The relational structure, value connotation, and practical strategies of frontier governance modernization: a case study of the Tibet Autonomous Region

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Abstract. As a crucial component of the broader national governance modernization agenda, the modernization of frontier governance holds substantial significance for safeguarding border security and ensuring lasting stability. The year 2025 marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Tibet Autonomous Region. Over these six decades, Tibet has undergone transformative changes and has developed a governance model of strategic value under the leadership of the Party. Drawing on Tibet's development trajectory, this article analyzes frontier governance from the perspective of Party committee leadership. It argues that core leadership capacity should be strengthened through advancements in political, organizational, and ideological development. From the standpoint of government administration, emphasis must be placed on high-quality development, expanding foreign trade and regional influence, and pursuing a path of green and ecological governance. Together, these efforts will drive the modernization of frontier governance.

Keywords: frontier governance, Tibet governance, 60th anniversary of the founding of the Tibet Autonomous Region

1. Introduction

The modernization of frontier governance represents a comprehensive state-led process in which national authority constructs institutional arrangements, delegates functional responsibilities, allocates personnel, coordinates resources, and facilitates cross-border linkages within the unique spatial context of frontier regions. Frontier governance is not merely the administration of a geographically defined area; rather, it is deeply intertwined with the nation's overall development imperatives while simultaneously reflecting local characteristics. As Fang Shengju observes, "In national governance, frontier governance is not a matter of presence or absence, but one of quality [1]." Zhang Lunyang further argues that frontier governance must be integrated into the national "Five-Sphere Integrated Plan," advancing—at a high standard—the building of a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation across frontier regions' political, economic, cultural, social, and ecological dimensions [2]. According to An Beijiang, "The modernization of frontier governance is essentially a dynamic reconstruction of spatial production. It transforms the physical space of geopolitical territories into a composite humanistic and ecological space, converting 'inorganic' territory into 'organic'

territory, meeting the survival and development needs of the Chinese national community while also embodying the interests of all ethnic groups and the will of the state [3]." Collectively, these perspectives underscore that frontier governance is a holistic process that integrates problem orientation, goal planning, and solution design. Tibet, as a vital part of China's frontier regions, occupies a distinctive position due to its unique historical and political trajectory. At the same time, it remains one of the less economically developed provincial-level regions in China and faces several challenges in advancing modernization: First, significant disparities in economic and social development persist between Tibet and inland regions. Second, frontier security remains vulnerable to interference from external hostile forces. Third, ecological protection and environmental governance continue to encounter numerous challenges and shortcomings. Fourth, the vitality and momentum of local economic development require further enhancement. Fifth, living standards in some border areas still have room for improvement. This article focuses on Tibet's frontier governance and seeks to explore the relational structure of Tibet's governance modernization, its underlying value connotations, and the macro-level pathways for advancing Tibet's modernization endeavors. Guided by the Party's strategic approach to governing Tibet, the discussion aligns with major national policies and analyzes Tibet's political direction and current developmental realities.

2. The intrinsic connotations of frontier governance modernization

The modernization of frontier governance is a process of systemic construction through which the state exercises authority, allocates resources, deploys personnel, designs institutions, and implements policies in frontier regions. It is directly linked to national unity and security, the stable development of the economy and society, and the well-being of the people. It represents the state's governance capacity in regions characterized by complex conditions and diverse, often unique, circumstances. Tibet fulfills essential functions in safeguarding national security, ensuring social stability, and maintaining ethnic unity. The year 2025 marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the Tibet Autonomous Region. General Secretary Xi Jinping, leading the Central Delegation to Lhasa, conducted an in-depth inspection of Tibet's development in the new era. While affirming the region's remarkable achievements, he also provided strategic guidance for building a new Tibet within the framework of Chinese-style modernization.

