects for their future growth and prosperity.

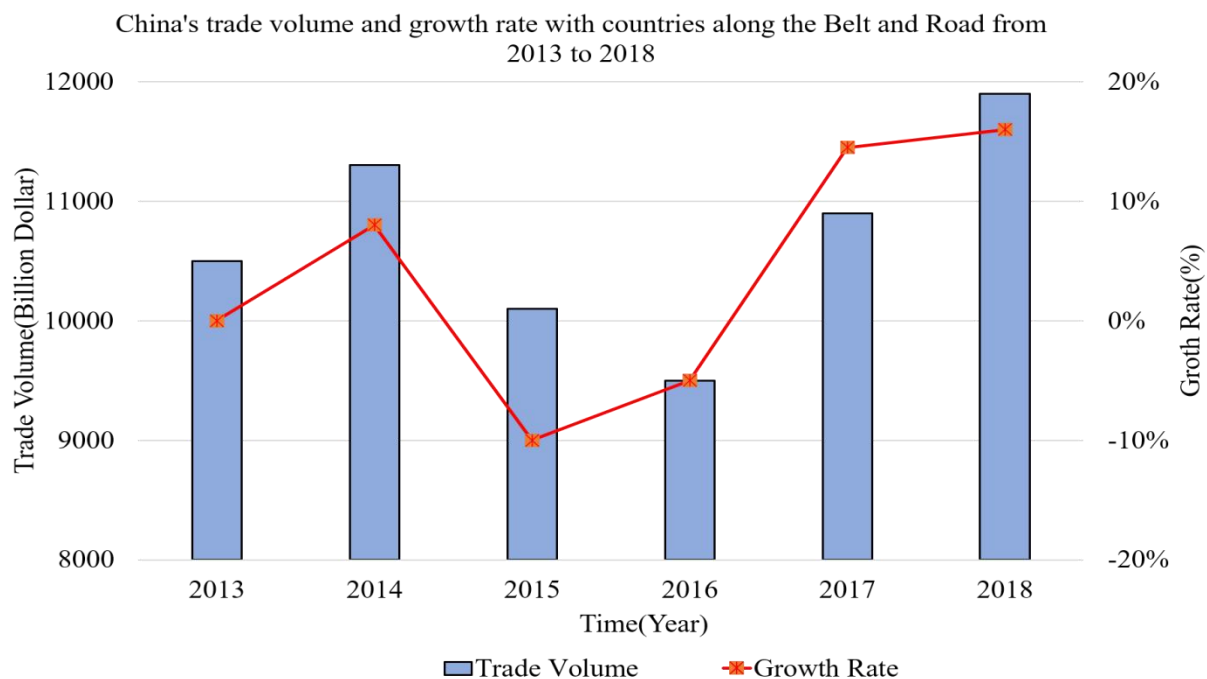


Figure 1. China's Trade Volume and Growth Rate with Countries Along the Belt and Road from 2013 to 2018

The environment of countries along the Silk Road Economic Belt is relatively complex, with significant differences in their political, economic, social, and cultural institutional environments (Tracy, Shvarts, Simonov, & Babenko, 2017). In addition, uncertainties such as terrorism and crime often occur (Sykes, Shaw, & Webb, 2023). The diversity and uncertainty of this environment bring some challenges to the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt (Liu, Liang, Lim, Long, & Shi, 2022). As one of the main advocates, China's governance policies in its border areas are particularly important (Zeng, Stevens, & Chen, 2017). Border areas often involve a multi-ethnic and multicultural social structure and cross-border ethnic issues may be manifested in Cultural conflict, social instability, and other forms in these areas (Zhang, & Guia, 2022). There are over 30 cross-border ethnic groups among China's 56 ethnic groups, located at important ports of the "Silk Road Economic Belt" (Pantucci & Lain, 2017). The main ethnic groups are distributed as shown in Figure 2. The countries along the Silk Road Economic Belt exhibit a complex environment marked by significant differences in political, economic, social, and cultural systems. Uncertainties such as terrorism and crime often occur within these nations. The diversity and

This map illustrates the linguistic and ethnic diversity of China. The most prominent language family is Mandarin, which covers a vast area in the north and east. Other major groups include the Tibetans in the southwest, the Mongolians in the north, and the Uyghurs in the northwest. The map also shows a high density of smaller ethnic groups in the southern and southwestern regions, including the Zhuang, Han, and various Hmongic and Tai groups. The color-coding helps to visualize the geographical concentration of each group.

With a civilization spanning 5000 years, China's history offers a unique lens through which to observe the shifts in its border governance models. This article undertakes a comprehensive analysis of the historical trajectory of border governance policies along the Silk Road, spanning various eras. By scrutinizing the strengths and weaknesses of these policies and elucidating the corresponding transformations in border governance models, the aim is to distill valuable historical insights. In addition, this study addresses a notable research gap. While previous research has explored the Silk Road and border governance individually, there is a conspicuous absence of comprehensive analysis that spans the entirety of Silk Road border governance policies. This research vacuum underscores the need for an integrated examination of the historical experiences in this domain. Ultimately, the article endeavors to leverage historical insights on border governance to assess its contemporary relevance. Drawing from the lessons of history, it will analyze border governance policies within the context of cross-border ethnic issues as part of the "Silk Road Economic Belt." This effort not only bridges existing research gaps but also provides valuable insights for guiding current policy formulation and practice.

THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE SILK ROAD ECONOMIC BELT

The Formation and Development of the Ancient Silk Road

The Silk Road encompasses both the overland and maritime routes. The term "Silk Road" gained prominence thanks to the efforts of German scholars Ferdinand von Richthofen and Albert Herrmann (Jacobs, 2020). In 1877, German geographer and geologist Ferdinand von Richthofen, as shown in Figure 3, initially coined the term "Silk Road" when referring to the historical trade route connecting China, Hezuo, and India from 114 BC to 127 AD. Before the era of reform and opening up, Chinese scholars predominantly referred to the Silk Road as "Sino-Western Communication." However, since the 1980s, the term "Silk Road" has been widely adopted by domestic scholars and has become the established term in China. The overland Silk Road, originating from Chang'an, the ancient Chinese capital, and extending to Rome, facilitated the convergence of Eastern and Western civilizations across Asia and Europe. Please refer to Figure 4 for the route of the Silk Road.



Figure 3. Ferdinand von Richthofen's Book 'China'

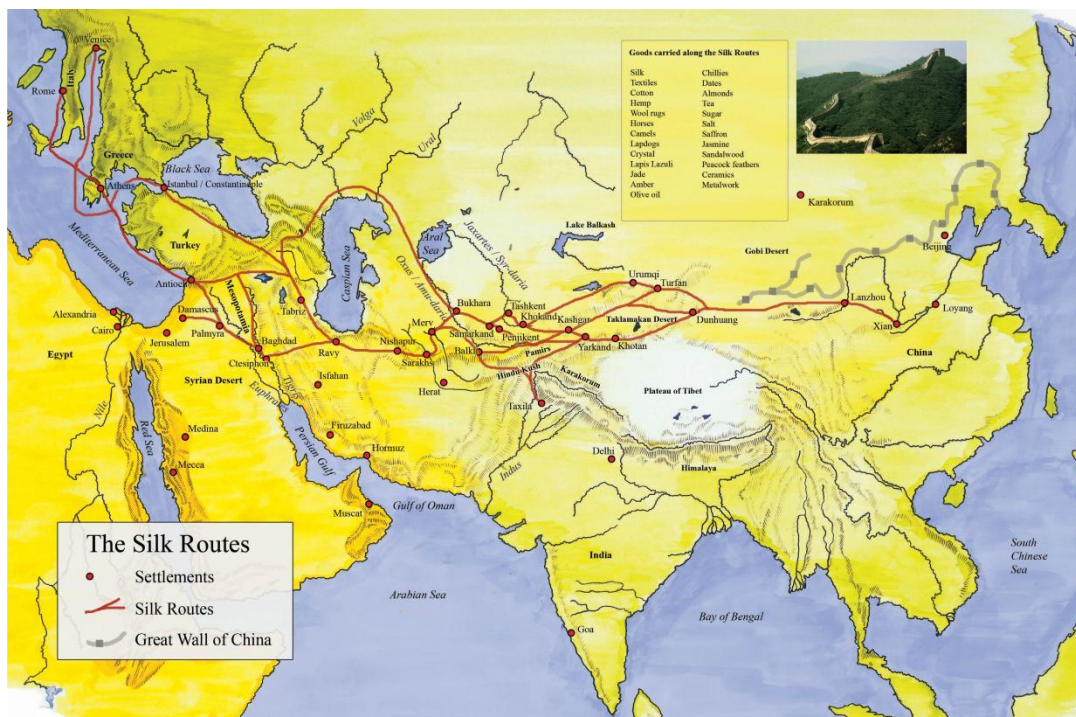


Figure 4. Silk Road Map

During the Western Han Dynasty, a period marked by national unity and a policy of light corvée and taxes implemented by successive emperors, the empire's strength was substantial, especially during the reign of Emperor Wu of Han. However, persistent incursions by the northern nomadic Huns led Emperor Wu of Han to dispatch envoys to Dariuzhi to establish connections and coordinate efforts to fend off the Huns from the east to the west. Zhang Qian's decade-long journey and diplomatic missions to various Western Regions countries yielded a wealth of information. Subsequently, the Western Han Dynasty established the Protectorate of the

Western Regions to strengthen ties with Western Regions nations, ushering in a prosperous era for the Silk Road and its official opening. In the coastal regions, a trade network, connected by ceramics, emerged along the South Pacific coast and its islands prior to the Qin Dynasty. With the unification of China under Qin Shi Huang, the Lingnan region experienced rapid development, particularly in shipbuilding technology, which further facilitated overseas trade. Emperor Wu of Han expanded the sea route, leading to the rise of the "Maritime Silk Road." The Silk Road during the Western Han Dynasty, spearheaded and actively promoted by Emperor Wu of Han, played a pivotal role in enhancing political, economic, and cultural exchanges between the East and the West. This formalized and developed the Silk Road, reflecting the society's keen interest in foreign interactions, ultimately promoting societal development during that period and exerting a significant influence on China's future.

The Socioeconomic and Cultural Influence of the Silk Road

The Silk Road, an ancient trade route connecting East and West, has made a profound impact on the economy and cultural exchange (Winter, 2021). Economically, it fostered complex trade networks, enabling the exchange of goods and market integration. Culturally, it facilitated the sharing of knowledge, artistic expression, and religious traditions among diverse civilizations. economically, the Silk Road played a pivotal role in linking trade networks between the East and West, facilitating the flow of Chinese products like silk and tea and other key commodities (Figure 5). This trade network promoted resource complementarity, market expansion, and regional prosperity, contributing to the industrial division of labor and global economic integration during that era.

