



FNVA

2025

UNITY OR ERASURE? CHINA'S DRAFT ETHNIC LAW IN FOCUS

REPORT

Prof. Srikanth Kondapalli Rushan Abbas
Enghebatu Togochoog Rinzin Namgyal Frank Lehberger Xia Ming
Pierro Tozi

HELD ON

November 14, 2025

ORGANISED BY:

The Foundation for Non-violent
Alternatives (FNVA)

www.fnvaworld.org



FOUNDATION FOR NON-VIOLENT ALTERNATIVES (FNVA)

Title: UNITY OR ERASURE? CHINA'S DRAFT ETHNIC LAW in focus

Produced by:
Foundation for Non-violent Alternatives (FNVA),
143, Uday Park, New Delhi 110049, India

All Rights Reserved:
No part of this report shall be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright holder.

Citation: UNITY OR ERASURE? CHINA'S DRAFT ETHNIC LAW in focus
– A REPORT 2025 New Delhi: Foundation for Non-violent Alternatives (FNVA)

Date: November 2025

Place: New Delhi

Contact Details:
Foundation for Non-violent Alternatives (FNVA)
143, 4th Floor, Uday Park New Delhi 110049
Email: office@fnvaworld.org
Website: www.fnvaworld.org

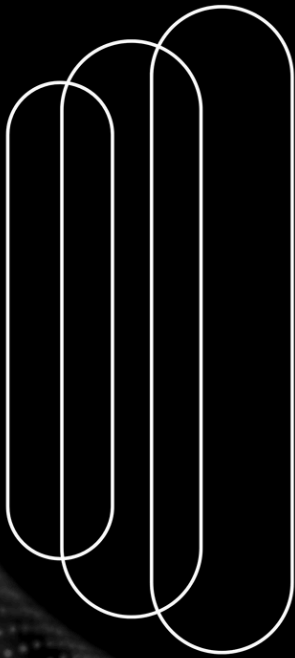
Mobile: 9599500392



UNITY OR ERASURE? CHINA'S DRAFT ETHNIC LAW IN FOCUS

CONTENTS

Ethnic Representations		Page
01	PANELIST INTRODUCTION	1
02	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	8
03	KEY TAKEAWAYS	9
04	RECOMMENDATIONS	10
05	OPENING REMARKS Prof. Srikanth Kondapali	12
06	REPRESENTING UYGHURS Ms. Rushan Abbas	14
07	REPRESENTING SOUTHERN MONGOLIA Enghebatu Togocho	18
08	DISCUSSION	20
09	REPRESENTING TIBET Rinzin Namgyal	24
International Voices		Page
10	Dr. Frank Lehberger	38
11	Dr Xia Ming	54
12	Pierro Tozzi	62
13	Discussion	69
Anexures		Page
14	DRAFT ETHNIC LAW TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH	72
15	ABOUT FNVA	84



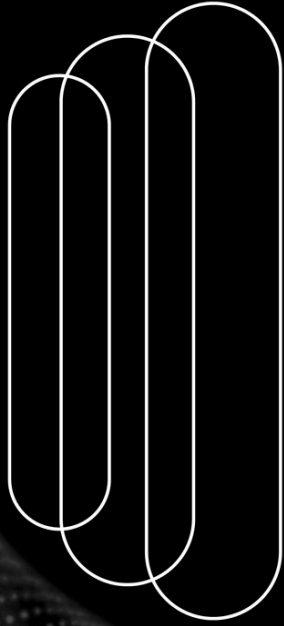
01

PANELIST

Prof. Srikanth Kondapalli

Dr. Srikanth Kondapalli is a leading Indian scholar on China and international relations and Trustee at the Foundation of non-violent alternatives. He is currently Chairperson of Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Research Associate at Centre for Chinese Studies, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. He is educated in Chinese studies in India and China with a specialisation in Modern Chinese History in Master of Arts at Osmania University at Hyderabad, Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy in 1989 and 1995 respectively in Chinese Studies Division of School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He learnt Chinese language at Beijing Language & Culture University and was a post-Doctoral Visiting Fellow at People's University, Beijing from 1996-98. He was a Visiting Professor at National Chengchi University, Taipei in 2004 and a Visiting Fellow at China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, Beijing in May 2007.

He has published several books, monographs, co-edited and several articles in edited books and in national and international journals and newspapers. He has presented several research papers at national and international conferences and lectured at Indian academic, defence, and media establishments. He is a guest faculty member at National Defence College, College of Naval Warfare, Army War College, Indo-Tibetan Border Police Academy and Border Security Force Academy.

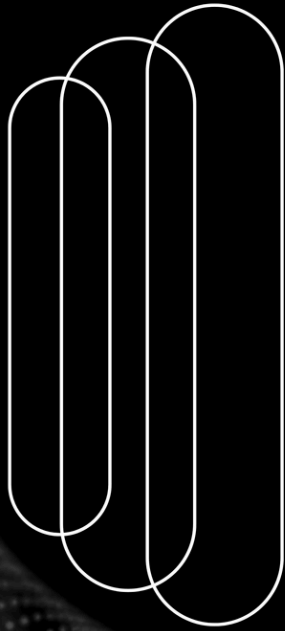


01

PANELIST

Rushan Abbas

Rushan Abbas is a leading Uyghur human rights advocate whose activism began as a student organiser of the pro-democracy demonstrations at Xinjiang University in the 1980s. Since moving to the United States in 1989, she has co-founded the first Uyghur student association in the U.S., served twice as Vice President of the Uyghur American Association, and became the first Uyghur broadcaster for Radio Free Asia’s Uyghur service. After two decades in international business and government affairs, she founded Campaign for Uyghurs in 2017, leading global initiatives—including the “One Voice One Step” movement—and publishing the landmark 2020 report *Genocide in East Turkistan*. Her organisation received Nobel Peace Prize nominations in 2022 and 2025, and in 2024 she received the Huntington Her Hero Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2025, she was honoured with the National Endowment for Democracy’s Democracy Award.