From the perspective of contemporary strategic planning, a set of governance objectives centered on the Party's leadership has taken shape. The Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China explicitly calls for "strengthening the development of frontier areas [4]." Under this strategic requirement, advancing the modernization of frontier governance becomes an inevitable undertaking in the nation's pursuit of rejuvenation. During the 18th collective study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee in 2024, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized that "promoting the modernization of frontier governance systems and capabilities is an essential component of Chinese-style modernization." The CPC Central Committee has long attached great importance to frontier governance modernization, successively proposing strategies such as "Revitalizing Border Areas and Enriching Residents" and "Safeguarding and Consolidating Border Stability," thereby laying out top-level plans for enhancing frontier governance in the new era.

From the standpoint of practical governance, Tibet has gradually formed a comprehensive governance model under the leadership of the Party. Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the central government's strategies for governing Tibet's frontier regions can be broadly summarized as follows: Fully uphold the Party's leadership and ensure that the Party's governance principles and policy designs permeate all aspects of Tibet's socioeconomic development. Second, Resolutely safeguard national unity and maintain

stability in Tibet, building a secure and sustainable frontier. Take fostering a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation as the central thread, promoting interaction and integration between Tibet's ethnic groups and people from inland areas. Leverage Tibet's unique resource endowments to develop characteristic industries, advance high-quality economic development, and improve people's livelihoods. Protect the ecological environment and safeguard the fragile ecosystem of the Tibetan Plateau. Deepen economic and trade cooperation with neighboring countries and promote border-area development. Together, these strategic measures reflect the Party's strong commitment to frontier governance in Tibet. They embody the essential characteristics and values of Chinese-style modernization and represent new practical achievements in the modernization of national governance at the frontier.

3. The relational structure of frontier governance modernization

Achieving high-quality governance in frontier regions requires advancing the modernization of frontier governance, which in turn necessitates clarifying several key relational dynamics.

3.1. Frontier governance modernization is fundamentally constituted by the frontier governance system and governance capacity

Border governance embodies distinct characteristics of integrity, systematicity, and organization, and it is primarily composed of two interrelated components: the border governance system and governance capacity. The border governance system "is an organic whole composed of elements such as the target-value system, organizational structure system, institutional-policy system, strategy-method system, and resource-guarantee system," while governance capacity refers to "a comprehensive capability, including the capacity to manage border development issues, security issues, identity issues, ethnic issues, religious issues, and border-related social issues" [5]. The modernization of border governance requires the coordinated functioning of these two components to achieve significant improvements in governance effectiveness.

On one hand, the border governance system serves as the foundation and guarantee for governance capacity. The governance values embedded within the system provide institutional norms for border governance. The completeness and logical consistency of the governance system directly influence the effectiveness of governance capacity: the more scientific and rational the system, the more effectively governance capacity can operate, demonstrating the advantages of institutional design. Conversely, an incomplete or poorly structured system may diminish governance outcomes. Therefore, the border governance system must evolve in step with the times to contribute to a well-ordered governance framework. On the other hand, governance capacity is the practical embodiment and active reflection of the governance system. The governance system provides scientific guidance for governance capacity, but the system's effectiveness can only be verified in practice, depending on how well it aligns with actual governance needs. The closer governance capacity aligns with the objective laws of border development and reflects the voices of border residents, the more efficiently the governance system operates, thereby validating its scientific rationality.

Currently, China's border governance system and governance capacity still face challenges such as theoretical-practical mismatches, outdated governance concepts, and overly complex institutional structures. Looking toward the main battleground of future border governance, it is essential to deeply understand these challenges and ensure that "the border governance system and governance capacity constitute a dialectically unified organic whole, complementing and reinforcing each other" [6]. By continuously strengthening core governance capabilities, adhering to pragmatism, and keeping pace with the times, the optimal synergy for effective governance can be achieved.

