

## *Original Paper*

# Planning Long-term Strategies and Taking Fundamental Measures: A Practical Study of the Communist Party of China's Thought on "Long-term Construction of Xizang" in Ganzi

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### ***Abstract***

*"Long-term development of Xizang" is an important principle by which the Communist Party of China guides work in ethnic minority areas and is one of the core contents of the Party's governance strategy in the new era. From the abandonment of the "three-year replacement" plan for troops entering Xizang and the establishment of the idea of "taking root in the plateau and making it home" to the systematic proposal of the important principles of "governing the region by law, enriching the people and developing the region, building Xizang in the long term, uniting the people and laying a solid foundation", the idea of "building Xizang in the long term" has undergone an evolution process from practical exploration to theoretical elevation and from specific work guidelines to strategic core. Ganzi Prefecture, the first prefecture-level autonomous prefecture for ethnic minorities in the People's Republic of China, is an important field of practice for the idea of "building Xizang for a long time". Based on a review of the theoretical content of the idea of "building Xizang for a long time", this paper systematically analyzes the practical achievements and experiences and inspirations of the implementation of the idea of "building Xizang for a long time" in areas such as economic development, poverty alleviation, infrastructure construction, ethnic unity and progress, ecological civilization construction, and counterpart support in Ganzi Prefecture. To provide references for a deeper understanding of the Party's governance strategy and for promoting long-term stability and*

*high-quality development in ethnic minority areas.*

### **Keywords**

*Long-term Development of Xizang, Party governance strategy, Garze Prefecture, Practical research, Long-term stability*

## **1. Introduction**

Ethnic minority areas have a particularly important strategic position in the overall governance of the country. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China has made it clear that “governing the country requires governing the border areas, and governing the border areas requires stabilizing the border areas first.” The stability and development of the relevant provinces and regions are not only regional issues, but also related to the overall work of the Party and the country. The idea of “building Xizang for a long time” holds a foundational position in the Party’s governance strategy system. In 2015, at the sixth Work symposium of the Central Committee, the 20-word important principle of “governing the region by law, enriching the people and developing the region, building Xizang for the long term, rallying the people and consolidating the foundation” was systematically proposed for the first time. Subsequently, at the Seventh Work Symposium, it was incorporated into the “Ten musts” of the Party’s governance strategy for the new era.

Ganzi Prefecture was established on November 24, 1950, as the first prefecture-level autonomous prefecture for ethnic minorities in the People’s Republic of China. From the construction of the Sichuan-Xizang Highway by the 18th Army, the suppression of rebellion and democratic reform, to the economic and social development after the reform and opening up, and to poverty alleviation and rural revitalization, Ganzi Prefecture has always been a practitioner and witness of the idea of “building Xizang for a long time”. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Ganzi Prefecture has earnestly implemented the central governance strategy and the work arrangements of the provincial committee, adhered to the working principles of “governing the region by law, enriching the people and developing the region, building Xizang for the long term, rallying the people and consolidating the foundation”, and coordinated the three major tasks of development, people’s livelihood and stability, achieving historic accomplishments in all undertakings.

However, at present, academic research on the idea of “building Xizang for a long time” mainly focuses on theoretical discussions about its connotation and significance, lacking a systematic review and effectiveness analysis of its practice in the specific ethnic region of Ganzi. This paper focuses on the practice of the idea of “building Xizang for a long time” in Ganzi. By collecting, identifying and analyzing relevant literature and data, an analytical framework for the practice effect is constructed to provide references for subsequent special studies and policy advice decisions.

## **2. The Practical Dimension of the Idea of “Building Xizang for a Long time” in Ganzi**

Ganzi Prefecture, located on the southeastern edge of the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau and at the junction of

Sichuan and Yunnan provinces, covers an area of 153,000 square kilometers and governs 18 counties (cities). It is an important part of the second largest ethnic minority area in China. Ganzi Prefecture is also the first prefecture-level autonomous prefecture for ethnic minorities established after the founding of the People's Republic of China, and it holds a particularly important position in the Party's ethnic work. For more than 70 years, Ganzi Prefecture has been a firm practitioner of the idea of "building Xizang for a long time". Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Ganzi Prefecture has taken "governing the region by law, enriching the people and developing the region, building Xizang for the long term, rallying the people and laying a solid foundation" as the fundamental guideline for governing and developing the prefecture, and has comprehensively advanced the practice in multiple dimensions such as economic development, improvement of people's livelihood, social stability, ethnic unity and ecological civilization.