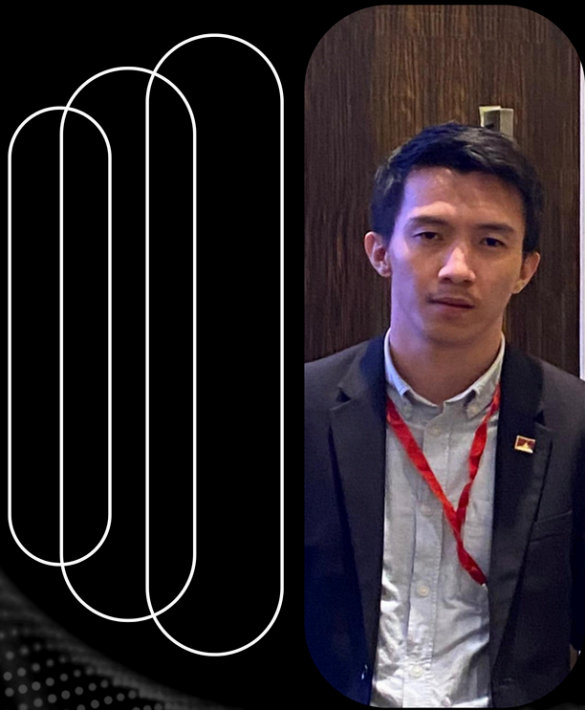


01

PANELIST

Enghebatu Togochoog

Born in Southern Mongolia, Enghebatu Togochoog came to the United States in 1998. In 2001, he established the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center (SMHRIC), a New York based human rights organisation dedicated to promoting and protecting the rights of the Mongolian people in Southern Mongolia. Currently he is the Director of the SMRHIC and the chief editor of the organisational newsletter "Southern Mongolia Watch". He has testified on human rights conditions of Southern Mongolia before the US Congressional Executive Commission on China, United Nations Human Rights Council, United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, United Nations Forum on Minority Issues, United Nations Committee Against Torture, and European Parliament. His work include the translation of "Way Out of Southern Mongolia" and "Genocide on the Mongolian Steppe" (Volume I and Volume II).



01

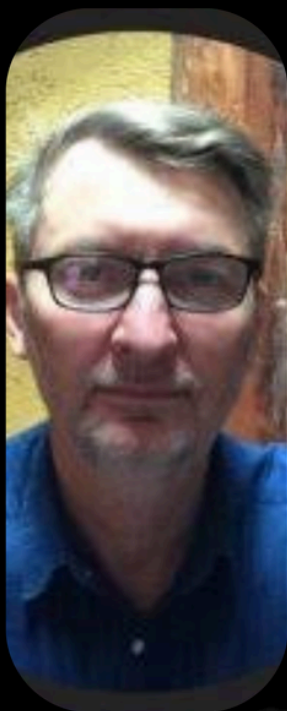
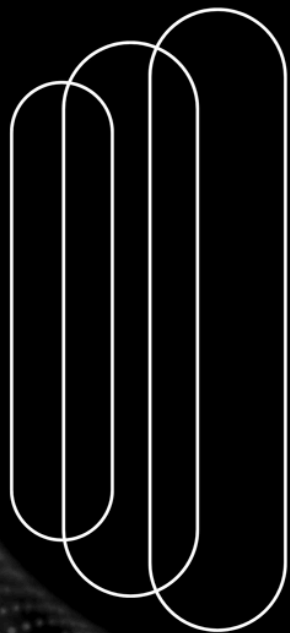
PANELIST

Rinzin Namgyal

Rinzin Namgyal is a PhD student in the Department of East Asian Studies at the University of Delhi and a Research Associate at the Foundation of Non-violent Alternatives. He previously completed his Master's degree in East Asian Studies, specialising in China, and holds an undergraduate degree from Kirori Mal College, University of Delhi.

His research focuses on Chinese domestic politics, ethnic policy, Sino-Tibetan relations, and the nexus between security and religion in China. His articles have appeared in Tibet Rights Collective, The Himalayan Dak, and Investigative Journalist Reportika, and he has been interviewed by StratNews Global, RFA Tibetan & Chinese, and The Eastern Sky Podcast.

He has also participated in major international conferences on global security and China, including the Raisina Dialogue, the Global Conference on New Sinology, and discussions on China's emerging global initiatives.

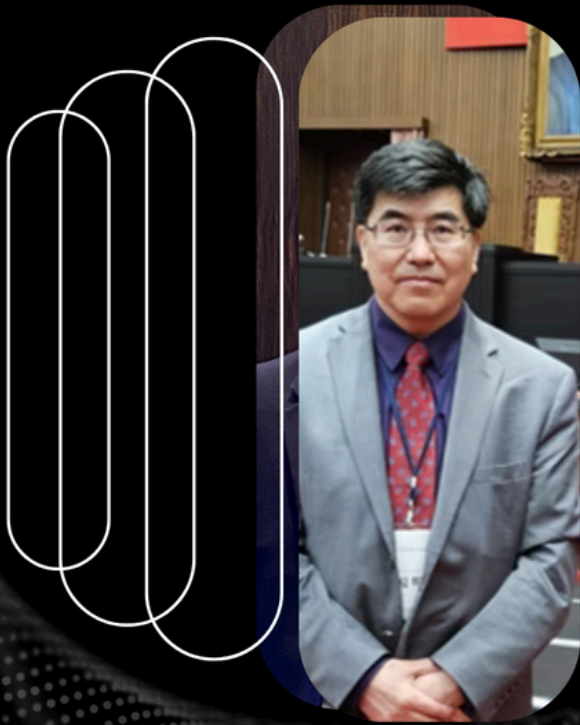


01

PANELIST

Dr. Frank Lehberger

Frank Lehberger is a trained Sinologist and expert on Chinese modern history, geopolitics, and Chinese colonial policy in occupied Tibet. He has lived many years in Taiwan, Hong Kong, mainland China, and Tibet, and beginning in 1996 travelled from British Hong Kong into several off-limits regions of Chinese-occupied Tibet to conduct poverty-relief projects. His near-native fluency in Chinese enabled him to obtain permits from wary Chinese colonial bureaucrats and work in areas closed to foreign visitors. In 2003, he privately funded the restoration of a historic Tibetan Buddhist monastery twice destroyed by Chinese forces, and he later witnessed major human rights violations during the 2008 crackdown. Since 2020, he has been based in Germany as an independent scholar, strategic foresight consultant, and China analyst. A German national, he speaks eight languages including Chinese and Tibetan, holds an honours degree in Sinology from the Sorbonne, and completed further studies in Taiwan. He is also co-author of a well-regarded 2010 book published in Finland analysing China's long-term strategic trajectory.