3.2. Frontier governance modernization reflects—and is rooted in—national governance modernization

Perry Hicks and others proposed the theory of holistic governance, which emphasizes, at the national governance level, the need for coordination between central and local authorities to establish a well-ordered political operation system. Border governance is a subset of national governance and shares certain commonalities with inland governance, including the need to maintain vigilance in times of stability and adaptability in the face of change. Its distinctiveness lies in the additional challenges it must confront, such as the management of borders, ethnic affairs, and religious matters. As an essential component of national governance, the level of development and effectiveness of border governance sets the ceiling for overall national governance. Because it deals with unique governance issues, the modernization of border governance carries particular significance. The quality of its construction and implementation reflects China's ability to address issues in special regions and provides structural and procedural guidance for the enhancement of national governance. At the same time, border governance, combining elements of both special and general local governance, must be grounded in national governance theory. National governance operates with a broader perspective and higher-level strategic thinking, offering practical feasibility and foundational theoretical support for border governance. Furthermore, practical lessons learned from handling general public affairs can be selectively applied to border governance. Excellent national governance can drive the continuous improvement of border governance, and conversely, advances in border governance can contribute to the overall progress of national governance.

3.3. The governance priorities of Tibet compared with other border provinces

China's nine border provinces each pursue distinct goals in their respective modernization processes. For example, Tibet focuses on four core tasks: maintaining stability, promoting development, protecting the ecological environment, and strengthening border security. Xinjiang concentrates on safeguarding social stability, consolidating the great unity of the Chinese nation, pursuing high-quality development, and expanding opening-up. Yunnan seeks to build itself into a "destination for green energy, green food, and healthy living," continually exploring new development pathways. Despite these provincial differences, several core tasks remain common across all border regions: First, safeguarding national sovereignty. Confronted with traditional geopolitical security threats, border provinces must prioritize patrols, surveillance, and regulation of frontier areas to ensure territorial integrity. Second, maintaining ethnic unity by fostering a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation. Third, improving people's livelihoods, enhancing residents' sense of fulfillment, happiness, and security. Fourth, protecting the ecological environment and building a green frontier.

4. The value connotations of frontier governance modernization

Since ancient times, Tibet has maintained close political, economic, and cultural ties with the Chinese heartland. Throughout history, Tibet's connections with the inland regions and the central government have continuously deepened, while its governance mechanisms have been progressively refined. In the long process of historical evolution, the people of Tibet and the people of the interior jointly expanded China's vast territory, forged a unified multiethnic state, wrote a long and rich Chinese history, created a brilliant Chinese civilization, and nurtured a great national spirit. The historical strategies for governing Tibet—from past to present—are profoundly significant. They attest to the centuries-long bonds between Tibet's ethnic minorities and other ethnic groups of the interior; they demonstrate the central government's gradual refinement of

policies for governing ethnic regions; and they form an important historical foundation for fostering a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation in contemporary Tibet. Through this long process, the people of Tibet have strengthened their identification with the motherland, the Chinese nation, the Communist Party of China, socialism with Chinese characteristics, and Chinese culture. This has shaped a pattern of ethnic equality, unity, and common prosperity among all ethnic groups, embodying diverse value connotations.

4.1. Embodying the core value of safeguarding national unity and frontier stability

Safeguarding national unity and ensuring the security and stability of frontier regions are fundamental acts of defending sovereignty. As a vital frontier in China's southwest, Tibet holds irreplaceable strategic significance. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, external hostile forces have repeatedly attempted to interfere in and split Tibet, posing grave threats to both regional and national security. These actions constitute violations of China's sovereignty and unlawful interference in its internal affairs. Addressing these threats requires a dual approach. First, a robust legal framework is indispensable. Instruments such as the National Security Law and the Regulations on the Establishment of the Model Area for Ethnic Unity and Progress in the Tibet Autonomous Region provide the legal basis for safeguarding frontier stability and national security, ensuring Tibet's long-term peace and prosperity. Second, a historical perspective is necessary to affirm that Tibet has always been an integral part of China. Whether through the establishment of central administrative institutions for Tibet in successive dynasties or through the practice of imperial recognition—such as the conferral of titles on the Dalai Lamas and Panchen Erdenis—history offers abundant evidence of central authority over Tibet. The notion of "Tibetan independence" has never existed; at its root, it is a fabrication driven by certain Western forces seeking to interfere in China's internal affairs and undermine ethnic unity. Such attempts will never succeed.