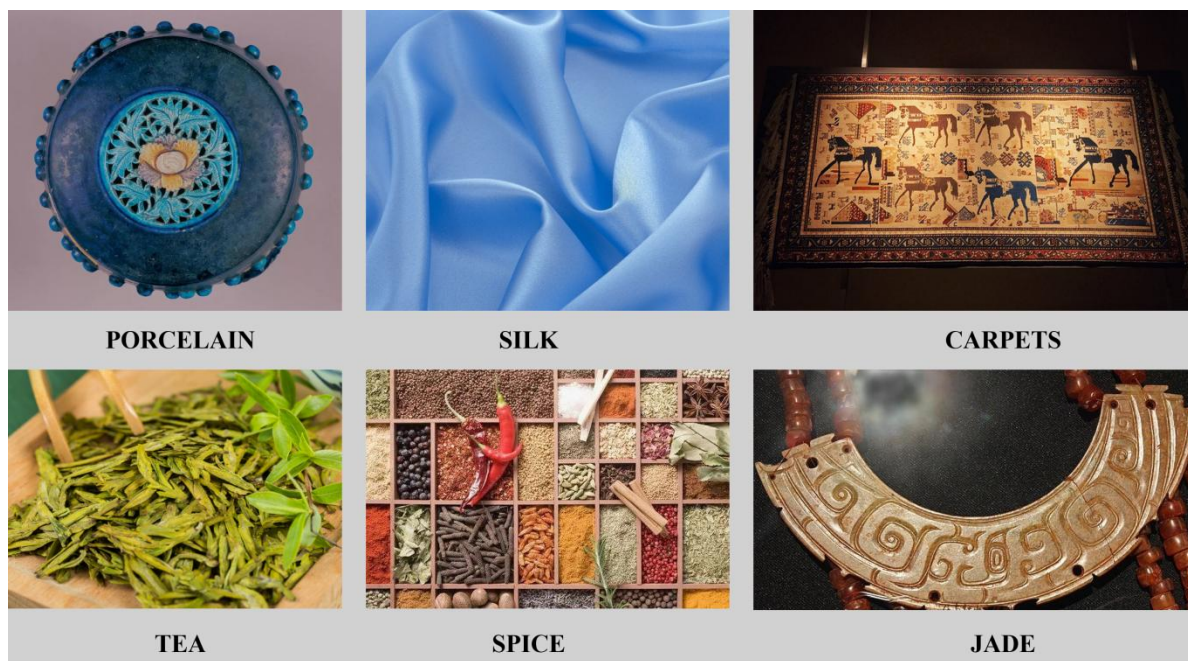


Figure 5. Silk Road Trading Commodities

The Silk Road served as a vital conduit for cultural exchange among different civilizations, fostering deep interactions in language, religion, philosophy, and more. Religions like Buddhism and Islam spread along the Silk Road, promoting the inheritance and integration of religious culture. Additionally, artistic, literary, and technological knowledge was transmitted through trade, enriching the cultural aspects of various civilizations. This cultural exchange injected new ideas and creativity into civilizations at the time, positively influencing the progress of human civilization.

In conclusion, the economic and cultural impact of the Silk Road was a mutually reinforcing process. Its trade network promoted economic prosperity and cooperation, simultaneously facilitating cultural exchange and knowledge transmission. This enduring influence remains relevant today, offering valuable insights into the evolution of human history and civilization.

The Disruption and Reopening of the Silk Road: The Modern Historical Context

The Silk Road, facilitating the exchange of ancient Eastern and Western civilizations, has experienced a complex history of interruption and revival influenced by international politics, economics, and technology (Millward, 2013). The modern interruption of the Silk Road can be traced back to internal political instability and international conflicts from the 19th to the early 20th century, including the Opium Wars and the Eight-Nation Alliance invasion (Figure 6). These events disrupted both domestic and international trade along the Silk Road.

Western-controlled maritime trade routes further strained its operation.

However, as global geopolitics shifted and domestic reforms gained momentum, modern China gradually emerged from this era of instability, setting the stage for the Silk Road's revitalization. Notably, China's policy of reform and opening up in 1978 marked the revival of the Silk Road, with active engagement in global economic cooperation and the reopening of trade routes. The Belt and Road Initiative, initiated in the early 21st century, aims to reconstruct economic ties and cultural exchanges along the Silk Road, propelling this historic route to new horizons. Additionally, technological advancements have played a crucial role in both the interruption and resurgence of the Silk Road.



Figure 6. The Opium War and The Great Powers Divide China

The Silk Road's interruption and revival reflect modern international political, economic, and technological changes. Across different historical periods, it has been influenced by various internal and external factors, displaying a history of twists and turns. This historical experience holds valuable lessons for understanding regional cooperation and development in the era of globalization.

EVOLUTION OF CHINA'S BORDER GOVERNANCE POLICIES

The Characteristics and Influence of Border Governance Policies in the Qing Dynasty

During the Qing Dynasty, the rulers refined and elevated the feudal autocracy centralization system, with a focus on various aspects of border governance, as seen in Figure 7. The political administration utilized the Lifan Yuan institution, which was responsible for border affairs. They also continued the traditional practice of subjugating upper-class ethnic minorities in border areas through measures like enfeoffment and intermarriage systems. In terms of religion, Lamaism played a role in spiritual governance. Economic strategies included farmland reclamation in Xinjiang and land reclamation in the southwest region.