(1) Economic development dimension: Consolidating the material foundation for long-term peace and stability

"Building Xizang in the long term" first requires long-term and stable material support. Ganzi Prefecture firmly holds that development is the foundation and key to solving all problems, insists on taking economic construction as the center, and continuously enhances its capacity for self-development.

In terms of total economic volume, Ganzi Prefecture has achieved remarkable results. In 2019, the state's gross domestic product reached 38.846 billion yuan, 1,142.5 times that of 1950, compared with the state's establishment in 1950. General public budget revenue reached 3.412 billion yuan, 15,507.4 times that of 1950. By the end of 2023, the total economic output of the state exceeded the 50 billion yuan mark, reaching 51.335 billion yuan, quadrupling from the end of the 12th Five-Year Plan. The total output and growth rate ranked second and third respectively among the 10 cities (prefectures) in ethnic minority areas. This leapfrog development fully demonstrates the practical power of the idea of "building Xizang for a long time" in promoting the economic and social development of Ganzi.

In terms of industrial development, Ganzi Prefecture, based on its highland characteristic resource advantages, is accelerating the construction of a modern industrial system. In 2023, the total output value of the traditional Chinese of ganzi industry exceeded 2 billion yuan for the first time, achieving the target of the 14th Five-Year Plan ahead of schedule. The upgrading of the entire chain of characteristic agriculture and animal husbandry has achieved remarkable results. In 2024, the added value of the primary industry in the entire state reached 9.104 billion yuan, surpassing the 9 billion yuan mark for the first time. Green industries such as cultural tourism and clean energy have also flourished and become new growth poles supporting the long-term development of Ganzi.

(2) Dimension of the battle against Poverty: A Historical leap in eradicating absolute poverty

The fundamental purpose of "building Xizang for a long time" is to enable people of all ethnic groups in ethnic minority areas to live a happy life. Poverty alleviation is a solemn commitment of the Party to people of all ethnic groups in ethnic areas and the most profound practice of the idea of "building

Xizang for a long time” in Ganzi.

In February 2020, Ganzi Prefecture achieved poverty alleviation throughout its territory. A total of 225,500 people were lifted out of poverty in the prefecture. All 1,360 poor villages were removed from the poverty list. All 18 counties (cities) were lifted out of poverty. Absolute poverty and regional overall poverty were completely eradicated. The poverty incidence rate dropped from 23.17% to 0.23%. In the process of poverty alleviation, Ganzi Prefecture has taken relocation for poverty alleviation as an important measure, completing the relocation of 13,721 households with 55,383 people and building 88 centralized resettlement sites. The population in areas with poor ecological environment and harsh living conditions in the state has been transferred and resettled in an orderly manner, fundamentally changing the survival mode that has relied on the harsh natural environment for thousands of years.

The victory of poverty alleviation is not only a leap in the economic aspect, but also a unity of hearts. As some researchers have put it, the essence of work in ethnic minority areas lies in “winning people’s hearts”, and poverty alleviation is the most effective way to win people’s hearts. The practice in Ganzi Prefecture shows that “building Xizang in the long term” and “winning people’s hearts” are mutually interdependent dialectical unity: without the development results of long-term construction, it is impossible to truly win people’s hearts; Without the cohesion of people’s hearts, long-term construction is also difficult to sustain.

### (3) Dimension of infrastructure construction: Building the Heavenly Road to modernization

A solid material and technological foundation is indispensable for the long-term development of Xizang. Ganzi Prefecture is located in a cold and oxygen-deficient area with high mountains and deep valleys and poor transportation. Infrastructure has long been the biggest bottleneck restricting its development. Over the years, Ganzi Prefecture has vigorously implemented the “transportation first” strategy, achieving a historic breakthrough in infrastructure construction.