4.2. Embodying the value of interwoven commonality and diversity

First, this value is reflected in the integration of unity and autonomy.Unity means safeguarding the overall national interest, defending national independence, and ensuring long-term social stability and prosperity. Autonomy, as exercised in frontier regions, is conducted on the basis of adherence to the Constitution and national laws, conformity with objective development laws, alignment with the fundamental interests of local populations, and compliance with basic moral principles. Autonomy arises from unity and is subject to it. The exercise of autonomous power in frontier regions must be grounded in legal legitimacy granted by the central government, supported by institutional authorization, and monitored through procedural oversight. Only in this way can frontier authorities effectively manage public affairs while strengthening border governance and contributing to the creation of a peaceful and stable environment for socialist modernization nationwide.

Second, frontier governance must integrate ethnic factors with regional characteristics. Border regions are home to substantial ethnic minority populations, often comprising either a single dominant minority group or multiple minority groups living alongside the Han population. This requires grounding governance in the project of fostering a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation and promoting extensive interethnic interaction. Traditional Chinese festivals, artistic forms, and other culturally expressive practices with distinctive national characteristics can be leveraged to strengthen emotional bonds and cultural identification among ethnic groups. In addressing everyday issues affecting different ethnic communities, governance must embody humanistic care—respecting and protecting the customs, cultural traditions, and religious beliefs of each minority group, and building a shared spiritual homeland for all. At the same time, special attention must be given to ethnic minorities in high-altitude, remote, and impoverished regions. Their living conditions and

quality of life must be effectively improved through deepening rural revitalization and consolidating the gains of poverty alleviation to ensure that no one falls back into poverty.

As an autonomous region, Tibet enjoys certain powers of self-governance derived from the Constitution. These powers reflect the aspirations of local communities and combine general administrative responsibilities with governance tailored to special regional conditions. They are manifested in legislation on regional autonomy, administrative arrangements, language use and education, and other domains. These practices integrate the unique history, culture, customs, and production methods of ethnic groups in Tibet. As Tibet advances toward Chinese-style modernization, its governance responsibilities extend well beyond internal development. With roughly 4,000 kilometers of international borders adjoining India, Nepal, and other countries, Tibet must not only promote regional development but also strengthen border management, cultivate strong national security consciousness, and resolutely safeguard China's territorial integrity.

4.3. Embodying the governance values of rule of law, scientific rationality, and institutionalization

In frontier governance, actions without legal authorization are impermissible. It is therefore essential to firmly establish a rule-of-law mindset, uphold governance according to law and in accordance with the Constitution, and ensure accurate interpretation and effective application of laws and regulations. Strengthening frontier governance requires improving the regional legislative framework, emphasizing judicial practice, and cultivating a corps of judicial and law enforcement personnel with strong legal literacy and extensive practical experience. While upholding the authority of law, governance must also effectively safeguard the lawful rights and interests of local residents. Acts that endanger national security, undermine ethnic unity, or disrupt social stability must be severely punished in accordance with the law, thereby forming a robust legal framework for frontier governance.

Scientific rationality constitutes a core dimension of frontier governance. First, scientific governance thinking must be established. The unique conditions of frontier regions mean that governance cannot rely solely on conventional patterns of thought; doing so risks falling into the traps of dogmatism or empiricism. Instead, governance must adhere to the mass viewpoint and the mass line—immersing itself among border residents and ethnic minorities, conducting extensive field investigations and consultations, accurately identifying the distinctive nature of local problems, clarifying their governance priorities, designing orderly governance processes, leveraging relevant precedents, and executing governance tasks with high efficiency. Equally important are process supervision, rigorous risk control, and comprehensive post-action evaluation and summary work. Second, scientific governance techniques must be deployed. Governance tools and methods should be diversified rather than confined to traditional approaches. Utilizing modern, data-informed, and technology-supported means can significantly enhance governance efficiency while reducing negative externalities during implementation.