These measures strengthened the Qing government's control over border regions and fostered relationships between the mainland, border areas, and upper-class ethnic minorities. They also contributed to the development of border regions and defense infrastructure. However, it's essential to note that these policies primarily served to

maintain the Qing rulers' authority and the Manchu aristocracy's control over China, rather than prioritizing the broader population's interests. The border policies seldom improved the conditions of the lower classes, even when they submitted to Qing rule. In summary, the study of Qing Dynasty and pre-Qing border policies offers valuable insights for shaping contemporary border policies.

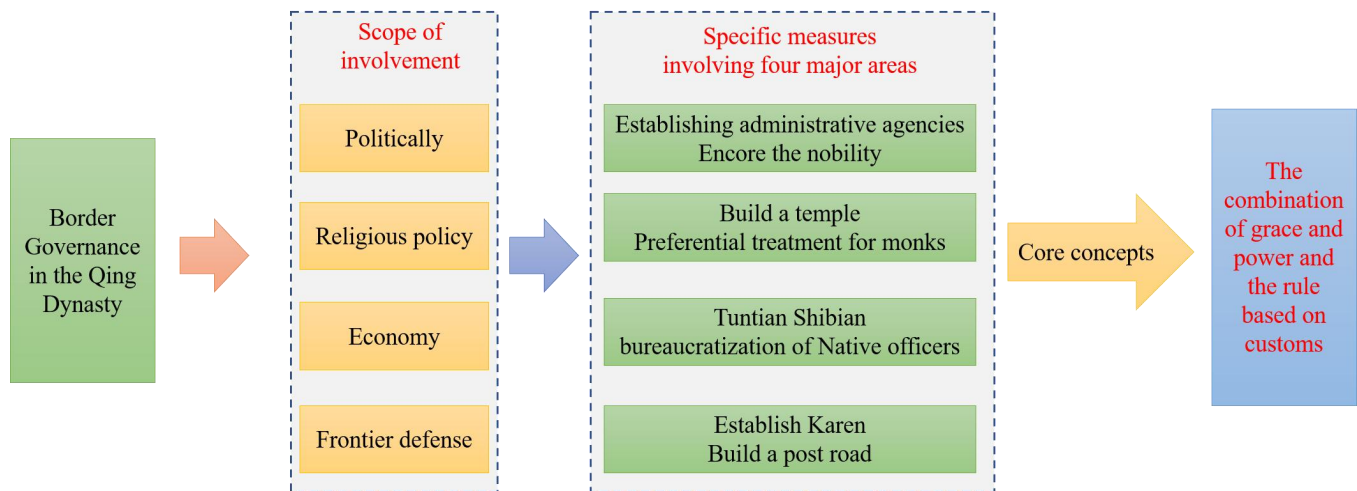


Figure 7. The Border Governance Policy of the Qing Government

Attitude and Policy Tone Towards Border Issues During the Republic of China Period

During the Republic of China, two prominent periods in politics were marked by the Beiyang government in Beijing and the Nationalist government in Nanjing, each with distinct perspectives on border governance. The Beiyang government's approach was rooted in maintaining the Qing Dynasty's border structure and order. This policy was influenced not only by the government's political background but also by the ongoing regionalism (Federalism) debate. Challenges in both local and national governance led to a more hands-off approach to border governance, continuing the internal political and social structures of border regions since the Qing Dynasty's end. While these two political systems had some similarities, they were shaped by different geopolitical environments and positions.

With the establishment of the Nationalist government in Nanjing, through the military activities with the Northern Expedition as the core and the operation of power politics, the Centralisation discourse held by the Kuomintang replaced the Federalism discourse that shrouded in the mainland provinces during the Beiyang period. This substitution and transformation eliminated the local crisis faced by the Beiyang government at the level of national governance from the discourse level. There is no powerful challenging discourse at the level of local governance, which makes it possible to establish a frontier governance concept dominated by the reconstruction of the new order of the nation-state. However, due to the existence of local power groups within the Kuomintang, at the specific operational level, the Nationalist government of Nanjing was still struggling to promote local governance, which also affected its border governance ability and strength.

Overall, the attitude and policy adjustments towards border issues during the Republic of China period were influenced by various factors, including domestic politics, international patterns, and ethnic relations. The handling of border issues by the Republic of China's government presents complexity and diversity, with both adhering to the position of territorial sovereignty and making compromises on some issues.

Border Policy Transformation after the Establishment of China

According to the phased goals of the socialist modernization construction of the People's Republic of China, the border governance policies are divided into three stages: the early stage of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the period of reform and opening up, and the new era. These three stages mainly dynamically adjust the phased tasks and goals in the process of socialist modernization in China, forming special policies for border governance.

During the initial stages following the establishment of the People's Republic of China, a policy of equality among all ethnic groups was implemented, accompanied by a strategy of unity and mutual assistance, with specific measures outlined in Figure 8. To bridge divides among the various ethnic communities, the government dispatched ethnic visitation teams, delegations, and condolence missions to regions inhabited by different ethnic groups, such as the Southwest, Central-South, Northwest, Inner Mongolia, and Northeast. The purpose was to

disseminate the party's national policies, enhance awareness and comprehension of the new China among minority ethnicities in border regions, eliminate ethnic discrimination thoroughly, and achieve ethnic parity.

Subsequently, substantial efforts were invested in the cultivation of a significant number of minority ethnic cadres. Specialized training programs or schools for minority ethnic cadres were established. Furthermore, the framework of regional ethnic autonomy was implemented, thereby empowering each minority ethnic group to take charge of their affairs. Lastly, policies were introduced to create scripts and written languages for ethnic groups lacking a written tradition. The "Common Program" articulated the principle that "all minority ethnic groups have the freedom to develop their languages and scripts, and to preserve or reform their customs, habits, and religious beliefs".