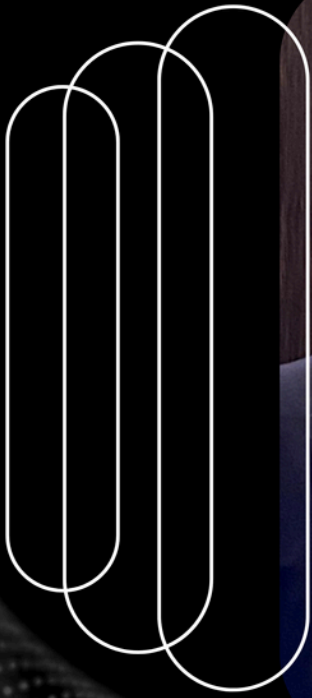


01

PANELIST

Prof. Ming Xia

He has held fellowships at leading institutions including the Sigur Center at George Washington University, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and the East Asian Institute and Asian Research Institute at the National University of Singapore. Professor Xia is the author of several books on Chinese politics, governance, and state power, and has edited or co-edited influential works on Liu Xiaobo and contemporary Chinese economic and political developments. He co-produced the Oscar-nominated HBO documentary *China's Unnatural Disaster* (2009) and served as historical adviser and translator for *Dream Against the World: Mu Xin* (2015). He was recognised among the "Top 100 Chinese Public Intellectuals" multiple times between 2009 and 2017. Ming Xia is Professor of Political Science at the College of Staten Island, City University of New York, and a doctoral faculty member at the CUNY Graduate Center. He received his degrees from Fudan University and Temple University, and previously taught at Fudan.



01

PANELIST

Piero Tozzi

Piero Tozzi is currently the Deputy Staff Director of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, having served as Staff Director in the 118th Congress. His previous positions include Republican Staff Director of the bipartisan Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission and Staff Director and Counsel for the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations. He has also served as Senior Foreign Policy Advisor and Counsel to Representative Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ). Mr. Tozzi received his J.D. from Fordham University School of Law and his B.A. from Columbia University. Mr. Tozzi speaks Mandarin Chinese, and is the author of several works on international law and comparative constitutional law, including [Constitutional Reform on Taiwan: Fulfilling a Chinese Notion of Democratic Sovereignty](#).

THE FOUNDATION FOR NON-VIOLENT ALTERNATIVES (FNVA) IS CONVENING THIS WEBINAR TO EXAMINE CHINA'S DRAFT LAW ON PROMOTING ETHNIC UNITY AND PROGRESS AS BOTH A DOMESTIC POLICY INITIATIVE AND A BROADER STATEMENT OF IDEOLOGY AND POWER.

FRAMED AS A TOOL FOR "UNITY" AND "PROGRESS," THE LAW IN REALITY CONSOLIDATES THE PARTY'S CONTROL OVER CULTURE, LANGUAGE, RELIGION, AND IDENTITY, WHILE LEGALLY BINDING ALL INSTITUTIONS AND CITIZENS TO UPHOLD A SINGULAR NATIONAL IDENTITY. THIS DISCUSSION AIMS TO UNPACK HOW THE LAW EXTENDS THE MECHANISMS OF CONTROL ALREADY SEEN IN XINJIANG, TIBET, AND INNER MONGOLIA INTO A NATIONWIDE FRAMEWORK.

THIS ONLINE PROGRAMME WILL ALSO EXPLORE HOW THE LAW'S EMPHASIS ON "PROTECTING SOVEREIGNTY" AND "PREVENTING EXTERNAL INTERFERENCE" INTERSECTS WITH BORDER POLICY—ESPECIALLY THE LAND BORDER LAW (2021)—AND WHETHER THESE FRAMEWORKS TOGETHER REFLECT A BROADER STRATEGY LINKING INTERNAL ETHNIC MANAGEMENT WITH EXTERNAL TERRITORIAL SECURITY.

BY BRINGING TOGETHER SCHOLARS, RESEARCHERS, AND COMMUNITY VOICES, THE DISCUSSION SEEKS TO MOVE BEYOND LEGAL ANALYSIS TO ADDRESS THE HUMAN, CULTURAL, AND GEOPOLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF CHINA'S NEW ETHNIC POLICY DIRECTION.

This report analyses China's Draft Ethnic Unity and Progress Law, a major legislative initiative that consolidates the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) shift toward an assimilationist ethnic governance model. Insights from Uyghur, Tibetan, Mongolian, and international experts highlight that the draft law—while presented as promoting "ethnic unity"—is designed to enforce ideological conformity, suppress cultural and linguistic diversity, and legitimise heightened state intervention across minority regions.

Key provisions mandate Mandarin-medium education, expand early-stage ideological instruction, criminalise activities deemed to "undermine ethnic unity," and deepen state authority over religious, cultural, and economic life. Experts emphasise that these measures institutionalise the erasure of Uyghur, Tibetan, Mongolian, and other minority identities under the framework of the "Zhonghua minzu," effectively replacing ethnic plurality with a singular state-engineered national identity.

Testimonies presented at the dialogue underscore that the legislation reflects and intensifies existing patterns: mass arbitrary detention and gender-based violence in Xinjiang; suppression of monastic institutions and restructuring of education in Tibetan areas; and removal of Mongolian language and heritage from public life in Southern Mongolia. The law also supports expanded resource extraction in minority regions, particularly rare earths and strategic minerals, and extends China's coercive legal reach to overseas communities.

The report finds that engaging China's legislative system offers minimal scope for change given the NPC's political constraints. Panelists agree that economic measures, including strict enforcement of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act and coordinated international action on supply chains linked to forced labour, represent the most effective means of generating external pressure.

The draft law is therefore assessed as a comprehensive instrument of cultural assimilation and enhanced state control, carrying significant implications for human rights, regional stability, and the future of China's ethnic nationalities.



03

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **The Draft Law Institutionalises Assimilation**

The proposed Ethnic Unity and Progress Law embeds the CCP's shift toward a unified "Chinese national identity", subordinating minority cultures, languages, and religions to a centralised, Sinicised framework.

2. **Education Becomes the Core Tool of Identity Restructuring**

Mandatory Mandarin-medium instruction and early ideological training formalise the erosion of Uyghur, Tibetan, Mongolian, and other minority languages and worldviews

3. **Criminalisation of Cultural and Political Expression**

Broad categories such as "undermining ethnic unity" enable intensified surveillance, criminalisation of dissent, and arbitrary punishment across minority regions.

4. **Legal Basis for Expanded Resource Extraction**

The law legitimises deepened exploitation of resource-rich regions—including Tibet, Southern Mongolia, and Xinjiang—under the banner of "common prosperity."

5. **Extends China's Ethnic Governance Beyond Its Borders**

Provisions targeting foreign individuals and organisations strengthen China's transnational repression, with implications for diasporas, activists, and Taiwan.

6. **Continuation of Existing Patterns**

Provisions targeting foreign individuals and organisations strengthen China's transnational repression, with implications for diasporas, activists, and Taiwan.

The law codifies trends already observed:

- mass detention and demographic engineering in Xinjiang,
- controls on monastic institutions in Tibet,
- removal of Mongolian language from public life,
- and administrative reclassification that gradually erases historical identities.