Institutionalization provides the foundational guarantee for frontier governance. On one hand, the continuous improvement of the legal system—combined with scientific governance models and modern governance technologies—creates a stable and predictable governance environment. Frontier governance must be guided by the major principles and policies of the Party and the state, as well as by the insights generated through high-level meetings dedicated to frontier affairs. Creative institutional innovations should be undertaken to continually refine the frontier governance system. On the other hand, existing institutional arrangements must be either preserved or reformed as appropriate. First, fundamental and basic political institutions must be upheld and effectively developed. Their core principles and normative spirit should be integrated with the valuable experiences accumulated in frontier governance, enabling these institutions to

better align with the general laws of regional development and the specific local realities of frontier areas, thus allowing them to express distinctive frontier characteristics. Second, in advancing Chinese-style modernization, important institutions must continue to be improved and implemented—such as paired assistance programs and transfer payment mechanisms. These initiatives should be dynamically adjusted in light of the developmental priorities and strategic directions of frontier regions, ensuring the efficient allocation and optimal use of policy support, financial resources, and human capital. The goal is to maximize the benefits of resources provided by developed regions and to promote coordinated development between eastern and western China.

5. Practical strategies for advancing the modernization of frontier governance

Building a modern system of frontier governance is a long-term undertaking that spans multiple domains of frontier development. Horizontally, it encompasses the enhancement of governing (administrative) capacity, high-quality economic development, social prosperity and stability, and border security. Vertically, Party and government authorities must strengthen their own institutional capacity while mobilizing developmental resources in accordance with local conditions so as to continuously consolidate the driver and potential for regional development. In July 2021, during his inspection tour in the Tibet Autonomous Region, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized the importance of focusing on the "four major tasks"—stability, development, ecology, and border consolidation. The Seventh Central Symposium on Tibet Work reiterated this imperative. These directives impose new requirements on Tibet's modernization of governance. As the leading force, the Communist Party of China (CPC) must prioritize strengthening its own capacity to lead the overall governance of Tibet. Meanwhile, the government, acting as an administrative manager, must focus on addressing developmental gaps, improving people's livelihoods and infrastructure, enhancing external connectivity, strengthening border security, and building an ecological governance framework.

5.1. The Party committee as the overall coordinator and leader

The leadership of the Communist Party of China represents the most essential feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics. It is the necessary path that aligns the objective laws of historical development with the needs of the people and constitutes the core leadership for comprehensively advancing Chinese-style modernization. The modernization of frontier governance in Tibet is equally a crucial element of national development and a key component of state governance. It concerns the vital interests of millions of Tibetan residents, the region's socioeconomic development, and the overarching objective of securing a stable and secure national border. Fulfilling the historic mission of advancing frontier governance modernization and achieving lasting prosperity in Tibet requires the Tibet Party Committee to plan, construct, and drive regional development. Under the strategic guidance of the CPC Central Committee, the Tibet Party Committee must deepen its self-reform and apply its organizational strength and political capacity to advance frontier governance to a new stage. Specifically, it should lead frontier governance through political, organizational, and ideological development.

5.1.1. Strengthening the Party's political development

Given the complexity of frontier governance, the Tibet Party Committee must reinforce its functional capacity and inject momentum into local development. At the macro level, it must continuously enhance its governing capacity through field investigations, grassroots engagement, data analysis, and inter-organizational collaboration to gain a comprehensive understanding of Tibet's development conditions. Key priorities include the following: First, strengthening political leadership as the core of governance capacity. The Party

