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## THE PARADIGMS OF CHINESE ETHNIC POLITICS

The nature of the interethnic relationships is determined by the unwritten principle according to which they present themselves as a zero-sum operation, where the profit of one party will necessarily be associated with loss for the opposite side of the equation. This problem is the core of ethnopolitics and leads to studies on the relationship between ethnic and political systems<sup>1</sup>. The theory of ethnopolitics was first laid out in the critical thought of Roland Breton. He wrote that it was necessitated by the need to “exorcise (...) a demon that was invented as ethnicity”<sup>2</sup>. Study of ethnicity helped to explain the object of its interest, but only ethnopolitics enabled the development of diagnostic tools able to predict what the future will bring for the multicultural world.

Those ethnic communities that are devoid of their own state institutions and function within the multi-ethnic state are forced to adopt a minority status, but the political reality of a minority is always defective, as relations between a minority and a majority are inherently asymmetrical. The state creates a legal and political order, but in a cultural sense its laws are discriminatory towards minorities. The political practice which the state applies to ethnic and national minorities is what is called ethnic politics.

In a sense, the emergence of ethnic politics threatens the survival of the modernist nations that may soon be supplanted by the paradigm of multiculturalism<sup>3</sup>. Nationalisms emerged in order to ensure consistency of modern industrialized societies. In future ethnic identity may be the only integrating force in the emerging post-modern societies. Postmodernism means a weakening of traditional social identities to promote diversity. Class solidarity and well-

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<sup>1</sup> W. Żelazny, *Etniczność. Ład, konflikt, sprawiedliwość*, Poznań 2004, s. 174.

<sup>2</sup> R. Breton, *L'Ethnopolitique*, PUF, Paris 1995, s. 121.

<sup>3</sup> A. Haywood, *Politologia*, Warszawa 2006, s. 214.

established political ties are breaking down in the face of increased social mobility and market individualism. Globalization has debilitated the ability of the nation-state to create a stable identity in the spheres of culture, politics and economics. Much evidence suggests that the ethnic loyalty will supersede the national loyalty, as the primary source of integration.

Ethnic politics should be understood as the realisation of largely competitive ethnic relations occurring in a multinational state. The concept of ethnic relations conceals two types of relationships. The first type is a relationship between the dominant group and minorities. One can apply it to a multi-ethnic state policy which represents the interests of the majority and national or/and ethnic minorities residing in that state, or to the policy of the minorities towards the state. Relations of the second type are the relationships between the minority groups themselves.

Ethnic relations always assume the character of a minority in the sense that sometimes minorities are their subject, and sometimes their object. Janusz Mucha defines a minority group by its opposition to the majority, which also must be considered in terms of an ethnic community<sup>4</sup>. In that view, by a term *majority* he means one ethnic group that dominates on a multi-ethnic territory. Therefore, by *ethnic minorities* Janusz Mucha understands other ethnic groups of the society: “they have less impact on what is considered to be a new nationwide culture, the institutions and political structures of the state”<sup>5</sup>. Defined in such a way, minorities see that they are treated differently and unequally, and thus consider themselves as objects of collective discrimination by the dominant group.

The process of mutual adjustment of ethnic groups in the multi-ethnic system is on principle considered to be asymmetric due to structural differences between the dominant group and the minorities.

#### ETHNIC MINORITIES IN CHINA

China is among the most diverse of ethnic and nationality-based countries in the world. Currently, its central government acknowledges 56 officially recognized nationalities called *minzu* that compose the socialist society of China. Among them the most numerous are the Han, who are ethnic Chinese. They are also the structurally dominant nationality which is the most mobile and the most easily adapting to social changes. The other nationalities correspond to *shao-shu minzu*, translated both as national minorities or ethnic minorities. In fact, their number is a deliberately underestimated figure owing to pragmatic political reasons. The originally

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<sup>4</sup> J. Mucha, *Oblicza etniczności. Studia teoretyczne i empiryczne*, Kraków 2005.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, s. 33.

adopted state guidelines assumed that all minorities would be granted their own autonomous territorial unit (or several such units) and the right to representation in the national parliament. By combining ethnoses that were often related to one other the process of recognition of minorities was launched and it led to the creation of a list of national groups. However, there are far more minorities than officially reported. At present, about 15 different ethnic communities seek to be recognized by the Chinese authorities as one of the official minorities<sup>6</sup>.