The construction of the Ya ‘an-Kangding Expressway is a landmark project for the implementation of the idea of “building Xizang for a long time” in Ganzi. The then head of the Ganzi Prefectural Committee clearly pointed out: “The Ya ‘an-Kangding Expressway is both an economic road, a people’s livelihood road and a political road. It plays a crucial role in promoting economic development and social harmony and stability in ethnic minority areas. It is also a practical action to implement the central government’s proposition of ‘governing the region by law, enriching the people and developing the region, building Xizang for a long time, uniting the people and consolidating the foundation’.” The Ya ‘an-Kangzi Expressway was fully opened to traffic on December 31, 2018, ending the history of Ganzi Prefecture having no expressway, greatly shortening the time and space distance with the inland areas, and opening up a thoroughfare for the long-term development of Ganzi.

In terms of communication infrastructure, Ganzi Prefecture has achieved a leapfrog development. All 94 communication base stations along the southern route of Sichuan-Xizang have been completed and put into operation, and Sichuan has achieved 100% access to “dual gigabit” networks (5G and gigabit optical network) in all towns and townships. The digital divide is being gradually filled by

technological forces. These “information sky roads” not only improve the quality of life of the people, but also provide important support for Ganzi’s integration into the national economic development cycle.

#### (4) Dimension of Ethnic Unity and Progress: Building a shared spiritual home for the Chinese nation

The underlying goal of “building Xizang in the long term” is to achieve the integration and unity of people of all ethnic groups. Ganzi Prefecture has made forging a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation the main thread of all its work and has innovatively carried out the creation of ethnic unity and progress.

In 2022, Ganzi Prefecture fully launched the “Strengthening the Awareness of the Chinese Nation Community - Ethnic Unity into Families and Temples” campaign, with more than 65,000 public officials covering more than 260,000 households, building the spiritual bond of ethnic unity through visits and consolations, family affairs and exchanges. As of 2024, Ganzi Prefecture has 6 national model counties and 16 model units for ethnic unity and progress, and 199 provincial model counties (cities) and model units for ethnic unity and progress.

In terms of cultural identity, Ganzi Prefecture has continuously carried out “Five Histories” education, built 325 ethnic museums and comprehensive cultural stations in towns and townships, and implemented the project for the protection and development of ethnic culture. In 2024, the collection “Pomegranate Flowers Bloom, Seeds Unite, Stories of Ethnic Unity” was compiled, documenting the real process of interaction, exchange and integration among all ethnic groups through vivid and lively stories. These practices vividly interpret the cultural dimension of “long-term construction of Xizang” - construction is not only about improving material conditions, but also about building a spiritual home.

#### (5) Dimension of ecological civilization construction: Protecting the green mountains and clear waters of the snow-capped plateau

Ecological civilization construction is an essential part of the “long-term development of Xizang”. Ganzi Prefecture, located in the upper reaches of the Yangtze River and the Yellow River, is an important ecological security barrier.

In 2023, the forest coverage rate of Ganzi Prefecture reached 35.38%, and the comprehensive vegetation coverage of grassland reached 85.58%. The rates of good air quality, good surface water quality, and good water quality of centralized drinking water sources in the prefecture have remained at 100% for six consecutive years, and the public satisfaction with ecological environment quality has ranked first in the province for four consecutive years. Based on its position as an ecological demonstration zone in northwest Sichuan, Ganzi Prefecture has been continuously promoting ecological civilization construction. Danba County has successfully established the “Green Mountains and Clear Waters are as Good as Mountains of Gold and Silver” practice innovation base, and Daocheng County has been selected as a pilot cultivation county for the construction of Beautiful Sichuan in 2023, providing beneficial explorations for ecological protection and high-quality development on the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau.

(6) Dimension of counterpart Support: Highlighting the long-term synergy of building Xizang as a national chessboard

Targeted support is an important form of institutionalized advancement of “long-term development of Xizang”. Since the important strategic decision of “regional responsibility, targeted support and regular rotation” was made at the third working symposium of the Central Committee in 1994, the targeted support policy has lasted for more than 30 years and has become an important institutional arrangement for promoting the prosperity and development of ethnic minority areas.