7. **Limited Scope for Change Inside China**

Given the NPC's political structure, legislative engagement cannot meaningfully influence the draft law, making external mechanisms more critical.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A coordinated international response is essential to address the implications of China's Draft Ethnic Unity and Progress Law. Governments should prioritise strict enforcement of forced-labour regulations, strengthen supply-chain due diligence, and consider targeted economic measures that reduce incentives for abusive practices. At the same time, increased protection for Uyghur, Tibetan, Mongolian and dissident communities abroad—along with stronger documentation of human rights violations—will help counter transnational repression. Building credible research, amplifying alternative narratives, and enhancing regional cooperation will further equip states and institutions to challenge the law's assimilationist agenda with clear, principled, and sustained policy action.



DEVELOP ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES AND RESEARCH

Institutions and think tanks should generate credible, data-driven assessments of development, governance, and rights conditions in minority regions to counter CCP narratives.

COORDINATE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

Governments, parliaments, and multilateral institutions should adopt joint statements, resolutions, and monitoring mechanisms that address the ethnic policies underpinning the draft law.

ENHANCE PARLIAMENTARY AND CONGRESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Encourage lawmakers to:

- propose targeted sanctions,
- hold hearings on ethnic policy trends,
- tighten regulations on surveillance technology exports,
- and challenge state-driven propaganda operations.

STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC AND SUPPLY CHAIN MEASURES

Countries should enhance implementation of laws similar to the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, expand due diligence requirements, and restrict imports tied to forced labour and resource extraction from minority regions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SUPPORT AT-RISK COMMUNITIES AND DIASPORAS

Increase protections for Uyghur, Tibetan, Mongolian, and Chinese dissidents abroad, including safeguards against surveillance, coercion, and threats from PRC-linked networks.

EXPAND HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTATION

Support documentation initiatives on:

- forced labour,
- demographic engineering,
- cultural destruction,
- transnational repression.

This strengthens evidence for future sanctions, legal action, and UN processes.

PROMOTE REGIONAL COOPERATION

Encourage India, Mongolia, Nepal, Bhutan, and other neighbouring countries to coordinate analysis and responses regarding Tibet's environment, resources, and cultural heritage.

DEVELOP ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES AND RESEARCH

Institutions and think tanks should generate credible, data-driven assessments of development, governance, and rights conditions in minority regions to counter CCP narratives.

MONITOR IMPLICATIONS FOR TAIWAN

Given that the law's language targets "overseas Chinese" and includes Taiwan, governments should integrate ethnic governance trends into Taiwan security assessments.



Prof. Srikanth Kondapalli

05

Opening Remarks

There is growing interest—and understandable concern—regarding several provisions in the draft Ethnic Unity Law. Among the most sensitive is the proposal to make Mandarin the primary medium of instruction, along with the introduction of political and ideological education for ethnic minority children at a very early stage, including content promoting “ethnic unity” and loyalty to the Communist Party. The draft also advances a model of multiethnic integration that, in effect, imposes uniformity on minority communities.

These developments build on trends already visible in the past 10 to 15 years across western China. In Tibet, for example, the policy of “Sinicization,” highlighted during the Tibet Work Forum in August 2020, has reshaped religious and cultural life. In Xinjiang, earlier “strike hard” campaigns fundamentally altered the social landscape, while in Inner Mongolia, the imposition of Mandarin in schools triggered strong public concern. Collectively, these measures have heightened anxiety among minority groups.

The draft law also seeks to mobilise enterprises—many of which are under Party influence. Since the introduction of corporate regulations in 1992, any company with more than seven employees must have a Party committee, effectively placing the vast majority of private firms under Party oversight. This has strengthened ideological control within the economic sphere and broadened the Party’s role in governance.

“
the
proposal
to make
Mandarin
the
primary
medium of
instruction

Opening Remarks

Another significant provision in the draft law criminalises acts deemed to “damage ethnic unity,” potentially expanding repression under the guise of promoting cohesion. The ideological enforcement envisioned extends across social, cultural, religious, and even urban-planning domains. Notably, the draft law hints at extending influence beyond China’s borders, including towards Taiwan and overseas Chinese communities. Reports of extraterritorial activities—such as the presence of so-called “overseas police stations”—underscore concerns about China’s efforts to monitor or pressure Chinese nationals abroad. A widely reported case in Manchester, where a Hong Kong protester was dragged into the Chinese consulate and assaulted, illustrates the seriousness of these concerns. Such actions affect not only minority communities but also Han Chinese abroad who express solidarity with them.

Given these wide-ranging and, in many respects, draconian features, it is important that this draft law be examined and discussed in depth. The Foundation for Non-Violent Alternatives is therefore pleased to convene this webinar, and we are honoured to welcome our distinguished speakers and all participants to this important conversation.



”

the draft law criminalises acts deemed to “damage ethnic unity,” potentially expanding repression under the guise of promoting cohesion.



06

Rushan Abbas

Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to speak. As I mentioned earlier when I first joined, I am speaking to you from Berlin—where a wall once stood, and where its fall became a symbol that efforts to cage freedom and democracy will ultimately fail.

I will begin with a brief introduction to who the Uyghurs are and what is happening to them today. As we all know, what China is doing to the Uyghurs is not only about the future of the Uyghur people; it represents a broader threat to the future of the world. The new legal measures under discussion, including language bans and ideological requirements, are familiar to our Southern Mongolian and Tibetan friends. Their experiences echo our own.

As a Uyghur American, it is painful to see how the world often engages with China primarily through trade, deals, and business interests, even as the cultures we come from—the Uyghur, Tibetan, and Mongolian heritages—are among the most beautiful and ancient in Asia. When I used the word “Uyghur” a few years ago and tried to explain that my people were being thrown into concentration camps, it seemed unbelievable to many. Today, our culture and religion are being criminalised, our language is banned, and our homeland—East Turkistan—is being stripped of its wealth. The term “Xinjiang,” meaning “new territory,” is a colonial name imposed on us, and we refuse to accept it. We also reject being called a “minority”—just as Tibetans and Mongolians do—because in our own homeland we were not minorities; we were the native peoples of those lands.

“
The term
“Xinjiang,”
meaning
“new
territory,” is a
colonial
name
imposed on
us, and we
refuse to
accept it.

Rushan Abbas

The implementation of Xi Jinping’s Belt and Road Initiative is a key driver of the current, full-scale genocide against the Uyghurs. This initiative has enabled the CCP to seize Uyghur land and homes. Recent reports show that land transfers to the state over the past 20 years have increased nearly fifty-fold. Silencing Uyghur intellectuals—writers, scholars, and cultural leaders—was the first sign that the state had branded an entire ethnic group as extremist, with the intention of erasing our language, culture, and history. The CCP has now moved further, using policies rooted in pre-crime ideology: arresting and imprisoning people before they have committed any offense, based on predictions of so-called political tendencies.