Committee must maintain full alignment with the CPC Central Committee in political strategy, ensure timeliness in policy execution, and integrate the Central Committee's latest frontier, ethnic, livelihood, religious, and border-trade policies with Tibet's practical development needs. These policies should be institutionalized and systematized as guiding principles for local governance. Meanwhile, the Party Committee should mobilize border residents and coordinate governmental agencies, social organizations, and interregional associations to participate in the entire process of regional development. Second, strengthening organizational capacity at the grassroots as a foundational building block. Tibet faces numerous challenges in its modernization journey, which require both the responsibility of governing authorities and the active participation of border residents. Therefore, the Party Committee must establish Party organizations in communities, villages, and grassroots units so that the Party's governance philosophy, policy approaches, and problem-solving pathways reach frontline areas. While enhancing residents' understanding of the Party's governance principles, these grassroots organizations should mobilize residents in accordance with laws, regulations, and relevant administrative norms to participate actively in local development initiatives. For instance, residents may be organized to participate in border defense activities and encouraged to learn from exemplary figures such as the sisters Zhuoga and Yangzong from Yumai Township. Third, strengthening social mobilization capacity as a key element of collaborative governance. Tibet covers a vast territory with numerous administrative areas, many of which span extensive geographic distances. In addressing public affairs, the Party's administrative authority must be complemented by the strength of society. For example, the protection of the plateau ecological system requires the Party Committee and grassroots organizations to mobilize residents, social groups, and local organizations to participate in ecological preservation, forming a comprehensive network of supervision and protection and fostering a governance landscape characterized by multi-stakeholder collaboration.

5.1.2. Strengthening the Party's ideological development

On the one hand, the ideological development of the Party carries a distinct orientation—namely, the emphasis on people-centered governance. In governing Tibet, it is essential to uphold a comprehensive, full-chain, and full-cycle governance mindset and to prioritize the protection of the interests of all ethnic groups. Enhancing the well-being of border residents should be placed at the core of ideological development. Simultaneously, it is necessary to maintain ideological purity by resolutely eliminating the erosion of harmful or erroneous ideas and advancing the Party's self-reform in the ideological sphere. On the other hand, under the leadership of the Party Committee, frontier governance in Tibet must continuously promote the adaptation of Marxism to the Chinese context and to the requirements of the new era. This entails strengthening the study of the basic principles of Marxism and equipping Party committees at all levels with Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. In designing governance processes, building institutions, configuring organizational structures, and arranging personnel, theoretical principles must be effectively integrated with practical needs. Emphasis should also be placed on the cohesive role of these theoretical achievements among the people, their positive contribution to the lawful administration of religious affairs, and their foundational function in fostering a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation. The overarching objective is to integrate Marxist theory with Tibet's developmental realities and its fine traditional culture; to vigorously promote the "Old Tibet Spirit" and the "Two Roads Spirit"; to consciously resist improper tendencies; and to demonstrate Tibet's contemporary, practical, and people-centered value. Through such efforts, frontier governance thinking in Tibet can achieve substantive elevation.

5.1.3. Strengthening the Party's organizational development

The organizational development of the Communist Party of China proceeds along two principal dimensions. First, the Party's leadership must be embedded in institutions that are directly led by non-Party organizations,

thereby ensuring the realization of the Party's overall leadership. This is achieved primarily through Party groups or dispatched Party organs, which shoulder responsibilities for political development, discipline enforcement, and ideological guidance. While conveying the major policies and strategic directions of the CPC Central Committee, these organs also lead institution-level Party building. Second, it is vital to give full play to the role of grassroots Party organizations as strongholds of combat capacity and to the exemplary role of Party members. Efforts should be made to cultivate a corps of highly competent Party cadres who think and work alongside the people, thereby translating mass-line principles into concrete action and consolidating the Party's authority and public image. At the same time, the Party must strengthen discipline development within its organizations. In accordance with the Regulations on Disciplinary Measures of the Communist Party of China and other discipline-related management rules—as well as directives issued by higher-level Party committees and leading departments—discipline must be enforced comprehensively across all Party organizations. This will help foster clean, upright, and disciplined Party organizations that provide a strong institutional guarantee for frontier governance.

