

Xi Jinping and the party Center in Beijing are in the midst of a far-reaching rectification campaign in Inner Mongolia. The introduction of new textbooks and *putonghua*-medium education in Mongolian schools led to widespread civil disobedience in September 2020. Order was quickly restored, and international media attention turned elsewhere. But what followed was a systematic campaign to strengthen central party controls and Han-defined cultural and ideological norms. In this article, I unpack Beijing's toolkits of control and transformation in Inner Mongolia, and foreground both the regional variation yet also the steady path toward Xi Jinping's dream of a new Han colonial empire.

The Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region (IMAR) was established by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) more than two years prior to the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1947. Premier Zhou Enlai declared it a "model autonomous region" (模范自治区), and its status as the first frontier region to join the PRC was celebrated by Deng Xiaoping and subsequent Chinese leaders, including Xi Jinping.<sup>1</sup>

Yet party leaders in Beijing have also been quick to castigate the region when deemed to fall short of expectations, such as in the late 1960s when its first chairman Ulanhu (乌兰夫) was accused of setting up an "independent kingdom" before being purged in a bloody pogrom.<sup>2</sup> A new deposition is underway in the IMAR, albeit a largely bloodless coup, as Xi Jinping pushes forward with his agenda of settler colonialism, cultural homogenization, and ideological purification across China's vast frontier regions.

During an April 2021 inspection tour, Politburo Standing Committee member Wang Yang spoke of "deep-seated problems in the ethnic sphere" and the urgent need for "a correct understanding and handling of the relationship between commonality and diversity" in Inner Mongolia.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 孔祥武, "关于'模范自治区,中央有了最新说法!" 人民日报, August 9, 2017, at <https://china.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnK4AuJ>, accessed November 3, 2021; 马奔腾, "解码'模范自治区'——听亲历者讲述内蒙古七十年," 中国日报, July 14, 2017, at [http://china.chinadaily.com.cn/2017-07/14/content\\_30113493.htm](http://china.chinadaily.com.cn/2017-07/14/content_30113493.htm), accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> See Kerry Brown, "The Cultural Revolution in Inner Mongolia 1967–1969," *Asian Affairs*, 38.2 (2007): 173–187; Paul Hyer and William Heaton, "The Cultural Revolution in Inner Mongolia," *China Quarterly*, no. 36 (1968): 114–128; Uradyn Bulag, *The Mongols at China's Edge* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> "汪洋在内蒙古调研时强调 坚定不移铸牢中华民族共同体意识 牢固建设祖国北疆安全稳定屏障," 新华网, March 14, 2021, at [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2021-04/14/c\\_1127330659.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2021-04/14/c_1127330659.htm), accessed November 3, 2021.

“All ethnic autonomous regions are under the leadership of the party and these areas collectively belong to the people of all ethnic groups,”<sup>4</sup> he warned local officials while urging them to “take good care to uphold the lofty honor of a ‘model autonomous region,’” and to “ensure implementation of the national constitution, laws, and government orders.”<sup>5</sup> In private, party officials like Wang criticized local cadres for dragging their heels and lagging behind Xinjiang and Tibet on language and other national reforms.<sup>6</sup>

Following a major reset of ethnic policies under Xi and previous crackdowns in Tibet and Xinjiang,<sup>7</sup> the party Center set its target on the IMAR after a popular protest movement in late 2020. When Beijing insisted ethnic schools adopt *putonghua*-medium instruction and a standard set of textbooks, Mongol students and parents took to the streets in defense of their language, culture, and autonomous rights as enshrined in the PRC Constitution.<sup>8</sup>

Inner Mongolia was the first frontier region Xi Jinping visited as general secretary, and it is the only frontier region he has visited twice (2014 and 2019),<sup>9</sup> suggesting a level of concern and possible frustration with the consolidation of his power in this strategic and resource-rich region. The IMAR is home to a powerful group of Mongolian officials, many of whom are

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> 内蒙古自治区教育厅, 筑牢中华民族共同体意识推进国家统编教材使用和国家通用语言文字教育宣传手册, 内部资料 (January 2021), pp. 24–25.

<sup>7</sup> James Leibold, “China’s Ethnic Policy under Xi Jinping,” *China Brief*, 15.20 (October 19, 2015), at <https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-ethnic-policy-under-xi-jinping/>, accessed November 3, 2021; James Leibold, “Planting the Seed: Ethnic Policy in Xi Jinping’s New Era of Cultural Nationalism,” *China Brief*, 19.22 (December 31, 2019), at <https://jamestown.org/program/planting-the-seed-ethnic-policy-in-xi-jinpings-new-era-of-cultural-nationalism/>, accessed November 3, 2021; James Leibold, “The Spectre of Insecurity: The CCP’s Mass Internment Strategy in Xinjiang,” *China Leadership Monitor*, March 1, 2019, at <https://www.prcleader.org/leibold>, accessed November 3, 2021; James Leibold, “Beyond Xinjiang: Xi Jinping’s Ethnic Crackdown,” *The Diplomat* (May 1, 2021), at <https://thediplomat.com/2021/04/beyond-xinjiang-xi-jinpings-ethnic-crackdown/>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Atwood, “Bilingual Education in Inner Mongolia: An Explainer,” *Made in China Journal* (August 30, 2020), at <https://madeinchinajournal.com/2020/08/30/bilingual-education-in-inner-mongolia-an-explainer/>, accessed November 3, 2021; Gerald Roche and James Leibold, “China’s Second-Generation Ethnic Policies Are Already Here,” *Made in China Journal* (September 7, 2020), at <https://madeinchinajournal.com/2020/09/07/chinas-second-generation-ethnic-policies-are-already-here/>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> 王子晖, “习近平与内蒙古, 这几个故事你知道吗,” 新华网, May 22, 2020, at [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/xxjxs/2020-05/22/c\\_1126019412.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/xxjxs/2020-05/22/c_1126019412.htm), accessed November 3, 2021.

directly or indirectly linked to Ulanhu and his large extended family,<sup>10</sup> as well as deep patronage networks closely associated with former general secretaries Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin.<sup>11</sup>

During his nearly decade in power, Xi Jinping has steadily employed personnel reshuffles and central disciplinary mechanisms to curb territorial cliques and the subnationalism posed by native leaders and organizations in regions like Inner Mongolia.<sup>12</sup> The appointment of Shi Taifeng as party secretary of the IMAR in October 2019 was widely seen as a move to rein in and further strengthen Beijing's control over the frontier region.<sup>13</sup> Shi had served as Xi Jinping's deputy at the Central Party School from 2007 to 2010, and he had successfully implemented Xi's call for expunging overt symbols of Islam, retarding "religious extremism," and "sinicizing" religion as the party secretary of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region from 2017 to 2019.<sup>14</sup>

In short, Xi Jinping's ongoing crackdown in the Mongolian borderlands goes well beyond language reform. As discussed below, Xi and the party Center are using a well-hewn toolkit of coercion, thought control, personnel sackings, and rule by law to slowly tame and remake the region, bring it more firmly in line with his vision for a Han-centric China.

