

# *A Study on National Identity of Ethnic Areas from the Perspective of "State Presence"*

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**Abstract:** This paper studies the influence and generation model of national identity in ethnic areas from the perspective of "state presence". Its main objectives are to understand the principles of national identity formation in the modern social life of ethnic areas, to figure out whether there is more space for the development of the national identity of ethnic areas, and to study how to give play to "state presence" to help enhance the national identity of ethnic areas. On this basis, this study briefly expounds the content of "state presence" and national identity, and analyzes the factors affecting national identity in ethnic areas from the perspective of "state presence" and the effects on national identity in ethnic areas. It then conducts an in-depth study on the practical path of enhancing the national identity in ethnic areas from the perspective of "state presence", aiming to provide valuable reference for implementing China's policy of national unity and mutual development and enhancing the national identity and sense of belonging in ethnic areas.

"State presence" is one of the important ideas put forward by the Chinese government. "Presence" refers to the relationship and dynamic situation between the subjects of action at a certain time and in a certain space field. State presence is a state of presence. It is embodied in that the Chinese government exerts influence on civil society by revising laws, formulating and implementing policies, implementing strategic thoughts, organizing ceremonies and activities, and constructing different scenarios, so as to obtain the response of civil society to the state's "presence". From the perspective of the relationship between China and its ethnic areas, the essence of "state presence" is that the Chinese government, based on the actual situation of the ethnic areas, provides them with development opportunities, help and resources through different policy, economic, cultural and other means, thus obtaining the response of ethnic areas to this "presence", so that they can have a sense of identity to the country and the government, and form a corresponding national identity<sup>[1]</sup>.

## **1. “State Presence” and National Identity**

The theory of "state presence" is a way to summarize the historical practice of western society. Chinese scholars introduced this concept into China, and used it to explain social issues in China, defining corresponding concepts such as: state, society, public sphere, etc., so that "state presence" can provide reliable directions for solving social problems. As for the relationship between "state" and "society", the former refers to the mandatory hierarchical system realized by means of legal

monopoly within a certain territory, while the latter refers to the integration of the people and non-state organizations within the territory of a country. The state is the prerequisite and basic condition for the existence of society. According to the relationship structure of "state-society", it can be seen that according to the idea of "state presence", social phenomena can be reasonably interpreted and social problems can be solved. Through the interaction between the state and society, effective responses can be obtained and social subjects can form a sense of identity and belonging to the country <sup>[2]</sup>.

National identity is one of China's main goals in the construction of the modern society, and also an important element to maintain harmony and stability internally and manifest its international status. National identity is not only an identity in one aspect, but also an identity from politics, economy, culture and other perspectives. It is high affirmation and recognition of the people, non-state organizations, ethnic settlement areas to the history, moral concept, social values, ideals and beliefs of the country. National identity can reflect the benign relationship between social individuals and state subjects, as well as the stability and legitimacy of national politics, and can reflect the good living conditions of the Chinese people. China is a country composed of many ethnic groups. The support and identity of ethnic groups directly affects China's internal cohesion and the overall strength <sup>[3]</sup>. It is very important to obtain the national identity of all ethnic groups for China's social development and national revival.

## **2. Factors Affecting National Identity of Ethnic Areas from the Perspective of "State Presence"**

From the perspective of "state presence", the formation of national identity in ethnic areas is affected by various factors in the external environment, including politics, economy, culture, history and international environment.

Firstly, national identity in ethnic areas is influenced by political factors. All ethnic groups are a community, not only in terms of culture and interests, but also in terms of politics. National identity and respect are the basis to ensure the political freedom and political rights of all ethnic groups in our country, and political rights are the guarantee of the interests of all ethnic minorities in ethnic areas. In China's various policies, assuming the political rights of ethnic minorities and formulating policies and guarantee measures to safeguard the political rights of ethnic minorities can safeguard the social harmony and stability, and further unite ethnic groups. While practicing political rights, ethnic groups can generate national identity and form multi-ethnic relations of mutual trust and dependence <sup>[4]</sup>. China is a typical multi-ethnic country. In order to obtain the national identity of all ethnic groups, it is necessary to firmly assume the political rights of all ethnic groups, coordinate the political relations of all ethnic groups, avoid political contradictions and conflicts caused by ethnic differences as far as possible, and maintain the unity of state power. Only in this way can we truly obtain the national identity of ethnic areas.

