

Assessing Ethnic Disparities in Income and Poverty in China: The Case of Han and Hui in Ningxia

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This paper studies differences in economic well being between Han and Hui in the autonomous region of Ningxia, Peoples Republic of China. As a part of Chinas ethnic minority policy stressing equality between ethnic groups out of China's 31 province level units, five have been given status as autonomous regions. This means that ethnic minorities are given some preferred treatments. The five are Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Guanxi and Ningxia. In each of the regions there are members of the minority and members of the Hahn majority although the proportions vary. On one hand in Tibet and Xinjiang are Han in minority, while in the other three they are in majority. It is clearly of policy interest in measuring possible ethic disparities in economic well being within those five units. Still, knowledge seems to be very limited, and we have actually not come across any attempts at all based on household data for the unit of an autonomous region addressing this issue.

When we here focus on Ningxia, we investigate the Hui and Han ethnic groups. Ningxia is a province level unit with GDP and HDI somewhat under the medina for China. Hui is one of 10 officially defined groups in China that are Muslims. Hui have language and appearance in common with the Han majority, thus in some sense ideal comparison to the Han. Studying Han and Hui disparities in Ningxia can thus also be seen as a comparison of ethnic Muslim minorities compared to the non-Muslim majority. Many countries have a Muslim minority.

Our ambition is to be many sided. We investigate rural as well as urban areas. Economic well being is in this study not only measured by household income, wealth and poverty but also by levels of education and health status. Furthermore we are interested in the subjective well-being. We use two relatively large sample surveys for 2006.

Turing to results we report that according to some indicators are the Hui in a unfavourable situation in Ningxia. Hui are on average shorter educated than Han and on average they have less wealth. This is true for rural Ningxia as well as to urban Ningxia. Furthermore, we report a household income per capita gap in urban Ningxia amounting to 21 percent. In rural Ninxia is the situation different as we cannot find any ethnic income gap. The reason for this is that Hui households compensate their lower farm income with higher incomes from out of farm work. For example, they are more likely to migrate. A interesting finding is that in rural Ningxia are Hui respondents are not less healthy nor less happy than Han respondents.