## Education Reforms

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<sup>10</sup> Ulanhu's clan is known as the Yun clan (云氏家族) in Chinese, after his Chinese name Yun Ze (云泽). See 白云书院, 布小林的显赫家世, at <https://archive.md/OjzbN>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Wen-Hsuan Tsai and Lingmiu Liao, "Institutional Changes, Influence and Historical Junctures in the Communist Youth League of China," *The China Quarterly* (2021); Guo Xuezhi, *The Politics of the Core Leadership in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 207–280; Bo Zhiyue, "Balance of Factional Power in China: The Seventeenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party," *East Asia*, 25.333 (2008), at <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs12140-008-9052-1>, accessed November 3, 2021; David Shambaugh, *China's Leaders: From Mao to Now* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2021). Some of the top party leaders who still have deep patronage networks in Inner Mongolia include Liu Yunshan (刘云山, b. 1947, Han), Wang Jun (王君, b. 1952, Han), and Hu Chunhua (胡春华, b. 1963, Han), while others such as Yang Jing (杨晶, b. 1953, Mongol), Yun Guangzhong (云光中, b. 1960, Mongol), and Pan Yiyang (潘逸阳, b. 1961, Han) have already been purged on corruption charges.

<sup>12</sup> David Bulman and Kyle Jaros, "Localism in Retreat? Central-Provincial Relations in the Xi Jinping Era," *Journal of Contemporary China*, 30.131 (2021): 697–716.

<sup>13</sup> 青苹, "内蒙古官场震荡 习近平党校副手石泰峰整治边疆," 多维新闻, December 1, 2020, at <https://archive.md/2Doe5>, accessed November 23, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> 石泰峰, "石泰峰在宁夏第十二次党代会上的报告(全文)," 宁夏日报, June 12, 2017, at <https://archive.md/KxS2K>, accessed November 3, 2021. See also Richard Madsen, "The Sinicization of Chinese Religions Under Xi Jinping," *China Leadership Monitor* (September 1, 2019), at <https://www.prclleader.org/sinicization-of-chinese-religions>, accessed November 3, 2021; James Leibold, "Creeping Islamophobia: China's Hui Muslims in the Firing Line," *China Brief*, 16.10 (June 2016), <https://jamestown.org/program/creeping-islamophobia-chinas-hui-muslims-in-the-firing-line/>, accessed November 3, 2021.

In July 2017, the Ministry of Education in Beijing set up a new national textbook committee, which mandated a uniform set of textbooks in the Chinese language for compulsory literature, politics, and history subjects, and called for a staged roll-out across primary and elementary schools.<sup>15</sup> Efforts to promote these textbooks and *putonghua*-medium education in Mongolian schools had been stymied by local officials in the past even though they were implemented in Xinjiang and Tibetan schools starting in 2017.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast, Mongolian-medium education remained relatively strong in the IMAR and was rebounding in some quarters,<sup>17</sup> due in part to a dedicated funding stream with a yearly budget allocation of 60 million RMB (USD 9.4 million) for ethnic education between 2003 and 2013.<sup>18</sup> According to a 2017 Xinhua article,<sup>19</sup> roughly 15 percent of primary- and middle-school-age students were studying in the region's 520 ethnic schools, including 55 schools that offered nine years of compulsory education entirely in the Mongolian language, such as the widely celebrated Tongliao Mongol School (通辽市蒙古族学校).<sup>20</sup>

In December 2019, the textbook committee issued a new implementation plan, what it referred to as a “soul-casting engineering project” (铸魂工程), aimed at achieving complete coverage of *putonghua*-medium education in the three subjects using unified textbooks by 2025.<sup>21</sup> Seeking to turn up the heat and overcome disinclination, Shi Taifeng and the IMAR Party Committee called on local officials to uphold the “two maintenances” (两个维护) – the leadership of the party Central Committee in Beijing and its core Xi Jinping – and dare to

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<sup>15</sup> 沙璐, “解析国家教材委员会:为何成立? 有哪些职能?,” 新京报, July 7, 2017, at <https://archive.md/bnrZM>, accessed November 3, 2021; “教育部: 普通高中三科统编教材今年9月将在部分省市投入使用,” 中国教育新闻网威信, August 28, 2019, at <https://archive.md/akMY5>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Atwood, “Bilingual Education in Inner Mongolia: An Explainer.” For an excellent overview of patriotic education under Xi Jinping see Edward Vickers, “Smothering Diversity: Patriotism in China’s School Curriculum under Xi Jinping,” *Journal of Genocide Research* (2021).

<sup>17</sup> Naran Bilik and Has Eredene, “Trilingual Education and Mongolian Ethnicity,” *Frontiers of Education in China*, 11 (2016): 435–454; Gegentuul Baioud, “Will Education Reform Wipe Out Mongolian Language and Culture,” *Language on the Move*, August 30, 2020, <https://www.languageonthemove.com/will-education-reform-wipe-out-mongolian-language-and-culture/>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>18</sup> 晒一晒, “我们的民族教育成绩单!” 平安通辽威信, September 3, 2020, at <https://archive.md/G9QB4>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>19</sup> 哈丽娜, “内蒙古少数民族受教育规模和程度达到历史最高水平,” 新华社, July 24, 2017, at <https://archive.md/zihrV>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>20</sup> 学校简介, 通辽市蒙古族学校, at <https://archive.md/zeQp8>, accessed November 4, 2021. See a list of the school's public awards here: 学校荣誉, 通辽市蒙古族学校, n.d., at <https://archive.md/ubBwt>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>21</sup> “教育部印发中小学三科统编教材‘铸魂工程’推进实施方案,” 媒体播, January 16, 2021, at <https://archive.md/AKhA9>, accessed November 4, 2021.