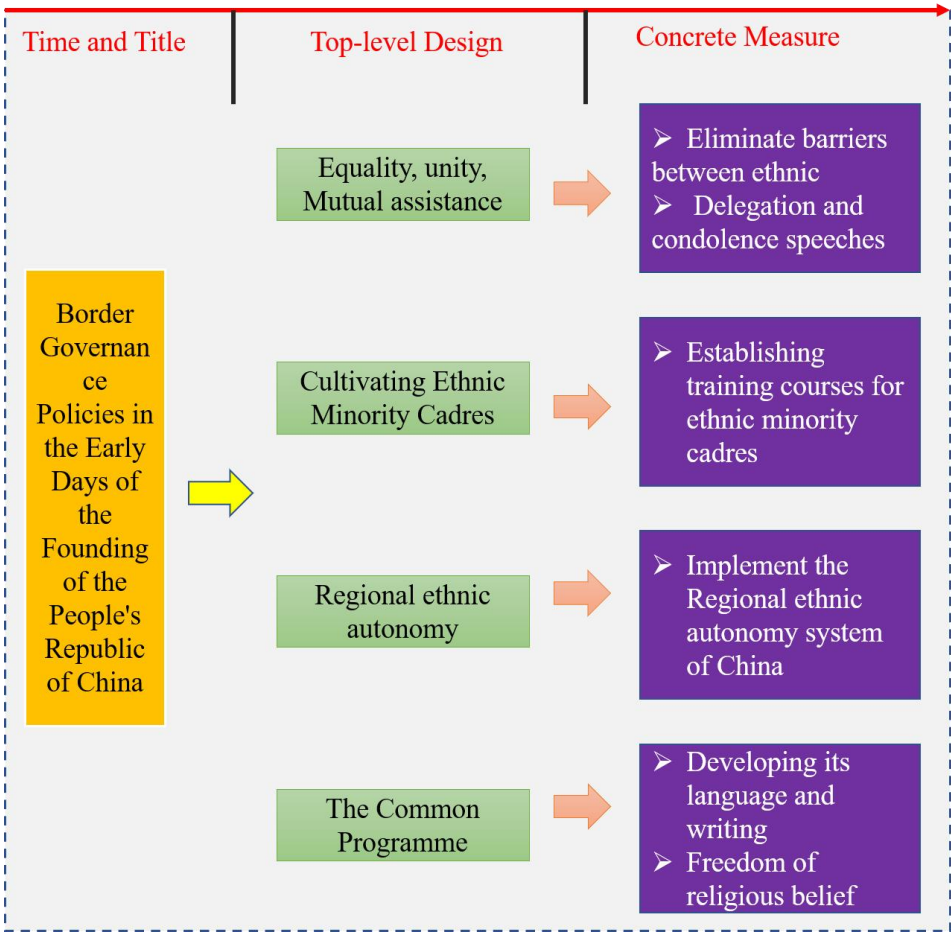


Figure 8. Strategies for Border Governance in the Early Stage of the Founding of the People's Republic of China

Since the reform and opening up, a border governance policy centered on "economic development" has been implemented. Focusing on economic construction, China has constantly explored and developed the governance of border ethnic areas, including the basic guarantee of the production and life of border ethnic minorities, adhering to and improving the Regional ethnic autonomy system of China, carrying out counterpart support and economic and technological cooperation, intellectual border support, actions to revitalize the border and enrich the people, east-west cooperation in poverty alleviation, and rural revitalization strategies. Overall, the border governance policies of reform and opening up have achieved the improvement of the living standards of ethnic minority people on the border, the consolidation of border defense, and the prosperity and progress of society.

In the new era, border governance policies have been inherited and innovatively developed. Actively promote theoretical innovation and practical exploration in the construction of ecological civilization, and build a beautiful China. Secondly, implement the rural revitalization strategy and build beautiful villages. In 2018, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the "Strategic Plan for Rural Revitalization", which pointed out the goal of focusing on the precise development of key areas, ethnic minority areas, border areas, and concentrated and contiguous poverty-stricken areas, that is, making border ethnic areas an important area for rural revitalization, and building modern rural areas in border ethnic areas. It is proposed to improve the conditions of rural transportation and logistics facilities and increase support for railway public

welfare transportation in border and impoverished areas. Finally, we will support the development and opening up of key areas along the border, and build a prosperous and stable national border. The key areas mainly focus on "deeply promoting the action of prospering the border and enriching the people, realizing the stability, security, and prosperity of the border", "reforming the system and mechanism, promoting the facilitation of factor flow", and doing a good job in the work of border ethnic areas for the implementation of the "the Belt and Road" initiative and serving the overall reform and development of the country.

CROSS-BORDER ETHNIC ISSUES IN CHINA UNDER THE BACKGROUND OF THE SILK ROAD ECONOMIC BELT

Definition and Classification of Cross-Border Ethnic Issues

Stalin believed that a nation is a stable community formed by people in history, with a common language, common region, common economic life, and common psychological qualities manifested in a common culture (Petrenko, 2015; Smith, 2013). In the process of theoretical debate and ethnic identification in China, the party, government, and academia have gradually reached a Chinese interpretation and application of Stalin's ethnic definition, which is different from the Soviet Union. The specific explanation is shown in Figure 9.