5.2. The local government as builder and administrator

As the executive organ of the state, the government plays a constructive role in shaping overall development or specific administrative affairs at both the national and regional levels. Whereas the Communist Party of China primarily performs leadership functions, the government must exercise its administrative functions and assume concrete developmental responsibilities. In Tibet's frontier governance, advancing the "four major tasks" requires local governments to fully perform their administrative duties.

5.2.1. Building a stable Tibet oriented toward high-quality development

The core element of regional development is people—concentrated social groups with production and consumption capacities. To achieve high-quality socio-economic development in Tibet, it is essential to ensure that this population base is sufficient. However, the total population of the Tibet Autonomous Region still accounts for only a small proportion of China's overall population, and the number of indigenous residents is relatively low, which significantly limits regional development. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on key areas with a sufficient population base, such as Lhasa, Shigatse, and Nyingchi, activating local natural and social resources and introducing the "City-Building and Border-Guarding Strategy" [7] to fully promote socio-economic development. This requires the Tibet government to enhance its management capacity, deepen reforms in administration, delegation, and service (fangguanfu), strengthen its supervisory role, and allow the market to operate with both legal freedom and regulatory oversight. At the same time, government departments must leverage policy guidance through tax reductions, talent attraction programs, and the optimization of the business environment—for example, the Tibet government has issued the Regulations on Optimizing the Business Environment in the Tibet Autonomous Region and launched the "Everest Talent" initiative to attract more external population to participate in Tibet's construction and development, gradually forming a population agglomeration effect.

Once a sufficient population scale has been accumulated, the government must prioritize the improvement and construction of infrastructure and public service facilities to ensure or enhance the basic living standards of the local population. This includes improving the regional transportation network, promoting the construction of basic data industries, strengthening the social security system, optimizing the roles of primary and secondary income distribution, and guiding tertiary redistribution to participate in socio-economic development. In 2024, "Tibet allocated 12.9 billion RMB to livelihood construction, fully implementing 21 key livelihood projects… achieving full coverage of county-level medical consortia, and the nation's first national medical center for ethnic medicine was officially approved" [8]. "Key projects such as the Qinghai-

Tibet, Sichuan-Tibet, Central Tibet, and Ali 'Electric Sky Roads' and the 'Three Regions and Three Prefectures' power grid were completed… cumulatively, 8,099 5G base stations and nearly 312,600 km of optical cables have been built. The 5G network now covers counties and key townships, mobile signals reach 3A-level and above tourist attractions, and optical fiber broadband, 4G signals, and broadcasting and television signals have basically covered all administrative villages" [9]. The full opening of the Lhasa–Rikaze Expressway and numerous achievements in the Sichuan–Tibet Railway, along with the commencement of the Milin Hydropower Station this year, provide strategic support for Tibet's economic operation and development, improve daily life for border residents, and enhance their sense of gain and well-being.

5.2.2. Building an internationalized and strong frontier Tibet

First, safeguarding national security must remain the central task. As a strategically significant province on China's southwestern frontier, Tibet performs a critical security function. On the one hand, ideological security must be protected by resolutely combating the infiltration of hostile external ideologies and lawfully promoting the core socialist values so that these values take firm root among the people and serve as the shared normative foundation of frontier cohesion. On the other hand, territorial security must be safeguarded through strengthened domain-specific regulation and coordination among the military, police forces, and border-resident patrol groups to form a robust and jointly defended inspection system. Tibet should establish and refine emergency response mechanisms for border contingencies and develop information-driven, network-based governance workflows that facilitate timely reporting to competent authorities and ensure efficient responses to any threat undermining the security of China's border regions.