“speak up and brandish the swords (发声亮剑),<sup>22</sup> a phrase first used in Xinjiang to demand absolute loyalty to the party Center.<sup>23</sup> In the lead up to a new school year, the Ministry of Education dispatched officials to the region, where they spoke frankly about “deficiencies in *putonghua* universalization.”<sup>24</sup>

Despite rumors of impending changes, the introduction of new Chinese-medium classes and textbooks – starting in grades one and four – were announced only several weeks prior to the start of school in September 2020. The indigenous community’s expostulation was widespread, with street protests, school boycotts, and clashes with uniformed police across the IMAR.

In response, the region’s chairwoman Bu Xiaolin (布小林),<sup>25</sup> the lauded Mongolian granddaughter of Ulanhu, issued a “five no changes” (五个不变) pledge<sup>26</sup> – no further changes to the curriculum; textbooks; hours of Mongolian-language instruction; and the current model of bilingual education.<sup>27</sup> This slogan was unceremoniously discarded several months later as part of the crackdown, with a January 2021 internal party document stating: “This formulation does not accord with the party Center’s demands; it is not accurate and should no longer be used.”<sup>28</sup> Beijing was now dictating policy, and Bu Xiaolin and other Mongolian officials who failed to fall in line were placed under intense scrutiny.

## Control and Transformation

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<sup>22</sup> “内蒙古自治区党委印发通知,” 内蒙日报微信, January 4, 2020, at <https://archive.md/LqfOy>, accessed November 4, 2021.

<sup>23</sup> The phrase seems to have been first used by Xi Jinping at the first Central Xinjiang Work Forum in May 2014. See “中央新疆工作座谈会要点: 发展要落实到改善民生上,” 新华网, May 31, 2014, at <https://archive.md/P1tXJ>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>24</sup> “教育部民族教育司副司长葛维威一行莅临内蒙古民族大学调研,” 翼牛网, June 4, 2020, at <https://archive.md/XuXtE>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>25</sup> “自治区政府召开电视电话会议 布小林出席并讲话,” 内蒙古日报, September 2, 2020, at <https://archive.md/mFbaR>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>26</sup> “民族语言授课学校小学一年级和初中一年级使用国家统编《语文》教材‘五个不变’——4位教育工作者解读相关政策,” 内蒙古教育厅, September 4, 2020, at <https://archive.md/2YSAw>, accessed November 4, 2021. In his excellent exposition of the language protest movement, Chris Atwood asserts the “five no changes” slogan was issued by state-owned media in the name of Party Secretary Shi Taifeng on August 30, 2020. I have found no evidence directly linking Shi with this slogan; although it is possible that evidence was subsequently scrubbed. See Atwood, “Bilingual Education in Inner Mongolia: An Explainer.”

<sup>27</sup> “自治区政府召开电视电话会议 布小林出席并讲话,” 内蒙古日报, September 2, 2020, at <https://archive.md/mFbaR>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>28</sup> 内蒙古自治去教育厅, 筑牢中华民族共同体意识推进国家统编教材使用和国家通用语言文字教育宣传手册, 内部资料 (January 2021), p. 25.

During the subsequent year, Beijing quickly restored order across Inner Mongolia and then gradually asserted its authority over the region through a familiar toolkit of repression, one it has employed in other frontier regions but also other areas of resistance such as Hong Kong. Regional variation, however, remains important, as Xi Jinping’s empire-building mission is not uniformly implemented at present, with some regions possessing more agency and wiggle-room to protect local interests.

### 1. Snuffing out the protests

In the face of widespread civil disobedience in August and September 2020, local officials employed their usual carrot-and-stick repertoire to cajole Mongolian parents, students, and ordinary citizens into submission.

Police in some urban areas issued name-lists and even photos of “troublemakers,” drawing on the now ubiquitous security cameras, especially in hot spots like Tongliao city and the Shilingol League. Police in the Khorchin district of central Tongliao – home of numerous Mongolian schools and students<sup>29</sup> – issued hundreds of surveillance photos of those purportedly “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” (寻衅滋事) in early September and offered a 1000 RMB (USD 157) reward for help in dobbing them into the authorities.<sup>30</sup>

In other parts of the region, authorities initially tried to bribe students into returning to school, giving them “large gift packages” (worth 200 RMB or USD 31) in the Ongnuud banner for each classmate they lured back to school – with no limits on the number of gifts a student could collect.<sup>31</sup> As opposition lingered, authorities turned to more blunt tactics, including the expulsion of students and dismissal from state employment, mandatory legal training, blacklisting, and the severing of social benefits for parents and guardians, or even detention and formal arrest should persuasion fail.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Tongliao is a prefectural-level city in eastern Inner Mongolia. According to a May 2019 blog post, Tongliao city is home to 109 Mongolian-medium primary and secondary schools, with nearly 46 percent of the city’s population ethnically Mongol. See “蒙古圈, 通辽市各旗县蒙古语授课 109 所中小学校, 看看有没有你的母校?” Sohu, May 15, 2019, at <https://archive.md/hDxjm>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>30</sup> 政治部宣传科, 科尔沁区公安分局协查通告, 平安通辽微信, September 2, 2020, at <https://archive.md/Ln1A2>, accessed November 4, 2021; 开发区公安分局协查通告, 科尔沁那些事微信, September 2, 2020, at <https://archive.md/1LSHM>, accessed November 4, 2021; 魏雅华, “科尔沁区公安分局协查通告(最新),” 科尔沁区公安分局, September 2, 2020, at <https://archive.md/SyaSg>, accessed November 3, 2021; “科尔沁区公安分局协查通告(第四批),” 科右中旗司法局微信, September 3, 2020, at <https://archive.md/ctspY>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>31</sup> See Annex B in UNPO and SMHRIC, “Submission to Mr. Fernand de Varennes, Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Regarding Efforts to Enforce Monolingual Education Policy in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region of the People’s Republic of China in Violation of the Linguistic, Cultural and Education Rights of the Mongolian People,” February 5, 2021, at <https://unpo.org/article/22125>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>32</sup> See *Ibid.*; Alice Su, “Threats of Arrest, Job Loss and Surveillance: China Works to Erase its ‘Model Minority,’” *Los Angeles Times*, September 23, 2020, at

Beijing dispatched Minister of Public Security Zhao Kezhi to the region, where he called for a “deepening of the struggle against separatism, and strict implementation of anti-terrorism and anti-terrorist measures” in Inner Mongolia, according to a September 2 Xinhua readout.<sup>33</sup> He also warned local officials they must “do a solid job in maintaining stability in the ethnic and religious sphere and advancing national unity work.”<sup>34</sup> By the end of month, order was restored. With children back in the classroom, the re-education campaign began.

