# Analyzing the Strengths of Grassroots Ethnic governance in China: A Comparative Study with the U.S. Model

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**Abstract:** Grassroots ethnic governance is not only the foundation of he governance of multi-ethnic countries but also an important part of public administration. Based on the multi-thousand-year history of "diversity in unity" in ethnic integration, China's grassroots ethnic governance emphasizes the guidance of the "Chinese nation community", and the Chinese government promotes the common development of all ethnic groups through the all-round embedding of culture, economy and society, aiming to eliminate the development gap among ethnic groups and build a unified multi-ethnic national identity. However, as an immigrant country, the grassroots ethnic governance approach in the United States is characterized by maintaining the tradition of autonomy in grassroots ethnic communities.Besides,the United States emphasizes the "non-deep integration" of ethnic multiculturalism. The grassroots ethnic governance in the United States adopts a "divisive governance" strategy, and the US government avoids the formation of a single group that could oppose the government by subdividing ethnic identities. As a result, the development gap among ethnic groups in the United States is growing wider and conflicts among ethnic groups are increasing.

**Key words:** grassroots ethnic governance; China-US comparative study

## Introduce

Grassroots ethnic governance is the foundation of governance in multi-ethnic countries. Besides,The development of the governance system in multi-ethnic countries must first promote the development of Grassroots ethnic governance method. Therefore, the topic of Grassroots ethnic governance in multi-ethnic countries has always been a popular research topic in the field of public administration. However, the existing research perspectives on Grassroots ethnic governance in multi-ethnic countries mainly focus on analyzing the Grassroots ethnic governance methods of a specific multi-ethnic country. The limitation of this research perspective lies in the fact that it does not compare the Grassroots ethnic governance methods of different multi-ethnic countries, making it impossible to intuitively understand the advantages of one country's Grassroots ethnic governance methods over another. Therefore, this article will compare the Grassroots ethnic governance methods of China and the United States, two different multi-ethnic countries, and draw the conclusion as to why China's Grassroots ethnic governance methods are more advantageous than those of the United States.

## 1 Grassroots ethnic governance methods in China

As a unified multi-ethnic country with a long history, China has drawn upon thousands of years of historical experience and has formed a grassroots ethnic self-governance model under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. This model is based on ethnic integration and is promoted through the implementation of relevant grassroots ethnic policies by the government (such as grassroots ethnic regional autonomy policies, and policies for training grassroots ethnic cadres). This approach aims to facilitate the comprehensive integration of the cultures, economies, and societies of all ethnic groups. Meanwhile, during the practice of grassroots ethnic governance in China, in order to cultivate the civic consciousness of grassroots ethnic people and protect the interests of ethnic groups, the government uses platforms such as ethnic residents'

meetings and democratic hearings to enable grassroots ethnic groups to "self-manage, self-service, and self-monitor". With China's economic boom and continuous social development, in order to eliminate the development gaps among ethnic groups and improve the living standards of grassroots ethnic people, the Chinese government has continuously innovated its governance methods for grassroots ethnic affairs[1]. The Chinese government also has proposed a project of paired assistance between developed areas with a majority Han population and backward areas with a majority ethnic minority population, which support through each provincial administrative units. For instance,Huang Yinglai and Shao yihong(2025)[2]reported that In 2024, Guangdong Province (an economically developed region with a majority of Han people as the population) provided economic assistance to Xinjiang Province (an underdeveloped region with a majority of Uyghur and other ethnic minorities as the population). More than 30 key enterprises from both regions signed cooperation agreements, and 23 actual projects were implemented. The business output of enterprises from Guangdong and Xinjiang in Xinjiang reached 10.5 billion yuan, and over 20,000 people achieved stable employment. Therefore, in the process of grassroots ethnic governance in China, it promotes the common development of all ethnic groups and builds a unified multi-ethnic national identity, achieving common prosperity among all ethnic groups at the grassroots level.