The most appalling aspect is that the “crimes” Uyghurs are punished for, according to leaked Chinese government documents, are basic human rights—rights that should be protected everywhere. Practicing one’s religion, visiting family abroad, speaking to relatives overseas, having as many children as one chooses, or refusing an arranged marriage—these normal activities are treated as criminal grounds for detention.

Outside the camps, fear permeates every aspect of daily life, creating what is essentially an open-air prison. Inside the camps, horrors—both documented and yet unknown—await. Former detainees describe relentless physical and psychological torture, constant propaganda, and forced ingestion of unidentified medications.

People are used as test subjects and victims of forced organ harvesting. Women have been especially brutalised. In addition to forced marriages, women are vulnerable to sexual abuse when male CCP cadres—1.1 million of them, mostly men—are sent to “stay” in Uyghur households. When Uyghur men are taken to the camps, women are left exposed in their own homes.

Uyghur women are also subjected to forced abortions, sterilisations, and the insertion of IUDs against their will. In some regions, birth rates have fallen to zero. The Chinese government does not even hide these acts; it has publicly celebrated the results. The Chinese embassy in the United States even issued a statement claiming that Uyghur women were “no longer baby-making machines.”

”
People are used as test subjects and victims of forced organ harvesting.

Rushan Abbas

As in Tibet, we now see nearly one million Uyghur children separated from their families and placed in state-run orphanages. This genocide is not happening quietly in the dark—it is moving toward the free world as the CCP destroys everyone in its path, using promises, propaganda, and economic leverage.

My own family's story is tragic proof. My sister, Dr. Gulshan Abbas, a retired medical doctor, vanished from her home just six days after I spoke at a panel at the Hudson Institute, where I discussed China's genocide and the fate of my in-laws. She has been missing since September 2018—more than seven years, over 2,800 days.

I had a successful career as an international business development director, but when the Chinese government abducted my sister to silence me, I resolved not to give in.

They may break my heart by taking my sister, but they cannot break my spirit. I fight with an unbroken will—for her, for my people, and for humanity.

Yet what is perhaps most painful is the world's collective complicity. Countries and companies continue to treat China as a normal business partner.

Hollywood celebrities, NBA stars, prominent public figures—many speak passionately about social injustices, but remain silent where Uyghur women's bodies have become battlegrounds of genocide.

Speaking against the CCP carries consequences, and economic interests often override moral responsibility. But selective outrage undermines credibility. Where does this leave us? We are all complicit when we use goods produced with forced Uyghur labour. My sister could have sewn the shirt on your back. The tomatoes you eat, the seafood you buy, the cotton you wear, the shoes, the handbags—many of these products pass through supply chains tainted by Uyghur slave labour. By consuming them, we enable the CCP's system and help make this genocide profitable.

”

My sister,
Dr.
Gulshan
Abbas, a
retired
medical
doctor,
vanished
from her
home just
six days
after I
spoke at a
panel

Rushan Abbas

To break this chain, we must refuse to purchase goods produced through forced labour. We must use our voices—to educate, to mobilise, to demand change. “Never again” must not become an empty phrase. The CCP has created the most sophisticated model of genocide in modern history: erasing an entire people while flooding the world with disinformation so that others look away.

Before this system was fully unleashed on the Uyghurs, it was tested in Tibet. Perfected in East Turkistan, it then moved to Hong Kong and now threatens Taiwan. Chinese surveillance technologies—cameras, sensors, data systems—are now installed in government buildings, schools, and private homes across the world. More than half of African countries have signed contracts with Chinese firms to implement public security systems modeled on China’s own. China has even established police stations abroad as a foothold in democratic societies. The CCP is gathering unprecedented amounts of global data—using technology that should empower humanity to instead oppress it. And by licensing these tools, China is offering a blueprint for dictatorships worldwide. Governments must respond with real protections against technological authoritarianism.

As I mentioned, I am speaking from Berlin, where Uyghur women have gathered for the International Uyghur Women’s Dialogue. Today, we adopted the Berlin Declaration Platform for Action on Women’s Rights and Freedoms, endorsed by 82 international organizations and nearly 140 individuals. This declaration calls on governments, the UN, corporations, and global civil society to act decisively against the CCP’s genocide in East Turkistan—particularly its targeting of Uyghur women through forced sterilization, family separation, sexual violence, and mass surveillance. Marking 30 years since China’s 1995 Beijing Declaration, this platform exposes the abuses Uyghur women face and demands justice, accountability, and protection.

What is happening to my people—this techno-genocide—is ground zero. It offers a glimpse of the future of tyranny enabled by technology. If we continue to be complicit, China’s silent colonization will advance and dismantle the free world from within. If we fail to act today, it will be our children and grandchildren who inherit an illiberal, dark world. We all bear responsibility for what happens next. The weight of this moment will echo through generations. History will judge whether we turned away or turned the tide—because silence is the oxygen of tyranny. Let us be the voices that break it before it is too late.

”

Before this system was fully unleashed on the Uyghurs, it was tested in Tibet.



07

Enghebatu Togocho

First of all, let me express my sincere appreciation to our friends at the Foundation for Nonviolent Alternatives for organising this panel and inviting us to share our perspectives on China’s draft law on promoting ethnic unity and progress. Since our focus today is this specific draft law, allow me to offer a brief overview of its structure, its underlying intent, and what China aims to achieve through it. The draft law consists of seven chapters and 62 articles. Although it is framed as legislation meant to promote unity, its substance is far from benign.

To begin with, Chapter 2 speaks of building a “common spiritual home.” In practice, this amounts to forcing all so-called ethnic minorities into a single, state-engineered identity—the “Zhonghua nationality,” essentially a rebranded term for Chinese nationality.

Chapter 3 promotes “mutual interaction, mutual exchange, and mutual integration.” This language is simply a euphemism for assimilation and the systematic erasure of Mongolian, Tibetan, Uyghur, and other distinct national identities.

Chapter 4, titled “Promoting Common Prosperity and Development,” functions as a justification for intensified resource extraction and economic exploitation, particularly in the occupied regions of Southern Mongolia, Tibet, and East Turkistan.

Chapter 5 outlines various safeguard and supervision mechanisms—essentially new tools to enforce these policies throughout China proper, and especially in Southern Mongolia, Tibet, and East Turkistan.

“Zhonghua nationality,” essentially a rebranded term for Chinese nationality.

Enghebatu Togochoᠭ

Chapter 6 details legal liability, specifying how individuals and organisations that do not comply with these policies will be punished.

The most alarming is Chapter 7, which explicitly states that foreign organisations and individuals who “undermine ethnic unity” or “incite ethnic division” will bear legal responsibility under Chinese law. This is a direct attempt to legitimise China’s ongoing campaign of transnational repression by extending its reach beyond its borders to silence voices globally.