## 2. Re-educating society

The IMAR Party Committee acknowledged “deep-seated problems” in ethnic work at a November 6, 2020 meeting and called for urgent remedial and rectification work.<sup>35</sup> During an inspection tour the following week, Party Secretary Shi Taifeng berated local officials in Shilingol League and Tongliao city for their poor handling of education reforms, claiming officials had “deviated from the guiding ideology of ethnic work” and failed to forge a strong sense of the “communal consciousness of the Chinese nation-race” (中华民族共同体意识).<sup>36</sup>

Re-education work formally got underway on December 6, 2020, when the IMAR launched a three-phase “special training program for forging the collective consciousness of the Chinese nation-race across the educational system.”<sup>37</sup> The aims of the campaign, as outlined by new IMAR education party boss Huang Yali (黄雅丽), included “purifying the political environment of the education system.”<sup>38</sup> Through a series of training workshops across

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<https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-09-23/inner-mongolia-china-model-minority-crackdown>, accessed February 3, 2021.

<sup>33</sup> “赵克志在内蒙古和宁夏调研,” 新华社, September 2, 2020, at <https://archive.md/eQmGy>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> “内蒙古自治区党委常委会召开会议 石泰峰主持,” 内蒙古日报, November 7, 2020, at <https://web.archive.org/web/20211006033511/http://cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2020/1107/c117005-31922501.html>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>36</sup> 刘晓冬, “石泰峰参加指导库伦旗委常委会加强和改进民族工作专题民主生活会,” 内蒙古日报, November 19, 2020, at <https://archive.md/rs85N>, accessed November 3, 2021; William Zheng, “Communist Party Officials in Inner Mongolia Lambasted for Poor Handling of Education Reform,” *South China Morning Post*, November 13, 2020, at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3109630/communist-party-officials-inner-mongolia-lambasted-poor>, accessed November 3, 2021. This concept of “forging the communal consciousness of the Chinese nation-race” (铸牢中华民族共同体意识) is the defining political formulation (提法) of nation-building work in Xi Jinping Thought. It was written into the Party Constitution at the 19th Party Congress.

<sup>37</sup> 郝文婷, “内蒙古开展全区教育系统铸牢中华民族共同体意识专题培训,” December 9, 2020, at <https://archive.md/8mKlR>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>38</sup> “乘势而上 应变布局 加快建设我区高质量教育体系 ——2021 年全区教育工作会议召开,” 鄂尔多斯教育体育之窗威信, February 26, 2021, at <https://archive.md/AXpv1>, accessed November 3, 2021; “锡盟教育系统扎实开展铸牢中华民族共同体意识专题培

schools and universities, government departments, and party committees, Inner Mongolians were made to study Xi Jinping Thought on nation-building work in order to “further clarify vague understandings, correct misunderstandings, and unify ideological thinking.”<sup>39</sup>

To guide re-education work, the IMAR’s Education Department issued a confidential propaganda pamphlet in January 2021, which was subsequently leaked to the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center.<sup>40</sup> It is filled with quotations from Xi Jinping, passages from national laws and regulations, and explanatory notes outlining the party Center’s requirements for educators and students in the region. When it comes to balancing unity with autonomy, the document asserts, unity is the presupposition and foundation of autonomy, and no autonomous region belongs to a single ethnic group.<sup>41</sup>

In the Tongliao Mongol School, staff and students were subjected to systematic reprogramming over the course of 2021 following their participation in the protest movement.<sup>42</sup> Faculty members attended three training sessions (in January, February, and April) during which they studied Xi Jinping Thought and key legal documents, and they reflected on their past errors.<sup>43</sup> During an interview on March 8, 2021, the school’s Mongolian party secretary and principal Ma Bagan (马巴根那) clarified the new policies and stressed the school’s mission to ensure that national unity “enters the minds and hearts” of all students and “national unity education begins from infancy.”<sup>44</sup>

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训,” 锡林郭勒教育, January 22, 2021, at <https://archive.md/er38K>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>39</sup> “河套学院铸牢中华民族共同体意识专题培训班圆满结束,” 河套学院, January 7, 2021, at <https://archive.md/ES8X>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>40</sup> 内蒙古自治区教育厅, 筑牢中华民族共同体意识推进国家统编教材使用和国家通用语言文字教育宣传手册, 内部资料 (January 2021).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 10–11.

<sup>42</sup> Bang Xiao and Oliver Lees, “内蒙古汉语授课事件再发酵 上百名民众遭悬赏通缉,” September 4, 2020, at <https://www.abc.net.au/chinese/2020-09-04/inner-mongolian-protesters-wanted-by-chinese-authorities/12622596>, accessed November 3, 2021. “汉化教育引蒙古族反感 通辽学生家长拒送子女上学,” Radio Free Asia, August 28, 2020, at <https://www.rfa.org/mandarin/yataibaodao/shaoshuminzu/ql-08282020063445.html>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>43</sup> “通辽市蒙古族学校开展‘铸牢中华民族共同体意识’专题培训,” 通辽市蒙古族学校威信, January 7, 2021, at <https://archive.md/yYBEp>, accessed November 3, 2021; “通辽市蒙古族学校举办第二轮铸牢中华民族共同体意识培训班,” 通辽市蒙古族学校威信, March 6, 2021, at <https://archive.md/KulkQ>, accessed November 3, 2021; “市教育局举办第三轮铸牢中华民族共同体意识暨中小学幼儿园党员骨干教师培训班 (第一期),” 通辽教育威信, April 23, 2021, at <https://archive.md/U1TGT>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>44</sup> “通辽市蒙古族学校校长马巴根那走进《行风热线》直播间,” 通辽广播电视台, March 8, 2021, at <https://archive.md/zU9vS>, accessed November 3, 2021.