Ganzi Prefecture, as a key area of work, has received strong support from the central government and other provinces and cities. Zhejiang Province, Guangdong Province and others have provided targeted support to Ganzi Prefecture, achieving remarkable results in industrial cooperation, educational and medical assistance, and talent cultivation. These counterpart support practices vividly interpret the contemporary connotation of “national support” and also demonstrate the institutional advantages of “long-term construction of Xizang” - the combination of short-term assistance and long-term support, and the integration of one-way blood transfusion and self-sustenance.

### **3. The verification and Enrichment of the Thought of “long-term Construction of Xizang” by the practice in Ganzi**

More than 70 years of development in Ganzi Prefecture has verified and enriched the theoretical content of the idea of “building Xizang for a long time” at the practical level and provided important empirical insights.

First, “building Xizang in the long term” must adhere to the unity of Party leadership and reliance on the masses. Practice has shown that the strong leadership of the Party is the fundamental guarantee for the historic leap of Ganzi. At the same time, the long-term development of Xizang cannot rely solely on the injection of external forces; it is necessary to stimulate the intrinsic motivation of cadres and the masses of all ethnic groups. Ganzi Prefecture has always prioritized strengthening the Party’s governance foundation in ethnic minority areas, and has focused on strengthening the grassroots foundation for long-term stability and security, making the Party’s governance foundation in Ganzi more solid.

Second, “building Xizang in the long term” requires a balance between development and stability. The practice in Ganzi Prefecture shows that development and stability are the two wheels for the long-term development of Xizang, and neither can be missing. Ganzi Prefecture highlights the “two key points” of poverty alleviation and long-term stability, and coordinates the three major tasks of development, people’s livelihood and stability, promoting stability through development and ensuring development through stability, forming a pattern of benign interaction.

Third, to build Xizang in the long term, we must grasp the dialectical relationship between the long-term and the phased. The long-term development of Xizang requires both the strategic determination to plan for a century and the phased advancement step by step. Ganzi Prefecture

emphasizes the combination of “looking to the long term” and “focusing on the present”, planning major foundation-related projects such as transportation, ecology and industry that are of long-term significance, as well as addressing urgent and difficult issues that concern the people most, such as poverty alleviation, employment, education and healthcare. In 2023, spending on people’s livelihood accounted for more than 65% of the general public budget expenditure, rallying people with a sense of real gain.

Fourth, the long-term development of Xizang must focus on the interaction between material and spiritual forces. The development practice of Ganzi Prefecture shows that the improvement of material conditions is the foundation for the long-term construction of Xizang, but the consolidation of spiritual forces cannot be ignored either. The precious spiritual wealth such as the “Old Plateau Spirit” and the “Two Roads Spirit” has been carried forward and developed through the continuous efforts of the people of all ethnic groups in Ganzi. At the same time, through the continuous promotion of the creation of ethnic unity and progress, Ganzi Prefecture seeks not only material prosperity but also deep identification and cohesion among people of all ethnic groups at the spiritual level.

#### **4. Conclusion**

From the advance of the 18th Army in 1950 to the establishment of the governance strategy for the new era, the idea of “building Xizang for a long time” has gone through more than 70 years of development. The idea has evolved from a simple concept of “the plateau as home” to a systematic theory of “planning for a hundred years and making long-term plans”, and from a specific work guideline to an important part of the strategic thought of governing the country. Ganzi Prefecture, as a typical representative of the key areas of ethnic regions, has seen more than 70 years of development and changes as a vivid portrayal of the idea of “building Xizang for a long time” - from “poverty and blankness” in the early days of liberation to the current economic output exceeding 50 billion yuan, the total number of poor people being cleared, the flower of ethnic unity blooming, and the ecological barrier being more solid. These achievements fully demonstrate the scientific nature and practical power of the idea of “building Xizang for a long time”.

The core wisdom of the idea of building Xizang for a long time, in the final analysis, lies in grasping the fundamental law of work in ethnic minority areas - the construction of ethnic minority areas should neither rush for quick success through a “passing fad” nor passively wait and do nothing, but must use strategic determination to plan for the long term, take measures to consolidate the foundation, and make efforts to continue. As emphasized by the Central Committee, “Plan for a hundred years, make long-term plans, all work should be planned for the long term, and all measures should be sustainable.” This is a political wisdom that transcends time and space and is the fundamental guideline for the long-term stability and high-quality development of ethnic minority areas.

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