At the heart of the draft law is forced identity conversion. The central aim is the firm inculcation of a single, unified “Chinese nationality identity”—the Zhonghua identity. The message is clear: Mongolians, Tibetans, Uyghurs, and other groups will no longer be permitted to maintain their own national identities. We must become Chinese and only Chinese. This is not unity; it is erasure. The ideological foundations of the law impose the full package of the Chinese state narrative: the notion of a “great mother nation,” the Zhonghua or Chinese nationality, the so-called “superior” Chinese culture, loyalty to the Communist Party, and adherence to “socialism with Chinese characteristics.” This is not coexistence; it is state-engineered restructuring of identity.

Internationally, China presents itself as a country governed by law, but we know this is a fiction. In China, laws do not protect civil or human rights; they function as tools to criminalise, punish, and suppress both Chinese citizens and the peoples of occupied nations.

Viewed in this context, the draft law is not simply a policy proposal—it is a warning signal, indicating what the regime intends to enforce on citizens and on the populations of the occupied regions.

From the standpoint of Southern Mongolia, this draft law is designed to justify an ongoing cultural genocide. It attempts to legitimise the erasure of the Mongolian language, culture, and identity, including the aggressive language policies introduced in 2020 and the elimination of Mongolian-medium education—the core of Mongolian cultural survival.

”
to
legitimise
China’s
ongoing
campaign
of trans-
national
repression

Enghebatu Togochoᠭ

Across Southern Mongolia, China is now removing the word “Mongolian” or “Mongol” from literature, arts, music, and public life. Schools are being renamed, signage is being stripped of Mongolian identifiers, and public spaces are being recast—all in the name of “ethnic unity.”

Another crucial dimension is the justification of large-scale resource extraction. Southern Mongolia has been declared China’s energy base since 2009. Nearly 95% of the world’s rare-earth supply comes from Southern Mongolia. Contrary to China’s claim that these are Chinese resources, the truth is that China itself has virtually no rare earths; the resources come from the occupied nation of Southern Mongolia, especially the Bayan Obo mine.

More recently, China announced the discovery of the world’s largest thorium deposit—again in Southern Mongolia. Some estimates suggest this single deposit could meet China’s energy needs for 60,000 years. The region is extraordinarily rich, and this draft law serves as political cover for intensified extraction and exploitation. In essence, this draft law outlines what many of us describe as the “final solution” to China’s so-called nationalities question.

China is preparing to eliminate the distinct identities of all 55 officially recognised ethnic groups and transform the country into a single, homogenised society. The regime seeks not only to erase our identities but also to erase the world’s memory of who we are.

In conclusion, I want to emphasise that the world must not be misled by the language of “unity” and “progress.” This draft law represents a blueprint for cultural annihilation, forced assimilation, and intensified repression within China’s borders and beyond. For those of us from Southern Mongolia, Tibet, East Turkistan, and other occupied nations, the true intention of this law is unmistakable.

Despite all the repression, people in Southern Mongolia continue to protest—sometimes openly, sometimes silently behind screens—calling on fellow Mongolians to stand up for our national identity and dignity. By speaking together today, we affirm that no law, however forcefully written or brutally enforced, can erase the truth of who we are.

”

Nearly 95%
of the
world’s
rare-earth
supply
comes
from
Southern
Mongolia.

Discussion Highlights

Comments by the Chair

China has historically treated law as an instrument of state power rather than a framework for protecting rights. The draft Ethnic Unity Law continues this pattern, functioning less as a rule-of-law measure and more as a political tool to justify resource extraction and economic exploitation in minority regions. This approach has deep historical roots. Since the nineteenth century, debates in China have revolved around questions of “civilised” versus “barbarian” peoples under the Qing, shaping policies that marginalised ethnic communities.

Ideas such as “five races under one nation” emerged in the late Qing and early Republican eras, with some discussions advocating equal rights and duties, while assimilationist positions were also proposed and later rejected by the 1912 Provisional Assembly. Chiang Kai-shek subsequently advanced the idea of a unified Chinese nation, treating minorities as part of a single national entity.

The concept of Zhonghua minzu (Chinese nation) became prominent during the Republican period and continues to inform Beijing’s thinking today. Interestingly, the 1931 Constitution of the Soviet Republic recognised minority self-determination, and the 1949 Common Programme emphasised equality, duties, mutual aid, and unity among ethnic groups. Yet over time, these principles gave way to assimilationist practices—first through campaigns such as the Cultural Revolution, and later through post-1978 economic reforms that accelerated resource exploitation in minority regions.

By the 1990s, under Jiang Zemin, policies actively encouraged aligning religion with “socialist society,” promoting a form of neo-Confucianism at the expense of minority belief systems. Over the past five to six years, “Sinicisation” has been promoted even more aggressively. Scholars such as Ma Rong have observed that China is moving toward a more centralised and revisionist ethnic policy, intensifying pressures on minority groups. The draft Ethnic Unity Law amplifies these challenges. It strengthens assimilationist objectives, centralises control, and reinforces ideological conformity.



Discussion Highlights

? Why do Tibetans, Mongolians, and Uyghurs view the proposed law as harmful and how minorities might approach policymakers in China to advocate change, how do we change the draft law to exert pressure on the lawmakers in NPC?

Rushan Abbas

The reality is that changing a draft law inside China through direct political engagement is virtually impossible. Beijing does not respond to calls for legal reform, and even China's own constitution is routinely ignored.

These laws function as political tools, not as genuine legal constraints. What the Chinese government does respond to is economic pressure. Financial measures are the only form of leverage with real impact.

Our focus, therefore, should be on coordinated efforts to reduce the flow of economic benefits that sustain the Chinese state. This includes enforcing and strengthening measures like the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, and addressing the deep integration of forced labour into global supply chains—an issue harming industries not only in the United States, but also here in Germany and across Europe. Sustained economic pressure requires collective action. Uyghur, Tibetan, Mongolian and allied groups must work together, alongside supportive lawmakers in Washington such as those in the CECC and members like Chris Smith, Young Kim, Raja Krishnamoorthi, John Moolenaar, and Tom Suozzi. Stronger legislation, better enforcement, and unified advocacy aimed at weakening China's economic incentives are the most effective tools available. Only by cutting the financial lifelines that underpin Beijing's repressive machinery can meaningful pressure be created.

Enghebatu Togochoq

There has been extensive discussion inside China—stretching back to the late nineteenth century—on how law has been used not as a safeguard of rights but as a political instrument. Historically, debates during the late Qing period framed ethnic communities through a binary of “civilized” and “barbarian,” setting the stage for exclusionary approaches that continue to burden minority groups today. Early ideas such as the “five races under one nation” concept suggested nominal unity, but equal rights and obligations remained more theoretical than real.