Throughout the school year, Mongolian students were subjected to a barrage of propaganda, including lectures on how the Chinese nation-race is a single family,<sup>45</sup> patriotic activities to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the CCP,<sup>46</sup> flag-raising ceremonies to assist with the “spiritual transmission of patriotic power,”<sup>47</sup> movie nights to watch “red films,”<sup>48</sup> art classes to “enhance students’ understanding of Chinese culture and the Chinese nation-race,”<sup>49</sup> and even a series of anti-terror, anti-riot drills simulating an attack by an armed “gangster.”<sup>50</sup>

To celebrate national *putonghua* promotion week, students created a chalkboard display in Chinese and dressed up in Han clothing to appreciate, according to the School’s *weixin* channel, how “every standard Han character is a microcosm of Chinese cultural history,” and the importance of promoting use of the national common language to forge the communal consciousness of the Chinese nation-race.<sup>51</sup> As the new Chinese-language textbooks were being rolled out, heretical texts that placed too much emphasis on ethnic identity and consciousness – like those of Mongolian identity – were mothballed for insufficiently promoting “collective [national] consciousness.”<sup>52</sup>

At the start of the 2021 school year, the Ministry of Education in Beijing issued new guidelines for students to learn Xi Jinping Thought in order to “strengthen resolve in listening and following the party” and “cultivate patriotic feelings.”<sup>53</sup> Across Inner Mongolia more

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<sup>45</sup> “通辽市蒙古族学校‘中华民族一家亲——民族团结教育’主题课堂开课啦,” 通辽市蒙古族学校微信, March 18, 2021, at <https://archive.md/CRdIx>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>46</sup> “通辽市蒙古族学校举办庆祝建党 100 周年‘学党史 感党恩 强心念’主题少先队辅导员技能技巧大赛,” 通辽市蒙古族学校微信, May 25, 2021, at <https://archive.md/bzL9M>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>47</sup> “中华民族一家亲, 同心共筑中国 ——科尔沁蒙古族中学举行主题教育升旗仪式,” 通辽市蒙古族学校微信, March 1, 2021, at <https://archive.md/rtChS>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>48</sup> “通辽市蒙古族学校组织开展红色电影观影活动,” 通辽市蒙古族学校微信, August 28, 2021, at <https://archive.md/WyYGM>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>49</sup> “内蒙古民族大学美术学院开展铸牢中华民族共同体意识活动与通辽市蒙古族学校共绘板报,” 美韵工作室微信, April 8, 2021, at <https://archive.md/hbPwq>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>50</sup> “通辽市蒙古族学校开展防恐防暴演练,” 通辽市蒙古族学校威信, May 19, 2021, at <https://archive.md/4tHxm>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>51</sup> “通辽市蒙古族学校开展‘普通话诵百年伟业, 规范字写时代新篇’主题活动,” 通辽市蒙古族学校威信, October 15, 2021, at <https://archive.md/pP31B>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>52</sup> “内蒙文化清洗升级 当局向中小学历史教材开刀,” 自由亚洲电台, January 18, 2021, at <https://www.rfa.org/mandarin/yataibaodao/shaoshuminzu/gf1-01182021052648.html>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>53</sup> “《习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想进课程教材指南》发布,” 新浪教育综合微博, August 24, 2021, at <https://archive.md/OpfCz>, accessed November 3, 2021.

than 30,000 teachers received training on how to use new “readers” (读本) on Xi Jinping Thought.<sup>54</sup> The Ministry also announced that all kindergartens throughout China must now use *putonghua* to achieve Xi Jinping’s directive of “starting from infancy” in the promotion of the national language.<sup>55</sup> In October, tiny pre-schoolers at the Tongliao Mongol Kindergarten chanted in *putonghua* as they took part in a week-long “little soldier training camp” (小小兵训练营) conducted by tactical police officers, instilling discipline and patriotism in the students while earning the school a plaque as an “exemplary counterterrorism unit.”<sup>56</sup>

### 3. Purging resistance

Xi Jinping’s anti-corruption campaign has seen hundreds of party and government officials removed from their posts in Inner Mongolia, including an ongoing investigation into corruption in the coal sector and the political and legal affairs system.<sup>57</sup> The language protests prompted another purge, one that targeted those who were perceived to have either botched

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<sup>54</sup> “我区 3 万余名教师参加《习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想学生读本》线上培训,” 内蒙古自治区教育厅, August 22, 2021, at <https://archive.md/PX4mG>, accessed November 3, 2021. These readers are officially known as “Student Readers for Xi Jinping Thought for Socialism in the New Era” (习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想学生读本). Pdfs of these readers can be download at [https://mega.nz/folder/GXR3iKAK#N\\_rDSWAVX-QcgxYlhNZN2g](https://mega.nz/folder/GXR3iKAK#N_rDSWAVX-QcgxYlhNZN2g), accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>55</sup> 教育部办公厅, “教育部办公厅关于实施学前儿童普通话教‘童语同音’计划的通知,” 中华人民共和国教育部, July 21, 2021, at <https://archive.md/bVJPT>, accessed November 3, 2021; “各民族幼儿园今秋汉语授课 蒙族幼儿园广招汉族人,” 自由亚洲电台, August 11, 2021, at <https://www.rfa.org/mandarin/yataibaodao/shaoshuminzu/ql0811a-08112021045557.html>, accessed November 3, 2021; “普通话诵百年伟业, 规范字写时代新篇——通辽市蒙古族幼儿园南区普通话推普周倡议书, 通辽市蒙古族幼儿园,” September 16, 2021, at <https://archive.md/eRUyb>, accessed November 3, 2021. See also Alexandra Grey and Gegentuul Baioud, “Educational Reforms Aim to Mold Model Citizens From Preschool in the PRC,” *China Brief*, 21.17 (September 2021), at <https://jamestown.org/program/educational-reforms-aim-to-mold-model-citizens-from-preschool-in-the-prc/>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>56</sup> “通辽市蒙古族幼儿园南区‘蒙幼小战士·童心永向党’第三届小小兵训练营结营仪式报道,” 通辽市蒙古族幼儿园微信, October 13, 2021, at <https://archive.md/r9n3O>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>57</sup> During a meeting with the Inner Mongolian delegation to the National People’s Congress in March 2021, Xi Jinping made some strongly worded remarks about corruption in the region, and under the leadership of the party Center, the IMAR launched a “twenty-year backwards investigation” in the coal sector. See “内蒙煤炭反腐翻查 20 年 习近平: 这个帐总要算,” 星岛日报, March 7, 2021, at <https://archive.md/1rNcN>, accessed November 3, 2021. In April 2021, as part of a national rectification campaign, the IMAR had its own “education and rectification” campaign throughout the party’s political and legal affairs system, where it promised to “eliminate black sheep and rectify chronic diseases.” See “全区政法队伍教育整顿警示教育大会召开,” 内蒙古自治区人民政府, April 16, 2021, at <https://archive.md/OWIWY>, accessed November 3, 2021.