Second, Tibet must strengthen its external economic connectivity. Bordering India, Nepal, and other South Asian countries, the region possesses substantial potential for external economic engagement. On the one hand, Tibet should leverage national strategic initiatives and actively integrate into the Belt and Road framework. The government should align policy adjustments with local industrial strengths to nurture high value-added industrial clusters. Simultaneously, investment must be increased in key border land ports by coordinating human, material, and financial resources toward areas with high development potential, such as the international Kyirong Port, the Gyirong Border Economic Cooperation Zone, and the Lhasa Comprehensive Bonded Zone. Such efforts will enhance cross-border economic exchanges and promote people-to-people connectivity. On the other hand, the modernization of a strong frontier Tibet will enable it to exert beneficial spillover effects on neighboring countries, advance bilateral and even multilateral relations, and, through strengthened institutional capacity, generate positive externalities that drive regional economic development, cultural interaction, and cross-border mobility among frontier populations.

5.2.3. Building a green Tibet where humans and nature coexist harmoniously

Located at high altitude and home to numerous unique ecosystems, the Tibet Autonomous Region is both ecologically fragile and a key area for endangered species conservation. Given the significant challenges in ecological civilization construction, Tibet must adhere to green and sustainable development principles and pursue a development path characterized by harmony between humans and nature. First, Tibet should improve its institutional system for ecological and environmental protection by establishing binding regulatory frameworks through legal means. Key instruments include the Plan for Ecological Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development of the Qinghai–Tibet Plateau and the Regulations of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Construction of a National Ecological Civilization Highland. These frameworks support integrated management of mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes, grasslands, and deserts, and enforce institutionalized ecological governance assessments for governments at all levels. Strict political accountability for ecological protection must be maintained. Based on ecosystem conditions, national nature reserves should be established, with local communities mobilized to participate in their management, as seen

in the Yarlung Tsangpo Grand Canyon National Nature Reserve. Tibet must also deepen cross-regional ecological cooperation with neighboring provinces to form contiguous, large-scale governance patterns, as exemplified by the Inter-Provincial Joint Prevention and Control Mechanism Agreement on Sudden Water Pollution Incidents in Upstream and Downstream River Basins jointly formulated with Yunnan and Qinghai Provinces. Second, Tibet should transform its economic development model and foster a green development mindset. Drawing upon its unique geography, Tibet possesses abundant wind, hydropower, solar, and geothermal resources. These advantages must be fully harnessed to develop green ecological projects that both facilitate industrial transformation and integrate economic benefits with social and ecological outcomes. At the same time, Tibet must further tap into its distinctive tourism resources to develop integrated models that combine natural, cultural, and economic value, as exemplified by the tourism development of Gala Village.

6. Conclusion

The modernization of border governance has always been a critical undertaking in the broader endeavor of building a Chinese path to modernization and advancing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. As an essential component of national governance modernization, it plays a constructive role in safeguarding national security, maintaining social stability, promoting interethnic interaction to ensure ethnic unity, improving the quality of life for border residents, and fostering prosperity and development in border regions. Border governance is a long-term process that has continuously evolved, been refined, and advanced from ancient times to the present. It is highly practical and deeply shaped by its era. To this end, it is imperative to resolutely safeguard national unity, correctly manage the relationship between diversity and commonality, and effectively ensure the legitimate interests of every region and every ethnic group.

The achievements made since the establishment of the Tibet Autonomous Region 60 years ago have been accomplished with the care and support of the CPC Central Committee, the State Council, and the entire Chinese people. On one hand, it remains necessary to continue strengthening the leadership of the Tibet Autonomous Region Committee of the CPC in overall planning and to give full play to the government's role in concrete administration, thereby shaping a governance model for Tibet characterized by coordinated Party-government cooperation. On the other hand, in the face of destabilizing factors stemming from external forces seeking to infiltrate Tibet's territory and ideology, it is essential to further refine the Party's strategies for governing border regions and governing Tibet. It is crucial to unswervingly safeguard China's territorial integrity, ensure national unity and security, and consistently promote ethnic embedding and integration. Efforts should be made to build a Tibet defined by ethnic unity, strengthen the sense of belonging to the Chinese national community among all residents in Tibet, and achieve integration at the ideological, institutional, and practical levels. By maintaining close alignment with Party organizations, all people in Tibet can work together to contribute to the region's prosperity and strength.

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