Secondly, national identity of ethnic areas is affected by economic factors. In the process of the development of China's modern society, the levels of economic development of ethnic areas are different due to the different geographical location, congenital advantages and conditions of development. In order to maintain their dominant position, all ethnic groups will strive for resources from the political, economic and cultural perspectives as much as possible to consolidate their own status advantages. Economic factors directly determine the economic status of ethnic areas and affect their role in the national policy system. Therefore, from the perspective of "state presence", it is necessary to analyze the interests of all ethnic groups and consider their economic development needs and existing economic conditions. While ensuring the coordinated development of all ethnic groups, more resources should be provided to impoverished ethnic areas to improve their ethnic

status, so as to obtain the national identity of ethnic areas <sup>[5]</sup>.

Thirdly, the national identity of ethnic areas is influenced by historical factors. The emergence and development of the Communist regime of China is the inheritance, innovation and continuation of the previous regime, which has the characteristics of the political, economic and cultural pattern of the previous stage, and the ethnic areas' recognition of the regime of the previous stage will also continue to the new regime.

In the development of the new democratic revolution period, it obtained the sense of identity of all nationalities, and this kind of identity promoted the Chinese regime to be highly recognized by ethnic areas in the development stage of modern society. Therefore, the national identity of ethnic areas is influenced by historical factors.

Fourthly, the national identity of ethnic areas is influenced by cultural factors. In the long-term development of various ethnic areas, local people, after a long history and a large number of historical events, have a high recognition of the spiritual symbol formed in this ethnic area. Ethnic culture is a unique culture of an ethnic area, and it is also a spiritual carrier different from other areas, which can affect the communication between different nationalities. High national cultural identity can effectively reduce the frictions between ethnic groups and affect the national identity of other ethnic groups.

### **3. The Effect of Various Policies on Affecting the National Identity of Ethnic Areas from the Perspective of "State Presence"**

Since the reform and opening up, the government of China have adhered to the strategic thoughts of ethnic unity, coordinated development and common prosperity, and incorporated these thoughts into the policies for ethnic areas, indicating the idea of "state presence" and becoming the reliance of ethnic areas. Under the long-term influence of the idea of "state presence", all ethnic areas have been taken care of by the government, and have achieved the promotion of political, economic and cultural status, showing strong feedback to the Chinese government, and thus forming a high degree of national identity <sup>[6]</sup>. From the current performance of national identity in ethnic areas, it can be seen that the "state presence" has indeed affected the national identity in ethnic areas and prompted all ethnic areas to form national identity one after another. The specific effects are as follows.

#### **3.1 Analysis from the perspective of political identity**

From the perspective of political identity, national identity in ethnic areas presents the characteristics of diversification, which can be reflected in the political demands of some interest groups and non-political organizations. On the ground of ethnic minorities, interest groups in some ethnic areas will exert pressure on the local government, express their appeals and even take actions.

In recent years, the ethnic policies introduced by the Chinese government have been implemented, and non-governmental organizations and interest groups in ethnic areas have gradually developed. When their own ethnic interests are not satisfied or are even damaged, they would use their role as "spokespersons" of ethnic areas to exert their political influence by pressuring the government. These spontaneous interest groups are often non-governmental organizations with low political efficacy, insufficient legal constraints, varying ways of pursuing interests, and constant adjustments of internal structures. If it is difficult for the regional government to regulate ethnic relations or the ethnic adjustment mechanism declines, these interest groups will incite the masses in ethnic areas to take political participation actions outside the system under the guise of ethnic culture. In this case, the nature of social interests in ethnic areas will change, which is not conducive to the formation of national identity in ethnic areas <sup>[7]</sup>. Based on this,

it is necessary to grasp the influence of policies in ethnic areas, not only to recognize the political status of ethnic areas, but also to properly control the political rights of ethnic areas, so as to ensure that they are always within a certain range, so as to ensure the feedback of ethnic areas on the "state presence" and the positive feedback on the implementation of ethnic policies, and strengthen the national identity by obtaining the political identity of ethnic areas.