or resisted the education reform agenda or who had failed to zealously fall in line with Xi's vision of a Han-centric China. During his September 2020 inspection tour, Zhao Kezhi called on officials to "keep the knife pointed inward and scrape the bones to remove the poison."<sup>58</sup>

To assist with this excavation work, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) dispatched a team to conduct a "routine inspection" of the IMAR from October 10 to December 20, 2020.<sup>59</sup> When it finally announced the results of the inspection in October 2021, the IMAR Party Committee admitted serious political and ideological deviation from Xi Jinping's central party line – especially in ethnic work – and committed itself to rectifying (整改) past mistakes and purifying (净化) the political ecology of the region.<sup>60</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the protest movement, local officials were blamed for poor communication and ineffective implementation, with the biggest scalps being the head of the IMAR Education Department Hou Yuan (候元) and the secretary-general of the regional government Bao Zhenyu (包振玉), who were removed from their posts on November 26, 2020 without reason.<sup>61</sup> Before completing its inspection, the CCDI issued a notice about "corruption and unhealthy practices in the education system" in Inner Mongolia and announced that 1,182 people had been investigated and punished for violations of discipline since the 19th Party Congress, and 35 cases had been referred to the courts for prosecution.<sup>62</sup>

Many of the purged officials were at the forefront of efforts to preserve Mongolian culture and language. In the Plain and Bordered White Banner (正镶白旗) in Shilingol League, for example, the Mongolian head of the education office Chingelt (青格勒图)<sup>63</sup> and head of the

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<sup>58</sup> “赵克志在内蒙古和宁夏调研,” 新华社, September 2, 2020, at <https://archive.md/eQmGy>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>59</sup> 中共内蒙古自治区委员会, “中共内蒙古自治区委员会关于十九届中央第六轮巡视整改进展情况的通报,” 中央纪委国家监委网站, October 23, 2021, at <https://archive.md/sn3xc>, accessed November 4, 2021.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> “悦享鄂尔多斯, 内蒙古任免牧远、包振玉、侯元、王俊峰职务,” 经济日报, November 27, 2020, at <https://archive.md/vgpd7>, accessed November 4, 2021; 弗林, “内蒙古多名官员下台 或与强推汉语教学风波有关,” RFI 中文, November 28, 2020, at <https://archive.md/R8FVV>, accessed November 4, 2021.

<sup>62</sup> 内蒙古一教育局长被查, 今日呼事, 1 April 2021, at <https://archive.md/dCgGC>, accessed November 4, 2021.

<sup>63</sup> “内蒙古一教育局长被查,” 今日呼事, April 1, 2021, at <https://archive.md/dCgGC>, accessed November 3, 2021. He was subsequently expelled from the party and his case was referred to the courts due to his “rotten character,” which included accepting illegal gifts and bribes, among other offenses. See “正镶白旗教工委书记、教育局党组书记、局长青格勒图严重违纪违法被开除党籍和公职,” 内蒙古锡林郭勒盟正镶白旗纪委监委网站, June 22, 2021, at <https://archive.md/TdZtM>, accessed November 4, 2021.

ethnic affairs office Jorigt (照日格图)<sup>64</sup> were removed and charged with disciplinary violations following widespread teacher and student boycotts in the banner.<sup>65</sup>

In Tongliao city, celebrated Mongolian educator and party secretary of the Education Bureau, Goa (高娃), was charged and later convicted of bribery charges.<sup>66</sup> As former principal of the Tongliao Mongol School, Ms Goa had overseen a fivefold increase in student numbers during the early 2000s and helped grow the school into the region's largest and most lauded Mongolian school, earning herself a state award as a hero of national unity in 2007.<sup>67</sup>

On August 5, 2021, the regional government announced it had accepted the resignation of IMAR Chairwoman Bu Xiaolin.<sup>68</sup> A cloud of suspicion surrounded her after she largely disappeared from public in the wake of the protest movement. When she reappeared to deliver the work report at the IMAR's People's Congress in January 2021, she dramatically collapsed on stage before being carried away and once again disappearing from public sight.<sup>69</sup>

No reason was given for Bu's removal, but her obvious demotion comes after two former Mongolian chairmen of the region, Yang Jing (杨晶) and Baatar (巴特尔), were dismissed from office.<sup>70</sup> There is speculation that Baatar was removed as head of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission in December 2020 due to his sympathy for the language protest movement in his native Inner Mongolia.<sup>71</sup> Yang Jing, who at the time was China's most

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<sup>64</sup> “内蒙古一官员任上被查 按照此前安排月底还要接待群众来访,” 网易, March 18, 2021, at <https://archive.md/5yXvQ>, accessed November 4, 2021.

<sup>65</sup> 旗宣传部, “锡林郭勒盟使用国家统编教材‘有问必答’ (蒙汉语第二期),” 苏尼特左旗人民政府, September 8, 2020, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/21094291-xi-lin-guo-le-meng-shi-yong-guo-jia-tong-bian-jiao-cai-you-wen-bi-da-meng-yi-yu-di-er-qi-su-ni-te-zuo-qi-ren-min-zheng-fu?responsive=1&title=1>, accessed November 3, 2021; 李方, Tweet, September 9, 2020, available at <https://twitter.com/stanleynordic/status/1303461125208506368>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>66</sup> “内蒙一市女教育局长受贿 500 多万, 当校长时学校成绩多次居全区榜首,” 呼和浩特吧, June 23, 2021, <https://archive.md/QqnKG>, accessed November 4, 2021.