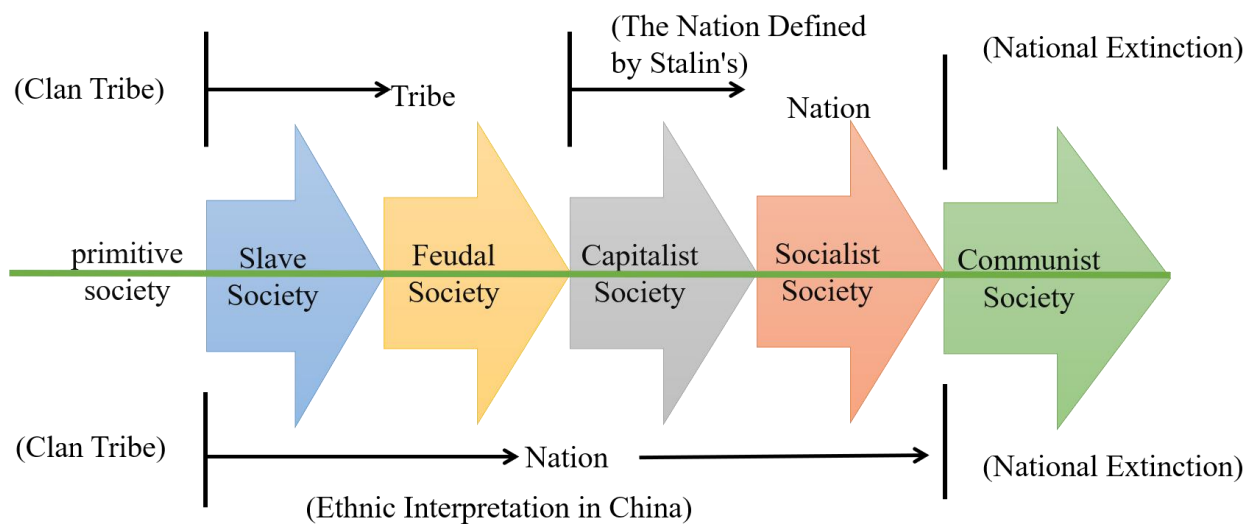


Figure 9. Schematic Diagram of China's Reinterpretation of Stalin's Ethnic Definition

In the context of the Silk Road, an understanding of Chinese ethnic groups theory serves as a valuable foundation for comprehending the dynamics of cross-border ethnic groups. Cross-border ethnic groups are defined as ethnic communities residing in the border regions of two or more different countries, often resulting from national boundaries' partition. These communities share various social relationships, such as familial ties and marital connections, as well as similarities in language, religious beliefs, and engagement in similar traditional economic activities. These aspects create strong interconnections among cross-border ethnic groups (Feagin, 2020; Lewis, 2017). Since the launch of the "Belt and Road" initiative in 2013, China has pursued diverse cooperation initiatives with neighboring countries along the route, with "people-to-people connectivity" emerging as a crucial component. The matter of cross-border ethnic groups assumes a significant role in this context, as it can impact the success or failure of these cooperation efforts (Castles, 2019; Scott, 2015). Cross-border ethnic groups represent a geopolitical phenomenon. In the border regions between China and its land border neighbors, there are 31 distinct cross-border ethnic groups. While they exhibit variations in language, script, religion, and other aspects, a degree of kinship ties them together. The linguistic kinship among these groups plays a pivotal role in maintaining cohesion and connections among cross-border ethnic groups. For instance, shared language facilitates communication and collaboration, enabling these communities to overcome the challenges posed by national borders and fostering a sense of unity that transcends geographical divisions, Figure 10 provides a visual representation of this linguistic kinship. This linguistic connection not only reflects their historical ties but also plays a vital role in the success of various cooperative efforts along the Silk Road, where cross-border ethnic groups play an integral role in facilitating people-to-people connectivity and cross-border initiatives.