## 2 Grassroots ethnic governance methods in the United States

As a typical immigrant country, the United States features a complex and diverse ethnic and cultural landscape. Due to the tradition of local autonomy maintained since its founding, communities where different ethnic groups gather are the most basic units of self-governance, undertaking almost all public management and service functions[3]. This means that at the grassroots level, ethnic communities can to a certain extent independently decide and manage matters related to their own ethnic groups, such as building small public facilities and organizing cultural activities within the community. However, due to the different cultural backgrounds among various ethnic groups and the significant disparities in their development, such as the average income of African Americans and Latinos being far lower than that of whites and their lagging behind in wealth accumulation, they are more economically vulnerable and have difficulty accessing good education and medical resources, further exacerbating the inequality in development among different races. As a result, not only can the various ethnic groups at the grassroots level in the United States not achieve deep integration, but violent conflicts often break out among them. Moreover, the U.S. government's attitude towards grassroots ethnic governance has always emphasized the "non-deep integration" of ethnic multiculturalism. That is, the U.S. adopts a "divisive governance" strategy at the grassroots level, dividing ethnic identities to prevent the formation of a single ethnic group that might oppose the government. For instance, recently, the U.S. has implemented the Asian sub-classification bill, further subdividing the "Asian" category into subgroups such as Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese. The implementation of this bill will further lead to the division among grassroots ethnic groups and cause more violent conflicts among them. According to the report on hate crimes against Asian Americans, after the implementation of the Asian sub-classification bill by the U.S. government, violent crimes against Chinese Americans by other ethnic groups in the U.S. have significantly increased. Therefore, although the United States is a multi-ethnic country formed by immigration, its grassroots ethnic governance approach has not led to balanced development among its ethnic groups, nor has it established a unified multi-ethnic national identity. Instead, violent conflicts among grassroots ethnic groups have been on the rise.

## 3 Comparing the grassroots ethnic governance models of China and the United States

Both China and the United States are unified multi - ethnic countries. Therefore, they share numerous similar governance models in grass - roots ethnic governance.The grassroots governance models of both China and the United States are based on the theory of people's sovereignty, emphasizing the dominant position of the people in the governance process. The grassroots ethnic autonomy system in China and the community-based ethnic governance concept in the United States both focus on "public participation" and strive for the direct exercise of democratic rights.However,There are significant differences in the governance models of grassroots ethnic affairs between China and the United States.In terms of the grassroots ethnic governance concept, the Chinese government emphasizes the establishment of the "Chinese nation community" concept, while the US government emphasizes the maintenance of the "independence of each ethnic group at the grassroots level" concept.In terms of governance methods, China emphasizes the leading role of the government,

respects the autonomy rights of ethnic minorities at the grassroots level, and promotes the common prosperity of all ethnic groups at the grassroots level through mutual assistance and integration among different ethnic groups. On the other hand, the US government continues the tradition of grassroots ethnic community autonomy, allowing each grassroots ethnic community to have the right to manage their own affairs to a certain extent. At the same time, the US adopts a "divisive governance" strategy, dividing different ethnic identities, and requiring each ethnic group at the grassroots level to achieve a difficult-to-realize deep integration in order to prevent the formation of a single ethnic group force that might confront the government.

## 4 Conclusion

By comparing the grassroots ethnic governance methods of China and the United States, two multi-ethnic countries, we can draw a conclusion that the grassroots ethnic governance method of China has advantages over that of the United States. The reason lies in that the grassroots ethnic governance method of China emphasizes the "Chinese nation community", and the Chinese government integrates culture, economy and society into grassroots ethnic governance in an all-round way, and attaches importance to the common development of all ethnic groups in grassroots ethnic governance practice, eliminating the development gap among ethnic groups and striving to build a unified multi-ethnic national identity. Therefore, the grassroots ethnic governance method of China promotes the common development of all ethnic groups and achieves common prosperity for all ethnic groups at the grassroots level. However, the grassroots ethnic governance method of the United States maintains the tradition of grassroots ethnic community autonomy, and each grassroots ethnic community can independently decide and manage matters related to their own ethnic group to a certain extent. Due to the significant cultural differences among ethnic groups, the development levels of different ethnic groups also vary. This makes it difficult for the ethnic groups in the grassroots of the United States to achieve deep integration and build a unified multi-ethnic national identity. Moreover, the United States government has adopted a "divisive governance" strategy at the grassroots level, dividing ethnic identities to prevent the formation of a single ethnic group that might oppose the government. The governance strategy of the United States government further exacerbates the conflicts among different ethnic groups at the grassroots level.

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