### **3.2 Analysis from the perspective of economic identification**

From the perspective of economic identity, the economy of ethnic areas has regional and diversified characteristics. The economic development of ethnic areas is inextricably linked to China's overall economic development. The rapid economic development of ethnic areas and economic exchanges between ethnic areas can promote China's economic development, which has also aroused the consciousness of identity and responsibility of the ethnic areas to China's economy, thus forming the national identity. At the economic level, the Chinese government expresses the idea of "state presence" to ethnic areas mainly by adhering to the principle of common prosperity of all ethnic groups, providing an opportunity for economic development for all ethnic areas, deeply exploring the resources and economic advantages of ethnic areas, and promoting ethnic areas to have their own industries and economic models <sup>[8]</sup>. In 2018, the Chinese government issued the *Opinions on Establishing a More Effective New Mechanism for Coordinated Regional Development*, which further supported the economic development of ethnic areas and the coordinated regional economic development of ethnic areas, and guaranteed the economic development of ethnic areas in terms of infrastructure and public services. It has improved the economic development ability of ethnic areas and the people's livelihood level to a certain extent, narrowed the economic gaps of various ethnic areas, revitalized the economy of ethnic areas, promoted the economy of various ethnic areas to be consistent with China's overall trend of economic development, and made ethnic areas form a high identity to China's economic development, thus affecting their national identity.

### **3.3 Analysis from the perspective of cultural identity**

In the development of modern society, the development degree of Chinese society, cultural exchanges between ethnic areas, and the penetration of western pluralistic values can all affect the national identity of ethnic areas. "Unity with diversity" is an idea on the development of ethnic culture put forward by China as a multi-ethnic country. It not only affirms the culture of ethnic minorities, but also recognizes the excellent traditional culture in the development of Chinese history and the socialist culture in the period of modern society. The promotion of ethnic cultural identity can affect the national identity of ethnic areas to varying degrees <sup>[9]</sup>.

## **4. The Practical Path to Enhance National Identity in Ethnic Areas from the Perspective of "State Presence"**

### **4.1 Focusing on identity contradictions and problems, formulating targeted ethnic policies**

Based on the above analysis, whether from the perspective of politics, economy or culture, the government can obtain a high degree of recognition from ethnic areas by formulating ethnic policies to help them establish social order, maintain ethnic culture in ethnic areas and revitalize the economy of ethnic areas, thus forming national identity. Based on this, it is suggested to further focus on the contradictions and problems encountered in the process of social development in ethnic areas, formulate targeted ethnic policies, strengthen the guidance to ethnic areas, so as to obtain positive feedback from ethnic areas. In view of the negative influence of existing non-governmental

interest groups on the local government in ethnic areas, the national identity of ethnic areas is a complicated task, and the political roles and cultural environment within ethnic areas are highly complicated. This requires the state to properly identify the political role and status of ethnic areas while maintaining the unity of the regime. It is necessary not only to strengthen the implementation of supportive policies, but also to strengthen the implementation of restrictive and standardized policies, and clearly define the social attributes and roles of non-governmental interest groups in ethnic areas. At the same time, it is necessary to pay attention to the contradictions between political rights and political status of different ethnic areas, strengthen the coordination of ethnic relations, and constantly solve new problems in ethnic relations, so as to ensure the national identity of ethnic areas <sup>[10]</sup>.