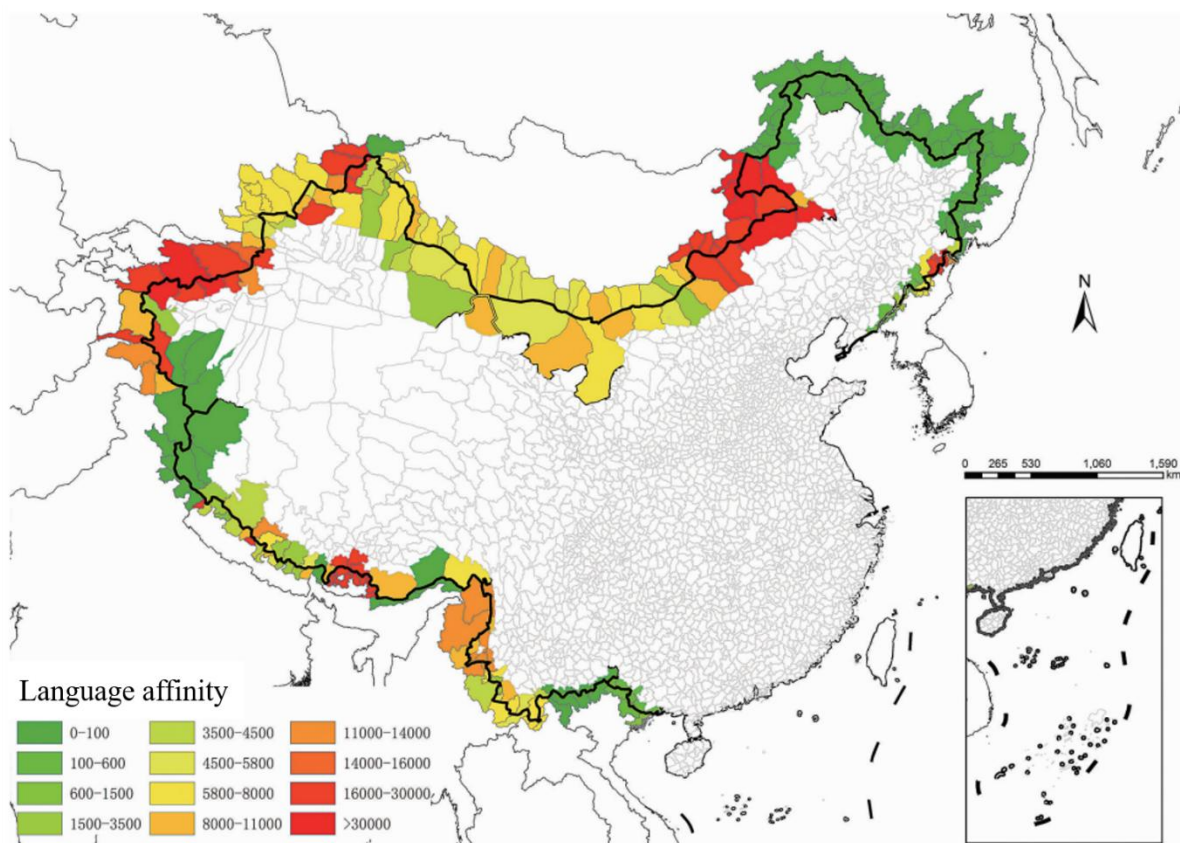


Figure 10. Cross-border Ethnic Language Affinity

Cross-Border Ethnic Issues in China under the Background of the Silk Road Economic Belt

Cross-border ethnic issues can be categorized into broader and narrower contexts. The cross-border ethnic problem in a narrow sense refers to the opposing forces between cross-border ethnic cohesion and national unity, which generate conflicts and contradictions. In a broader sense, cross-border ethnic issues encompass all the challenges faced by cross-border ethnic groups in their pursuit of self-development. It goes beyond cross-border ethnic security issues to include cross-border ethnic development and identity issues. It can be asserted that cross-border ethnic security, development, and identity issues encompass virtually all challenges encountered by our country's cross-border ethnic groups throughout their developmental trajectory. As a result, based on the perspective of cross-border ethnic self-development, cross-border ethnic groups can be categorized into non-traditional security issues, development issues, and identity issues. These three tiers of distinct issues encapsulate the significant challenges currently confronting our country's cross-border ethnic groups within the framework of the "Silk Road Economic Belt" initiative.

Simultaneously, these three major issues are not mutually exclusive; rather, they maintain intricate interconnections. It can be contended that analyzing the triad of cross-border ethnic issues and their interplay serves as a pivotal key to gaining profound insights into cross-border ethnic dilemmas. Such analysis stands as a theoretical prerequisite for resolving cross-border ethnic issues and facilitating the realization of cross-border ethnic development, especially within the context of the "Silk Road Economic Belt" construction.

The "Silk Road Economic Belt" is composed of the Northern Route, Central Route, and Southern Route, connecting the two major global economic spheres: it extends eastward into the Asia-Pacific economic region and westward into the European economic sphere. It is hailed as the world's longest and most promising economic corridor. However, the "Silk Road Economic Belt" has encountered challenges related to religious extremism, international terrorism, and pan-nationalism, particularly affecting the cross-border ethnic communities situated in China's border regions. As the initiative of the "Silk Road Economic Belt" advances, these three forces have exerted adverse influences on these communities.

Foremost, this extensive economic corridor has become a hotspot for religious extremism, serving as a breeding ground for terrorism that poses a long-term threat to social stability in the region. Simultaneously, the regions along the "Silk Road Economic Belt" are also susceptible to the impact of radical nationalism. Some cross-border ethnic groups, influenced by extremist nationalism, have been swayed by extremist elements, leading to

demands for ethnic unification and territorial integration. In pursuit of these objectives, some factions have resorted to the fervor of religious beliefs, and even employed terrorist tactics to advance their political goals. Consequently, this region has been subject to ongoing political volatility.

The issue of cross-border ethnic communities is interlinked with religious extremism and international terrorism. Nevertheless, with robust anti-terrorism and stability maintenance efforts nationwide, through stringent measures against separatist activities, the vigorous development of the economies in ethnic regions, and improvements in the living conditions of ethnic populations, substantial progress has been made. Since the inception of the "Silk Road Economic Belt" initiative, there have been no significant incidents of terrorism within China's borders. Overseas "East Turkestan" separatist elements have been marginalized and weakened through joint international actions, and the influence of separatist forces has been curtailed. Consequently, the national identity of cross-border ethnic communities in China has generally strengthened, and the overall security situation has shown signs of mitigation.

Development challenges constitute a paramount concern for China's cross-border ethnic communities. In the context of the era, although certain global regions still grapple with conflicts and upheaval, the themes of peace and development continue to prevail. Pursuing development has become a shared aspiration among diverse ethnic groups worldwide. Since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, our nation has shifted its focus toward economic development. In alignment with the prevailing developmental trends of the nation, China's cross-border ethnic communities have undergone profound transformations, achieving remarkable leaps in development. However, development can be distinguished between absolute and relative dimensions. In the longitudinal course of history, significant absolute advancements have been made by China's cross-border ethnic groups. Nevertheless, when evaluated from a lateral regional perspective, the developmental progress of cross-border ethnic communities in China's western regions remains considerably limited. In comparison with the central and eastern regions, these discrepancies have even been exacerbated.