Intellectuals like Liang Qichao argued for building a modern state inclusive of all ethnic groups, yet assimilationist thinking steadily gained ground. After the fall of the Qing dynasty, the Republican era again revived the notion of “five races under one union,” though the provisional assembly in 1912 rejected explicit assimilationist proposals. Chiang Kai-shek later advanced a vision of a unified Chinese nation that subsumed minority identities. The theme of assimilation reappears throughout modern Chinese constitutional and policy history.



Discussion Highlights

The 1931 Constitution of the “Soviet Republic” briefly endorsed self-determination for ethnic minorities, and early PRC documents—such as Article 9 of the 1949 Common Program—referred to equal rights and mutual aid. However, the socialist project that followed, including Li Han’s policies, the Cultural Revolution, and later reforms, steadily eroded space for minority autonomy.

Economic reforms and resource extraction policies have intensified these pressures. Jiang Zemin’s 1993 call to “guide religion to adapt to socialist society” set the tone for expanding state intervention in minority cultural and religious life. The last five to six years have seen a sharper turn toward Sinicization, with scholars like Fei Xiaotong and Ma Rong articulating a more centralised, assimilationist approach to ethnic policy.



Today, China appears to be moving toward an explicitly revisionist model of ethnic governance—highly centralised, politically driven, and focused on cultural and ideological homogenisation. The draft Ethnic Unity Law amplifies this shift.

It reinforces long-standing concerns among minority groups about the use of law as a tool of control, the suppression of cultural and linguistic rights, and the facilitation of large-scale resource exploitation in minority regions. These anxieties were reflected in the questions raised during the panel discussion. Participants asked why Tibetans, Mongolians, Uyghurs, and others overwhelmingly view the draft law as threatening, and what avenues—if any—exist to advocate for change. The issue, as noted by the speakers, lies in the nature of the Chinese legal system: while the constitution and various laws appear progressive on paper, implementation is inconsistent and often subordinated to political objectives. Law in China does not primarily function to protect rights; rather, it is used selectively to criminalize dissent, regulate identity, and justify state objectives such as resource extraction or cultural restructuring.

Given this reality, influencing lawmakers within the National People’s Congress to amend or improve the draft law is extremely difficult. The structural limitations of China’s political system leave very little room for external or internal advocacy to alter legislation that is politically important to the central leadership.



09

Rinzin Namgyal

Since our focus today is this specific draft law, allow me to offer a brief overview of its structure, its underlying intent, and what China aims to achieve through it.

The draft law consists of seven chapters and 62 articles. Although it is framed as legislation meant to promote unity, its substance is far from benign.

Whether this law represents unity or erasure is, in my view, not a choice between the two. It is both. These are two sides of the same coin: the drive for “unity” is pursued through erasure, and the erasure of distinct identities is justified in the name of unity. This logic lies at the heart of the draft law and its targets in the minority regions.

To understand this, it is important to briefly outline how lawmaking works in China. The process begins with agenda-setting, where ministries, Party leading small groups, commissions, think tanks, and individual policy entrepreneurs generate hundreds of draft proposals every year. Many of these drafts remain within ministries for years, waiting for a favourable political climate. Once the leadership considers the moment appropriate, these proposals—long prepared and circulating internally—are pushed forward into the legislative calendar for consideration by top Party and state bodies.

The second stage is the inter-agency review, during which ministries negotiate and bargain over language, responsibilities, and political sensitivities. It is at this point that the draft undergoes significant internal bargaining, often reshaped by institutional interests and political directives before moving up to the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress.

”

“unity” is pursued through erasure, and erasure of distinct identities is justified in the name of unity.

Rinzin Namgyal

POLITICS OF LAW-MAKING IN CHINA (Based on Tanner, 1995)

FOUNDATION FOR
Non-violent
Alternatives
an initiative for developing peace studies

1. Agenda Setting

- Whirlpool of hundreds of legislative proposals each year.
- Proposals may originate from ministries, think tanks, or individual policy entrepreneurs.
- Many remain dormant within ministries until the political climate becomes favorable.

2. Inter-Agency Review

- Conducted by multiple ministries, committees, and CCP central departments – each pursuing its own interest.
- Top Party leadership occasionally intervenes to resolve bureaucratic deadlocks (Case of this Law in my opinion)
- This stage crucially shapes the final content of any draft law.

If we take the example of a national-level law—such as legislation concerning the Chinese railway system—it illustrates how lawmaking in China operates. When a body like China Railway submits a draft bill, it does not move forward on the strength of a single committee. Instead, it must first pass through a broad consensus-building process involving multiple committees, especially those responsible for land management, geography and topography, resource planning, and even sectors such as the steel industry whose inputs are required for implementation. Only after these various committees agree does the draft move forward.

At this stage, it is not uncommon for the top leadership to intervene when bureaucratic deadlocks emerge. Such intervention helps resolve competing institutional interests and allows the draft legislation to progress. In the case of the draft ethnic unity law, this second stage—the inter-agency review—is particularly relevant. It is during this phase that the language of the law is negotiated, modified, and refined through bargaining among ministries and party-affiliated bodies.

This inter-agency review essentially determines the final content of any draft law before it proceeds to the next step. In other words, while a bill may originate from a single institution, its eventual form reflects the outcome of negotiations across the bureaucracy, shaped by political priorities and the broader policy direction set by the leadership.

Rinzin Namgyal

This slide discusses the NPC review process, which is essentially overseen by the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress. At this stage, Party approval is a prerequisite, and meaningful opposition is virtually nonexistent. No institution has the authority—nor the political space—to challenge a proposal that has already received the endorsement of the Politburo. In practice, the NPC cannot advance or refine any legislation without the Politburo’s prior consent.

The final stage is implementation, which is carried out mainly by the State Council, led through the State Council’s Legislative Affairs Bureau, together with the relevant ministries and the Supreme People’s Court. However, the passage of a law in the NPC does not guarantee its implementation at the local level. Implementation requires budgetary allocation, administrative capacity, and bureaucratic willingness. Without these elements, even formally adopted laws remain largely symbolic.

In short, while the NPC review provides formal legitimacy, actual enforcement depends entirely on state capacity, political will, and resource availability, meaning that many laws in China are passed but only partially—if ever—implemented in practice

”

Many laws in China are passed but only partially—if ever—implemented

3. NPC Review

- Managed primarily by NPC leadership and the Standing Committee (NPCSC).
- Party Center approval is a prerequisite – opposition is rare, though revisions may occur.
- NPC cannot promulgate laws without prior Politburo.