#### **4.2 Grasping the development trend of national identity and adjusting ethnic policies whenever necessary**

To solve the new problems in the ethnic areas quickly and effectively, and ensure the stable and solid national identity of the ethnic areas, it is necessary to grasp the relationship between the ethnic areas and other regions, between the ethnic areas and the state, pay attention to the dynamic development of the relationship, and formulate forward-looking and advanced ethnic policies according to the development trend of different periods. This is because the implementation of any ethnic policy is targeted at a specific period of time; moreover, after the implementation of ethnic policies, a series of changes will occur, leading to changes in the political environment, cultural atmosphere and economic development trend of ethnic areas <sup>[11]</sup>. Therefore, the government needs to evaluate the development trend of ethnic areas according to the implementation of previous ethnic policies, and make corresponding adjustments according to the political status, economic development and cultural role of ethnic areas. It should not only promote the development of ethnic areas, but also always maintain the leading position of the state and enhance the national identity of ethnic areas.

#### **4.3 Enhancing the integration of values and continuing to strengthen the national identity in ethnic areas**

The national identity of ethnic areas is based on the idea of "state presence", which is the feedback obtained after the management and leadership measures taken by the state and the government in ethnic areas. In order to enhance the national identity of ethnic areas, the integration of values between ethnic areas and other areas should be enhanced. For example, the integration of the ethnic identity and national identity of the people in ethnic areas, firmly cultivate the sense of identity and belonging of the people in ethnic areas, and encourage the local people to sublimate their sense of identity to the national level, so as to strengthen the national identity of ethnic areas. In view of the actual situation of ethnic areas, the government can provide economic support and industrial resources for areas with low economic development level, reflect the idea of "state presence", give full play to the state power, assist in promoting the economic development of ethnic areas and improve the living standards of the local people. In this process, people in different regions work with local ethnic masses to form a close whole, so as to further integrate the values of people in ethnic areas and other areas and promote the general identify of these.

#### **4.4 Construct the grass-roots governance system of ethnic areas to help strengthen regional national identity people with the whole country**

From the perspective of "state presence", in order to continuously improve the national identity

in ethnic minority areas, it is suggested to infiltrate "state presence" into the grassroots life of people in ethnic minority areas from the perspective of grassroots governance, so as to further build the grass-roots governance system in ethnic areas, let the people in ethnic areas feel the benefits of China's grass-roots autonomy and rule of law, improve the grass-roots environment in ethnic areas, thus obtaining higher national identity. In practice, the government can apply the model of grassroots autonomy and community autonomy to ethnic areas; according to the customs and habits of ethnic areas, the government can analyze the ethnic psychology, analyze the conflicts between ethnic customs and national laws, and adopt the method of grass-roots governance to subtly lead the migration of "conflict elements" in ethnic customs, thus solving conflicts and driving customs and cultures in ethnic areas to develop in the same direction as the laws and policies of the state <sup>[12]</sup>.

## 5. Conclusions

To sum up, "state presence" is not only the communication strategy proposed by the Chinese government for ethnic groups and other countries, but also one of the ways in which the Chinese government further demonstrates its position, firmly implements the strategic thought of multi-ethnic common development and common prosperity, and implements peaceful and friendly foreign relations. According to this study on "state presence" and national state identity, it can be seen that under the thought of "state presence" and through the implementation of ethnic policies, national identity in ethnic areas is increasingly enhanced. It can be seen that the implementation and embodiment of the thought of "state presence" can promote all ethnic groups to have stronger trust and dependence on the country and policies, strengthen the sense of national belonging of all ethnic groups, strengthen the cohesion of all ethnic groups, and continuously improve the national identity of ethnic areas. In the future, the idea of "state presence" should be fully implemented and incorporated into the social development, infrastructure, economic development and friendly exchanges in ethnic minority areas, so as to promote ethnic areas to form unified behaviors and emotions with the state and to form cognition in the same direction, thus generating more sense of national identity.

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