As statistics demonstrates, in the mid-2000's Chinese minorities represented just over 9.4 percent of the total population, which in absolute numbers is slightly more than 123.3 million people<sup>7</sup>. The official size of the minority population is sometimes questioned, as according to many Chinese commentators the numbers included in the statistics are often overstated. There is no indication that this is the result of deliberate government manipulation, because this criterion does not affect the image of China promoted internationally; neither does it play a great role in domestic politics<sup>8</sup>. Presumably the cause is the processes occurring at the basic level of the society, such as false ethnicity declarations by some respondents. The local authorities may also be interested in falsifying public records, as administrative units dominated by minor or economically weaker ethnic groups are more likely to obtain state subsidies for the development of such regions.

The term *ethnic minority* describes a community that cannot be characterised in the same ethnic or national categories as the majority of the population owing to a number of distinctive characteristics such as race, language, religion, customs, traditions, social organization etc. The multiplicity and variability of these ethnic characteristics leads to the emergence of many different types of minorities. The most common are: 1) indigenous groups and groups of immigrant origin, 2) ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, 3) territorial minorities, 4) groups of a specific socio-economic organization, 5) political minorities. The specificity of ethnic relations and ethnic politics in a multi-ethnic state depends largely on the mode of country organization. Thus, there are a) multinational states created in the process of emergence of several major nationalities with equivalent status; b) multi-ethnic states, whose borders have been arbitrarily set without considering any naturally occurring ethnic variations, c) multi-ethnic states created as a result of territorial expansion and conquest by the dominant national

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<sup>6</sup> C.X. George Wei, *Exploring nationalisms of China: themes and conflicts*, Westport 2002, s. 203.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 17 March 2006. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cept/chn/xwdt/t240927.htm> [June 19, 2007].

<sup>8</sup> S. Szykiewicz, *Mniejszości etniczne*, [w:] *Chiny: przemiany państwa i społeczeństwa w okresie reform 1978-2000*, red. Karin Tomala, Warszawa 2001, s. 355.

group d) multi-ethnic countries, where immigrants dominate over indigenous groups, and e) countries that have become multinational through the adaptation of immigrants.

Today's China is a multinational state formed in the course of centuries of territorial expansion of the Han people and the mixing of cultural influences of many ethnic groups. Among the Chinese minority groups there are both the indigenous ones and groups of immigrant origins. Moreover, there are also national and ethno-religious groups; territorial ethnic groups settled in strictly defined regions; spatially dispersed groups; borderline groups and the groups inhabiting enclaves within the Han communities<sup>9</sup>. They are characterized not only in the terms of different organization, but most of all by versatile levels of socioeconomic development.

#### POLITICAL STATUS OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE PRC

The diagnosis of the situation of ethnic and national minorities in China should start with a presentation on how they are defined by the Chinese authorities. It should be noted that a rigid definition does not exist. All ethnic groups living in the PRC which are not a part of the Han majority nationality are subsumed under the category of national minority. This category can be used to describe virtually every ethnic community, whose number is relatively small compared with the largest national group, and is clearly distinguishable against the background of the whole society and against the dominant Han people owing to its ethnic and cultural specificity. If we consider these characteristics as a definition, it must be admitted that it is rather broad and ambiguous, just like the notions which it describes. In Chinese political discussion on the problems of ethnicity or nationalities there is no deeper distinction between categories of people, nation, nationality or ethnos, as all are referred to with the use of the same term *minzu*. Scientific discourse is not particularly interested in making the relevant clarifications either.

Needless to say, multiplication of meanings causes serious problems with a strict definition of the used terms. Also, the criteria under which different nationalities were separated, are various and blurred, therefore the concepts of ethnic minorities and minority nationalities in China are used interchangeably and are treated as synonyms, which means that the same category is applied to all the minorities and the dominant majority. This leads to two main consequences: it suggests political equality of all nationalities, which means that the majority is not favored and minorities are not discriminated. On the other hand it implies the subordi-

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<sup>9</sup> T. Heberer, *China and its National Minorities. Autonomy or Assimilation?*, M.E. Sharpe, London 1989, s. 10.

nation of national groups towards state sovereignty that in theory (and only in theory) does not prefer any of them. The act of replacement of the widespread model that presupposes the existence of a state-nation and subordinated minorities with the concept of equal nationalities has deeper political causes. Nationalities will always be subordinated to a greater or lesser extent to a higher power, while the nations have (or at least can claim) the sovereign right to decide about their political future. Predominantly, nationalities obtain relative autonomy in administering their own ethnic territory which remains a part of the more inclusive state structures. The state guarantees their right to autonomy and allows them to use its strength. T. Heberer called this type of organization “the state of nationalities”<sup>10</sup>. In the “state of nationalities”, all forming nationalities are equal from a formal point of view. Therefore, they do not have the ground to question the integrity of the state.

