

# Ethnic Discrimination and Authoritarian Rule: An Analysis of Criminal Sentencing in China

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This paper presents the first analysis of ethnic discrimination in sentencing patterns in the People's Republic of China, focusing on drug cases in Yunnan province.

We posit the “problem minority” hypothesis, which holds that discrimination in an authoritarian system emerges when an ethnic group becomes associated with behavior that generates social instability. On average, minority defendants in Yunnan receive sentences that are about 1.4 to 7.5 months longer than Han defendants that have committed similar drug crimes. Further analysis of data from all provinces reveals that this bias is largest for groups heavily involved in the drug trade, and in provinces with significant minority populations and drugs.



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Yue Hou's substantive research interests include authoritarian institutions, business-state relations, the political economy of development, and ethnic politics, with a regional focus on China.

Her book “[The Private Sector in Public Office: Selective Property Rights in China](#)” (October 2019, Cambridge University Press) examines strategies Chinese private entrepreneurs use to protect property from expropriation.

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