<sup>67</sup> “内蒙古自治区通辽市蒙古族中学校长高娃: 献丹心睿智 谱民族教育新篇,” 国家民委网站, November 4, 2009, at <https://archive.md/j36V5>, accessed November 4, 2021.

<sup>68</sup> “王莉霞任内蒙古自治区政府代主席 布小林辞去主席职务(图|简历),” 中国经济网综合, August 5, 2021, at <https://archive.md/vMTA6>, accessed November 4, 2021.

<sup>69</sup> 穆尧, “北京或撤换布小林,” 多维新闻, June 1, 2021, at <https://archive.md/5yUjn>, accessed November 4, 2021; 穆尧, 布小林提前下野, 多维新闻, 3 August 2021, at <https://archive.md/6Bzj4>, accessed, November 3, 2021.

<sup>70</sup> 苏子牧, “中國國務院‘大管家’楊晶被降級 團派接班無望,” 多维新闻, August 3, 2021, at <https://archive.md/CuRNA>, accessed November 3, 2021; 穆尧, “國家民委「掌門」換人 中共為何 66 年來更換一名漢人,” 多维新闻, December 17, 2020, at <https://archive.md/3aRdD>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>71</sup> 布蓝, “中國民委換帥背後: 前兩任少數民族主管去職或有隱情,” 多维新闻, December 15, 2020, at <https://archive.md/GWtrC>, accessed November 4, 2021. Baatar was replaced as

senior cabinet minister and non-Han party official, was removed from office in February 2018 and confessed to corruption.<sup>72</sup> Bu Xiaolin was replaced by Wang Lixia (王莉霞), a Mongolian official who had spent most of her career outside the region,<sup>73</sup> suggesting a concerted effort to weaken the links between Mongolian officials and the autonomous region, with loyalty emerging as the key determinant of promotion in Xi's China.

#### 4. Weaponizing the law

The shift toward *putonghua*-medium education and cultural assimilation contradicted existing IMAR and national laws, and thus required retrospective changes and reinterpretations to shore up the legality of the party Center's reforms in Inner Mongolia. Under Xi Jinping, the law is frequently "weaponized" in support of the party's will.<sup>74</sup>

The Regulations on Mongolian Written and Spoken Language Work in the IMAR,<sup>75</sup> which were enacted in May 2005, stipulate written and spoken Mongolian as the "lingua franca" (通用语言) across the IMAR and "an important tool for exercising autonomy." They require all government and civil organs to use Mongolian alongside *putonghua* as well as dedicated support for promotion of the language. Despite some opposition at the time of its passage, the 2016 Regulations on Ethnic Education in the IMAR codified strong administrative and financial incentives to support Mongolian-medium education, affirming the region would "prioritize the development of and provide targeted support for ethnic education," while also outlining sanctions on those who violate or obstruct ethnic education.<sup>76</sup>

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head of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission by Chen Xiaojiang (陈小江), the first time since 1954 that a Han official rather than an ethnic minority headed the commission.

<sup>72</sup> 苏子牧, "中國國務院 '大管家' 楊晶被降級 團派接班無望," 多维新闻, August 3, 2021, <https://archive.md/CuRNA>, accessed November 3, 2021; Zhuang Pinghui, "Top Chinese Cabinet Official Yang Jing's Sacking 'Linked to Missing Billionaire Xiao Jianhua,'" *South China Morning Post*, February 24, 2018, at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2134592/top-chinese-cabinet-official-yang-jings-sacking-linked>, accessed November 4, 2021.

<sup>73</sup> 穆尧, "布小林提前下野," 多维新闻, August 3, 2021, at <https://archive.md/GWtrC>, accessed November 4, 2021; Linda Lew, "Inner Mongolia's Old Order Makes Way as Outsider Replaces Member of Local Political Dynasty as Chairwoman," *South China Morning Post*, August 5, 2021, at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3143994/inner-mongolias-old-order-makes-way-outsider-replaces-member>, accessed November 4, 2021.

<sup>74</sup> Susan Trevaskes, "Weaponising the Rule of Law in China," pp. 113–140, in *Justice: The China Experience*, eds. Flora Sapio et. al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Han Zhu and Lu Jun, "The crackdown on rights-advocacy NGOs in Xi's China: Politicizing the law and legalizing the repression," *Journal of Contemporary China* (2021).

<sup>75</sup> "内蒙古自治区蒙古语言文字工作条例," 阿拉善日报蒙古文版, March 16, 2015, at <https://archive.md/dvEFj>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>76</sup> "内蒙古自治区民族教育条例," 内蒙古人大网, December 4, 2020, at <https://archive.md/qjId3>, accessed November 4, 2021.

In its January 2021 internal propaganda pamphlet, the IMAR Education Department stressed the legal requirement that all Chinese citizens study the national spoken and written language under Article 19 of the PRC Constitution, and other national laws, while stating the above IMAR regulations were inappropriate and would need to be “revised and perfected.”<sup>77</sup> And sure enough, the Legislative Affairs Committee of the National People’s Congress Standing Committee issued a ruling later that month stating that local regulations requiring ethnic schools to use their own written and spoken languages are inconsistent with Article 19 of the Constitution.<sup>78</sup>

In August 2021, the IMAR government issued two new draft regulations on education and the promotion of *putonghua* for public consultation. Schools in the region, the new education regulations mandate, must cultivate the correct view of the country, history, nation, culture, and religion, and promote the national common language as the “foundation” (基本) of the regional education system.<sup>79</sup> The second set of regulations make explicit the need to maintain the “dominant position” (主体地位) of *putonghua* and its central role in forging the communal consciousness of the Chinese nation-race.<sup>80</sup> These regulations, when they come into force on 1 January, 2022, will nullify and replace the 2005 regulations on the Mongolian language and the 2016 regulations on ethnic education in the IMAR, therefore marking the death knell for the Mongolian language and identity in the region.