#### “ORDERING NAMES”: CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

In the imperial China the boundaries between the minority nationalities and the dominant Han were set on the basis of ethno-cultural, ethno-linguistic or ethno-religious evidence. Anyone who functioned in a manner different from the Chinese way of life was undoubtedly regarded as a foreign, or at least an eccentric element and excluded from the social life. Ethnic groups residing on the territory of the state or on the incorporated lands were expected to assimilate themselves completely to the Chinese cultural value system.

In the republican period, especially during the government of the Kuomintang, issues of ethnic diversity have been brushed aside. In the current political discourse national minorities in the specific sense of the word do not exist. Problems of nationalities and the discussion about them have been resolved by the claim, that all ethnic groups are a part of the Chinese nation. That point of view has been most clearly expressed in the concept of Sun Yat-sen proclaiming a common racial origin of all Chinese ethnic groups that constitute a nation<sup>11</sup>. While Chinese nationalists have noticed the existence of ethnic groups, what is more, admitted that there are “non-Chinese” in China, they also argue that the prevalence of the Han population is so large, and the cultural assimilation of the non-Han population is sufficiently advanced so that China, in principle, is homogeneous in cultural or even racial terms. Sun Yat-sen rejected the objectively observable multi-ethnicity by introducing the ideological notion of *minzu* – Chinese peoples. This political stance was different, however, when China fell under the influence of the communists, who had to come into closer contact with minorities

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<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, s.12.

<sup>11</sup> Y. Sun, *The three people's principles*, Szanghai 1927.

in the Civil War period and during the so-called “Grand March”. Presumably it was merely a historical accident that the communists managed to read quite carefully the ethnic map of the country. Nevertheless, the question of nationality quickly found its way into propaganda. The Chinese communists promised to minorities, to whom in fact they owed their survival the right to self-determination, if they agreed to pay heed to the party interests.

The recognition of national minorities by the Chinese communist authorities began in 1950’s. There was no one precise conceptual apparatus to classify the variety of ethnic and national communities at different stages of development, and scholars adopted the objectivist paradigm corresponding to the Marxist-Leninist concept of the nation. According to it, the nation is identified by the means of the so-called objective criteria. In order to be recognized as a distinct nationality, a group had to demonstrate the possession of a common language, territory, economic organization and a shared “mental scheme”, i.e. cultural identity<sup>12</sup>. At the end of 1950’s some scholars boldly began to question the usefulness of the purely objectivist criteria in the Chinese conditions. The majority of experts were rather unanimous in the assertion that they did not necessarily work well for Chinese nationalities. To sum up the conclusions reached by the Chinese scholars, T. Heberer systematized them into several major contradictions between the definitions and the requirements of reality. What he considered essential were the lack of a distinct language, the lack of a compact territory, the lack of a common organization of economic life and, finally, for some minorities, the lack of a common cultural identity<sup>13</sup>.

Objectivist definition of a nation is entirely inadequate for the specific characteristics of national minorities in China. Nevertheless, its basic features are still regarded by the central government as relevant criteria for the classification of nationalities. According to the Chinese commentators linguistic, territorial or cultural considerations are important but not absolutely necessary: the ostensible paradox perfectly reflects the arbitrary and instrumental dimension of their evaluations, as the objectivity of ethnic markers is treated conventionally and rather freely. A nation can be equally well defined by the subjective factor which refers simply to the community of faith or belief or to the sense of being a nation. “Self-awareness” is the idea that the Chinese government readily uses to justify its decisions regarding the recognition of minorities and accordingly it assumes that two basic dimensions should be taken into considera-

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<sup>12</sup> D.C. Gladney, *Dialogic Ethnicity: The Making of a Muslim Nationality in China*, “Etudes Oriental” No. 13/14 (1994), s. 113-142.