In the contemporary context characterized by the frequent and extensive flow of information and population movement, substantial developmental disparities could lead to internal imbalances within minority ethnic groups. Under the influence and manipulation of separatist elements and foreign anti-China forces, certain ethnic populations might become social factors posing threats to national unity, ethnic solidarity, and social stability. Consequently, this could give rise to a series of severe cross-border ethnic security issues. The advancement of the "Silk Road Economic Belt" initiative has further accentuated the developmental predicaments of China's cross-border ethnic communities.

As the "Silk Road Economic Belt" initiative advances, cross-border ethnic groups are transitioning from the periphery to the center stage, assuming significant roles in international interactions. Concurrently, as exchanges and interactions intensify between nations, regions, and ethnicities, cross-border ethnic communities are increasingly influenced by diverse ideologies, religions, and civilizations from abroad. This heightened exposure contributes to a growing complexity in the issue of ethnic identity, with implications for national identity, posing various challenges. Particularly within the context of the progressing "Silk Road Economic Belt" initiative, the national identity awareness of China's cross-border ethnic groups has been subject to the influence of pan-nationalist sentiments and antagonistic forces from Western countries.

In summary, against the backdrop of the "Silk Road Economic Belt" initiative, cross-border ethnic security concerns are gradually alleviating, while developmental issues are becoming more pronounced. Meanwhile, the matter of cross-border ethnic identity is growing increasingly intricate.

The Chinese Government's Strategies for Cross-Border Ethnic Issues

Actively promote theoretical innovation and practical exploration in the construction of ecological civilization, and build a beautiful China. In response to the three major cross-border ethnic issues in China under the background of the Silk Road Economic Belt, the response strategies mainly include four main contents. Firstly, adhere to the principle of governing cross-border ethnic issues and transform governance thinking. Against the backdrop of the promotion of the "Silk Road Economic Belt" initiative, China's cross-border ethnic issues are becoming increasingly complex. To coordinate the governance of cross-border ethnic issues and promote the construction of the "Silk Road Economic Belt", it is necessary to clarify China's principles for handling cross-border ethnic issues and adhere to these principles.

Secondly, promote the economic development of cross-border ethnic areas and expand opening up to the outside world. The most important task for cross-border ethnic groups in China is to achieve rapid economic development. Only with high-level economic development can other aspects of development have a solid material foundation and achieve the goal of comprehensive development. We need to accelerate the economic development

of cross-border ethnic areas, solidly promote various ethnic support policies, and promote a new pattern of cross-border ethnic opening up to the outside world. Secondly, we need to steadily promote the construction of the "economic belt", achieve comprehensive development in cross-border ethnic areas, and enhance the "happiness" of cross-border ethnic groups.

Thirdly, enhancing cross-border ethnic national identity serves to solidify the collective consciousness of the Chinese nation. Cross-border ethnic identity represents a stable and intrinsic cognitive framework, predominantly rooted in cultural affiliation. Conversely, cross-border ethnic national identity constitutes an externally constructed cognitive framework, primarily entailing political allegiance. When ethnic identity transcends its cultural origins to encompass the political sphere, conflicts and contradictions may arise between ethnic identity and national identity, leading to a potential decline in cross-border ethnic national identity. The issue of cross-border ethnic national identity delves into the realm of ideological thought, embodying deep-seated complexities. If left unresolved over an extended period, this matter could manifest in tangible behaviors and political practices among cross-border ethnic communities, potentially even instigating cross-border ethnic divisions.

Fourthly, safeguarding security and stability in cross-border ethnic regions while deepening international cooperation is imperative. Cross-border ethnic communities often inhabit territories straddling two or more neighboring countries and maintain intricate ties with ethnically kindred populations in adjacent nations, thus exhibiting distinct international characteristics. When cross-border ethnic issues arise within a nation, they are frequently intertwined with the influence of kindred ethnic groups beyond its borders. These external elements exert varying degrees of impact on the trajectory of cross-border ethnic matters.

In short, the three major issues of cross-border ethnic security, development, and identity are interrelated and mutually influencing, forming a unified whole. To solve the problem of cross-border ethnic groups, we must organically unify these three, promote them in coordination, and comprehensively manage them, to truly solve the problem of cross-border ethnic groups.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has examined the border governance policies within the historical evolution of the Silk Road Economic Belt, using the issue of cross-border ethnic groups in China as a focal point to explore the underlying mechanisms and impacts of policy formulation and adjustment. Firstly, over different historical periods, the Chinese government's approach to cross-border ethnic issues has evolved, displaying diversity. Early policies emphasized centralization and the pursuit of stability and integration in border regions. However, China has transitioned towards policies promoting local autonomy and ethnic equality, forming a policy framework for border autonomy. In contemporary times, China promotes multiculturalism and regional peace and cooperation. Secondly, the study highlights the complexity and diversity of border governance policies in the Silk Road Economic Belt region, influenced by various ethnic, cultural, and religious factors. These policies necessitate adaptation and flexible adjustment to local conditions, considering the interests of all stakeholders, regional characteristics, and the international environment to maintain harmony and stability in border areas. Lastly, this article explores the significance of the Silk Road Economic Belt's development in terms of economic growth, security, and identity. In summary, our investigation into cross-border ethnic issues in China serves as an example to delve into the historical evolution of border governance policies in the Silk Road Economic Belt region. The research results not only offer a novel perspective for comprehending governance models in historical contexts but also provide valuable insights for future policy formulation and implementation. In the globalized world, this study holds relevance in promoting peace, stability, and development within the Silk Road Economic Belt region and serves as a reference for policy research in other regions.

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