Unlike Xinjiang and Tibet, the IMAR lacked a set of regulations explicitly promoting national unity. This changed with passage of the Regulations on Accelerating Progress on National Unity in the IMAR on January 30, 2021, with Article 71 outlining the responsibilities of residents to uphold national unity and social stability while avoiding any violent terrorist, ethnic, separatist, or religious extremist activities.<sup>81</sup> The regulations, an explanatory text and graph illustrates, “entirely embody the important proclamations of General Secretary Xi Jinping on nation-building work and the party Center’s major policy decisions on ethnic work.”<sup>82</sup> The region’s new regulations on promoting “civilized behavior”

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<sup>77</sup> 内蒙古自治区教育厅, “筑牢中华民族共同体意识推进国家统编教材使用和国家通用语言文字教育宣传手册,” 内部资料 (January 2021), p. 21.

<sup>78</sup> 沈春耀, 全国人民代表大会常务委员会法制工作委员会, “关于 2020 年备案审查工作情况的报告,” 全国人民代表大会, January 27, 2021, <https://archive.md/lfuB9>, accessed November 3, 2021; See also Wei Changhao, “Reining in Rogue Legislation,” *Made in China Journal*, September 19, 2021, at <https://madeinchinajournal.com/2021/09/19/reining-in-rogue-legislation/>, accessed November 4, 2021.

<sup>79</sup> “关于《内蒙古自治区教育条例（草案修改稿）》公开听取意见的公告,” 巴彦淖尔市教育局, August 23, 2021, at <https://archive.md/gd9jo>, accessed November 4, 2021.

<sup>80</sup> “关于《内蒙古自治区实施〈中华人民共和国国家通用语言文字法〉办法（修订草案修改稿）》公开听取意见的公告,” 内蒙古人大, August 21, 2021, at <https://archive.md/eABo4>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>81</sup> “《内蒙古自治区促进民族团结进步条例》(全文),” 腾讯网, May 24, 2021, <https://archive.md/9Fu9Z>, accessed November 4, 2021.

<sup>82</sup> “《内蒙古自治区促进民族团结进步条例》将于 2021 年 5 月 1 日正式施行,” 呼和浩特新闻综合广播威信, February 8, 2021, at <https://archive.md/ThD3f>, accessed November 3, 2021.

(文明行为), which outlaw everything from spitting and defecating in public to failing to walk one's dog on a leash, also require a "firm footing" (牢固树立) in the "communal consciousness of the Chinese nation-race," and, in theory, punishments for those who do not abide.<sup>83</sup>

Finally, in September 2021, the IMAR Education Department announced plans to follow suit with other provinces and autonomous regions in gradually scaling back and eventually eliminating altogether ethnic-based "extra points" (加分) on the university entrance exam.<sup>84</sup> To "integrate ethnic factors with regional factors," students (regardless of ethnicity) living in remote regions in the IMAR would retain 5 extra points, and beginning in 2026, Mongolian students in urban areas who used to receive upward of 30 bonus points would not receive any preferential treatment.<sup>85</sup>

## Implications

The Chinese Communist Party has long used a carrot-and-stick approach to ethnic governance. Under Xi Jinping's new era of cultural nationalism,<sup>86</sup> the party Center is turning to more coercive methods of control and homogenization as its tolerance for diversity wanes. The emphasis is on standardizing and normalizing Beijing's directives throughout the nation, while also creating a uniform set of ethnocultural norms in frontier regions such as Inner Mongolia.

As a result, Mongolian identity – like that of other non-Han communities in China – is slowly being hollowed out. This sort of "slow violence" is chiefly structural and not defined by any single event or policy action; but rather represents the steady – yet at times obscure – altering of what it means to be a citizen of China and the norms that define that identity.<sup>87</sup>

Ritualized performances of exotic otherness remain, often through fetishized costume, song and dance ensembles performed for the voyeuristic pleasure of visiting Han officials and foreign tourists. Meanwhile, on the main stage, Mongols and other indigenous communities

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<sup>83</sup> "内蒙古自治区文明行为促进条例," 昆都仑区城市管理综合执法局威信, October 22, 2021, at <https://archive.md/Veug0>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>84</sup> Yin Han, "Experts Urge End to *Gaokao* Benefits to Minorities," *Global Times*, June 26, 2018, at <https://archive.md/IpzNM>, accessed November 4, 2021; Wang Qi, "Anhui Province to Cancel Bonus Points for Ethnic Minorities in College Entrance Exams," *Global Times*, September 15, 2020, at <https://archive.md/KV6G9>, accessed November 4, 2021.

<sup>85</sup> "内蒙古: 出台深化高考加分改革工作实施方案," 内蒙古自治区教育厅, September 15, 2021, at <https://archive.md/iWuE9>, accessed November 3, 2021; "内蒙古: 2010年高考照顾政策性加分办法出台," 北方新报, May 11, 2010, at <https://archive.md/icdaX>, accessed November 3, 2021.

<sup>86</sup> Leibold, "Planting the Seed."

<sup>87</sup> Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013; Gerald Roche, "Articulating Language Oppression: Colonialism, Coloniality, and the Erasure of Tibet's Minority Languages," *Patterns of Prejudice*, 53.5 (2019): 487-514; Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8.4 (2006): 387-409.

are being taught to dress, act, and speak in accordance with Xi Jinping Thought in state schools, where children as young as six years of age learn: “We are all Chinese; we all deeply love our motherland, as Grandpa Xi Jinping says, ‘Love for one’s motherland is the deepest and most enduring sentiment in the world; the source for achieving individual virtue and the foundation for rendering meritorious service’.”<sup>88</sup>

Yet Inner Mongolia is not Tibet nor Xinjiang. Regional variations remain as do forms of local resistance. Xi Jinping’s mandate for cultural nationalism and ethnic assimilation has been rolled out at varying paces and under different local circumstances. Inner Mongolia has exercised – at least until recently – a higher degree of autonomy than those restive regions where national security fears have propelled a more heavy-handed and securitized approach to stability maintenance and nation-building. The party’s methods in Inner Mongolia are more subtle and less visible, arguably making them more insidious to China’s ethnocultural diversity over the long term.

### **About the Author**

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<sup>88</sup> 教育部组织编写, 习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想学生读本 (小学低年级) (北京: 人民出版社, 2021), p. 1.