<sup>13</sup> T. Heberer, op. cit.

tion: on the one hand, the assessment of a nationality in accordance to objective criteria and on the other hand, the intention expressed by the members of the ethnic community.

#### NEGOTIATING IDENTITY POLITICS

In identifying the minorities the Chinese state has imposed its own definition of what constitutes linguistic, territorial or cultural identities, paying no attention to the feelings of the concerned ethnic communities, and even without taking into account the actual appearance of the characteristics recognised as normative. The PRC authorities determine what they mean by cultural tradition, and have actually forced the minorities to respond to their demands by imposing on them the notion of their traditions and their own image of identity. This lead to the creation of often conflicting visions of identity that demand to be reconciled with socio-economic conditions and symbolic representation of the unitary state, whose nationalities form one political nation. Dru C. Gladney believes that the identity of Chinese ethnic minorities is the specific effect of constant negotiations between traditional order shared within the group and the changing sociopolitical context of the state<sup>14</sup>.

The discourse on ethnic identity consists of two layers of negotiated meanings. The first one involves the internal dialogue between the ethnic actors establishing among one other the sense and the significance of the traditional image of their collective past. The second layer assumes a dialectical reconciliation of the identity in a dialogue with those to whom community finds itself in opposition, i.e. with other ethnic groups or the state.

The most important issue for the cultural identity of the ethnos is its historical memory. Selective handling of images of the past allows the group to consolidate its auto-stereotype. It does not matter how that stereotype has been created, but it is important that once it has been articulated, it becomes a social fact. A multi-ethnic society is a conflict zone, in which contradictory internal and external stereotypes confront with each other. The specific dialogue between the two competing stereotypes begins the process of negotiating identity. In China, the role of the stereotype external to auto-stereotypes generated by the minorities is performed by the “stereotype of the Chinese unity”. This idea is expressed in the assertion that China's current shape is an extension of the old state and civilization. Not only the Han people have developed in it, but all minorities are perceived as parts of the state. Such statements have created a political demand to continue the “natural” unity.

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<sup>14</sup> D.C. Gladney, op. cit.

The traditional definition of China, as evidenced by Chih-Yu Shih, results to a lesser extent from the concept of territory than the concept of Chinese culture and the sense of chineseness<sup>15</sup>. Pre-modern China did not need to establish clear-cut territorial boundaries. Neither did it need clearly defined ethnic differences. The basis of the identity was a cultural concept of chineseness denoting participation in the achievements of its civilization and assimilation of its values, practices and norms. The notion of a “Chinese society” is presented here as more ancient than the notion of the Chinese state<sup>16</sup>. The modern Chinese state would insist on the demarcation of its territory and put even more effort on the insistence on the political unity of the nation, but by doing it compromised the moral principle of that unity. China has submitted its policy to two objectives: modernization and unification. The essence of this policy is to define China as a nation-state. In ethnicity it sees the potential forces disintegrating and weakening the unity of the state.

According to the modern assumptions, Chinese idea of the nation is inextricably linked to the concept of a territorially independent state. Loyalty to the state is synonymous with membership in the nation which ceased to be voluntary, however, and no longer relies on voluntary participation in culture. To avoid conflicts of minorities’ identity with the identity of the Han majority, the state negotiates a new Chinese identity. A strong sense of chineseness protects ethnic identification from dissolving in the ideosphere of the dominant group or defensive attitudes which may lead to separatism.

#### THE DOMINANT THEMES OF CHINA'S ETHNIC POLITICS

Ethnic politics of each country has its own specific dominants which determine its overall character. In the Chinese context, these themes are, at least four. In the Chinese state policy towards minorities special consideration must be given to their geopolitical location. Most territorially concentrated ethnic minorities are living in the strategically important border areas or in regions adjacent to them. More than 80 percent of the land borders of the PRC on the north-east, north-west, south-west and south run through the territories of ethnic minorities, where there is no clear dominance of the Han group<sup>17</sup>. It is not surprising that the authorities in Beijing are aware of the importance of ethnic differences and from the outset have been trying at all cost to win the favor of the minority groups, thereby minimizing the danger

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<sup>15</sup> Chih-Yu Shih, *Negotiating Ethnicity in China: Citizenship as a Response to the State*, London 2002.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, s. 1.

<sup>17</sup> D.Y.H. Wu, *Culture Change and Ethnic Identity Among Minorities in China*, [in:] *Ethnicity and Ethnic Groups in China*, eds. Chien Chiao, Nicholas Tapp, “New Asia Academic Bulletin” 1989, Vol. VIII, s. 11-22.



of separatism or a redefinition of loyalty to the state. S. Szykiewicz views it as follows: “Worried about the territorial integrity of the country which results from the ethnic alienation of the residents of borderlands is a constant element of the PRC policy and determines the conduct of the center towards the periphery”<sup>18</sup>. An important element of this policy has been the settlement of the Han population in regions formerly dominated by ethnic minorities.

Manipulation of the ethnic structure and ethnic demographics has been used for several decades, and is a tool abused by the Chinese ethnic policy. Dense populations of various ethnic minorities comprise 60 percent of the entire range of the country. Minorities remain more aware of ethnic differences especially in the west and the north, by virtue of their positions relatively more distant from regions strictly dominated by the Han people. This does not mean that on these areas there is no Han people at all, rather than that these are the areas where there are still noticeably large populations of the non-Han groups. Realistically speaking, there are no more such regions in China where the Han would not have settled and there are fewer places where a group is dominant and more numerous. It is a result of a migration processes occurring in a long period of history or, as in the case of Tibet and Xinjiang, the result of a deliberate policy.

From a historical perspective, it was not the conquest of brute force but migration that was the main mechanism of territorial expansion and the formation of the Chinese ethnos. The model for this expansion was as follows: after the first waves of civilian settlers the troops followed to supervise the administration and protection of the projected settlement. With time, the military bridgeheads turned into agricultural colonies, usually planned to be self-sufficient. Successive waves of migrants taking over the area by moving further and further into the confines of the state. This process was shaped only slightly differently in the north, where the impact of civil colonisation was much lower. There, however, China's expansion was carried out with the use of the dynastic affinities. As regards the nomadic peoples of north, a strategic requirement was the proximity of permanent agricultural settlements which could result in economic exchange and provide the possibility of complementary development. Inevitably, the peoples of the northern frontier gravitated toward China. Extended contacts led to a natural cultural change, which most frequently met with complete sinicization of the local elites. In this way peaceful colonization was achieved. Chinese state supremacy was based on the cultural domination of feudal serfdom of new areas without interference in their political organization.

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<sup>18</sup> S. Szykiewicz, *op. cit.*, s. 355.

Such an expansion model meant that non-Chinese ethnic groups could actually exist in the state and the current situation can be largely considered to be the effect and the continuation of a centuries-old process. Although in modern times, when a definitive consolidation of boundaries was achieved, the expansion is made possible owing to internal demographic movements, mainly involving the most dynamic migration of the Han people, but also because of increasingly frequent migration toward the center from the periphery.

Chinese tradition has proved to be consistent with the Marxist-Leninist concept of state and society in terms of assimilation, as the assimilative course is the second dominant feature of China's ethnic policy. To stimulate the assimilation of minorities has always been a part of Chinese national interest. Currently, such actions have become the rule in the PRC policy. The ultimate goal of the past-era communist policy was the consolidation of all nations in the universal proletarian internationalism. However, now this principle has changed and the goal is the unification of all the Chinese nationalities in one great nation.

In the past, what was frequently announced as “peaceful coexistence” of the Han and the minorities meant isolation rather than actual social intercourse. Acculturation, if performed, was limited, and related to the margin of ethnic communities. A full change occurred with the establishment of the PRC through the liquidation of the old social structures, owing to widespread education and healthcare. In the first years the communists took measures to modernize the structures of the minorities. Many efforts were put to eliminate obstacles to mutual contact. The barriers still exist, but are disappearing due to increasing social changes. The state puts emphasis on cooperation requiring a uniform space of communication that makes the downward assimilation more rapid, as it is stimulated by economic and political pressure. At the same time, however, treating the processes of assimilation only in terms of intentional and politically-led operations would be a mistake. Of course, such top-down treatment has been and will be taken, but it does not change the fact that assimilation is a natural trend in the Chinese socio-economic conditions.

One of the important mechanisms for overcoming the isolation of minorities is the system of autonomy of national groups that aims to achieve full unity of the state. Introduced shortly after the establishment of the PRC, it has been criticized for its imperfection and formalism, and during the Cultural Revolution was unsuccessfully liquidated<sup>19</sup>. The postulate of autonomy for the minorities was implemented in the early 1980s and was followed by a new course of modernization. It was the time when the authorities paid their careful atten-

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, s. 363.

tion to the issue of ethnic politics and that new course was reflected in the May 1984 “Law on Regional Autonomy of National Minorities” implemented in October 1984<sup>20</sup>. The new law introduced a quota system for the political representation of minority groups, as well as access to higher education and public administration. The system of regional autonomy assumed increased participation of minorities in local government, thus opening for them the opportunity to participate in the political game and dialogue, while taking into account optics other than the dominant one. In terms of culture, autonomy creates the conditions for the revival of local ethnic traditions, but it also has an economic dimension: thanks to grants, credits and tax exemptions the authorities can stimulate private entrepreneurship in minority regions.

Warren W. Smith notes, however, the dissonance between the idea of a permanent regional autonomy of ethnic groups and Chinese history and political culture<sup>21</sup>. The ideology of expansion and assimilation of borderlands recognized is recognized as natural and leads to the spread of civilization. Autonomy has been a typical first step, followed by a gradual increase in control, colonization, and complete assimilation. But is there really so much contradiction between the two? In the cultural sense the Hans’ approach has not changed, what changed, however, have been the reactions to minorities. Political and social integration is still progressing, but it is subject to cultural differences. Therefore, there is no assimilation in the strict sense. The minorities are no longer forced to adopt the great tradition of the Han people, but are able to make a use of it. They do not deny it, but still it is a culture alien to them. From the perspective of the Hans’ manifestations of any willingness to become a separate nation or to refuse the benefits offered, are an indirect proof of the backwardness of the minorities. The socialist state has aimed at non-ethnic forms of unification of the population and easily agrees to the existence of “cats of various shades”, provided that they remain obedient and carry out their tasks.

The fourth dominant of the paradigm described is a phenomenon that Steven Harrell called the “Chinese civilization project”<sup>22</sup>. Harrell defines it as an interaction between at least two ethnic groups, one of which is the civilizing center which establishes un-equivalent contact with groups to be defined as a periphery. These are obviously the minorities, not necessarily only those living far from the centers of power in the borderland, but also those mixed with the dominant population. Inequality between the civilizing center and peripheral natio-

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<sup>20</sup> D.Y.H. Wu, op. cit., s. 13.

<sup>21</sup> W.W. Smith. *Polityka Chin wobec autonomii Tybetu*. [Online]. Protokół dostępu: <http://www.hfhrpol.waw.pl/Tybet/pdf/polityka.pdf> [14 czerwca 2011].

<sup>22</sup> *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, ed. S. Harrell, University of Washington Press, Seattle 1995, s. 3-36.

nalities is justified by the idea that the center has reached a higher level of civilizational development. Aspirations of the center result from a conviction that there is a need to raise the moral values of the peripheral groups to the central level and this is not tantamount to military conquest. Rationalization of the civilizational project is the belief of the center that only its dominance can allow the periphery to achieve a cultural, religious or moral equality with the center.

Civilizational project involves active participation of both sides. It cannot therefore be restricted to the activities of the center, and also requires the reaction and response of the periphery. The success of the project largely depends on the nature of that relationship. One extreme possibility is the situation in which the dominated group rejects any attempt to absorb the central system of values and/or denies its effectiveness. The second extreme scenario is a total acceptance of the civilizational project by the peripheral population, but only in the matter of sub-culture, when the peripheral values still have equal or higher status in other spheres of life. Most scenarios, however, are distributed between these two extreme possibilities. Minorities trying to maintain their own identity and the components of culture take some part in the project of the civilizing center out of necessity or as a result of rational calculation. It seems that this option best describes the current state of ethnic relations in China.

#### ABSTRAKT

Chiny należą do najbardziej zróżnicowanych pod względem etnicznym i narodowościowym państw świata. Obecnie mówi się o istnieniu 56 oficjalnie uznanych przez państwo narodowości. Od początku istnienia Chińskiej Republiki Ludowej regulacja stosunków etnicznych stała się ważnym punktem polityki wewnętrznej. Charakter stosunków interetnicznych określa niepisana zasada, wedle której przedstawiają się one jako działanie o sumie zerowej, gdzie zysk jednej strony jest koniecznie związany ze stratą po przeciwnej stronie równania. Problem ów stanowi jądro etnopolityki. Charakter kursu polityki etnicznej Pekinu wyznaczają obecnie co najmniej cztery dominanty.

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