4. Implementation (State Council)

- Led by the State Council Legislative Bureau, relevant ministries, and the Supreme People’s Court.
- Depends heavily on budgetary and bureaucratic capacity at national and local levels.
- NPC oversight in implementation is growing but remains limited.
- Not all laws passed are fully implemented in practice – enforcement varies regionally.

Rinzin Namgyal

It is important to note that the passage of a law by the National People's Congress Standing Committee—or during the annual Two Sessions—does not automatically translate into implementation on the ground. Effective enforcement requires budget allocations, administrative capacity, and sustained bureaucratic commitment. In practice, this often limits the ability of newly passed laws to take effect uniformly or promptly.

Although the NPC has recently attempted to play a more active role in overseeing implementation, its influence remains constrained. The NPC can intervene when the State Council is preparing to operationalise a law, but if the State Council lacks the resources, political will, or bureaucratic preparedness, there is little the NPC can meaningfully do. Factors such as fiscal constraints, limited local capacity, and competing administrative priorities often delay or dilute implementation.

Consequently, not all laws passed in China are fully executed in practice. Many remain only partially enforced, or are unevenly applied across regions. With regard to the draft Ethnic Unity Law, it is formally sponsored by the NPC's Ethnic Affairs Committee—one among seven or eight specialised committees within the NPC. The committee has stated that, in 2024, it conducted nationwide inspections among legislative leaders to refine the draft.

”

The NPC's oversight is limited, and many laws are delayed or diluted due to weak resources, capacity, and political will.

POLITICS OF LAW-MAKING IN CHINA (Based on Tanner, 1995)

INSTITUTE FOR
Non-violent
Alternatives
An Institute for Developing Peace Studies

1. Agenda Setting

- Whirlpool of hundreds of legislative proposals each year.
- Proposals may originate from ministries, think tanks, or individual policy entrepreneurs.
- Many remain dormant within ministries until the political climate becomes favorable.

2. Inter-Agency Review

- Conducted by multiple ministries, committees, and CCP central departments — each pursuing its own interest.
- Top Party leadership occasionally intervenes to resolve bureaucratic deadlocks (Case of this Law in my opinion)
- This stage crucially shapes the final content of any draft law.

Rinzin Namgyal

However, it is unlikely that a single year of inspections produced the entirety of the law's contents. Many provisions appear consistent with research agendas and policy proposals that have circulated within ministries and party think tanks for several years.

The draft was initially listed as a Category II item in the 14th NPC Standing Committee's legislative plan, but it was later elevated to high priority. This elevation reflects a clear political directive from the top, particularly after the Third Plenum, which emphasised building a "strong sense of community for the Chinese nation." As discussed earlier, when a draft law becomes stuck at the ministerial or inter-agency level, intervention by senior party leaders can move it onto a fast track for Standing Committee deliberation.

This political signalling underscores the significance the leadership attaches to the draft law and explains how it advanced quickly into the NPC's formal legislative process. Although official statements claim that this law was developed following nationwide legislative inspections in 2024, it is difficult to accept that a single year of field visits could produce a draft

comprising 62 articles across seven chapters. It is far more likely that many of these provisions had been circulating for years within ministerial research papers, internal policy discussions, and bureaucratic drafts. In other words, much of the substance of this law predates the inspections and had already been embedded within various ministries.

Initially classified as a Category II item in the 14th NPC Standing Committee's legislative plan, the draft was later elevated to high priority, signalling a clear political directive. This shift appears to follow the Third Plenary Session, where the leadership emphasised building a "strong sense of the Chinese national community." As noted earlier, when a draft becomes stalled within competing agencies, intervention from the top leadership can move it onto a fast-track for deliberation. This seems to be the case here. The elevation of the draft and its rapid movement into Standing Committee discussions underline its political importance and the central leadership's desire to push it forward.

”

The draft Ethnic Unity Law advanced quickly not because of one year of inspections, but because its core provisions had long existed and were pushed forward by top-level political directives.

Rinzin Namgyal

- How will the proposed Ethnic Unity and Progress Law concretely manifest into governance, social behaviour, and cultural practices in ethnic minority regions once implemented?
- Why did the Politburo elevate a Category-II legislative project in 2023, and what strategic concerns or policy shifts within the CCP made this ethnic law suddenly urgent?

These observations are based on the 2024 nationwide field survey carried out by legislative leaders. According to Chongqing Daily and related provincial reports, several senior officials of the National People's Congress Standing Committee travelled across key regions to conduct consultations on the draft ethnic unity and progress law. Vice Chairman Liang visited Jilin Province, where he chaired a legal research meeting on ethnic affairs and held seminars and consultations with local leadership in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture. These engagements involved both elite-level coordination and pre-legislative discussions with county authorities.

Similarly, Vice Chairwoman Shen, also of the NPC Standing Committee, visited Guizhou Province in early 2024. Her work focused on ethnic governance, border development, and the legal foundations of ethnic unity. She also convened a symposium and a conference on establishing a "demonstration zone for the Chinese national community," reflecting the political emphasis on forging a unified national identity.

My own observations, however, focus primarily on the Aba region (Ngawa) of Sichuan Province, traditionally part of Amdo. In late July 2024, Sichuan's Governor Shi Xiaolin travelled to Aba Prefecture. The official prefectural website stated that her visit was for "research," but provided no details about the nature of the work, its scope, or its intended purpose. Only weeks later, Aba authorities announced a plan to invest one billion yuan to construct new primary and secondary schools equipped with digital infrastructure across the prefecture.

”

The 2024 field visits were politically driven consultations, and Shi Xiaolin's opaque Ngawa visit preceded a major one-billion-yuan education investment.

Rinzin Namgyal

Around the same period, reports from exile media such as RFA indicated that young monks at Kirti Monastery—one of the most important monasteries in Abo—were being expelled from monastic life. Shortly after that report, the Tibet Action Institute noted a deeply concerning incident in which four to five Tibetan students, including young monks, attempted suicide near a riverbank. While these developments cannot be conclusively tied to the governor’s visit, the proximity in timing raises serious concerns. In my assessment, this sequence of events—beginning with Shi Xiaolin’s visit and followed by a series of disturbing reports—reflects heightened pressure on religious institutions, youth, and cultural expression in the region.

Further, Sichuan Provincial Party Secretary Wang Xiaohui visited Kardze Prefecture (Ganzi), home to the well-known Serthar (Larung Gar) monastic community. His visit focused on ethnic governance reforms and provincial-level engagements with local cadres. This coincides with the broader national push toward centralisation and ideological alignment under the framework of the “Chinese national community.”

Taken together, these developments illustrate the ongoing patterns of political intervention, cultural regulation, and administrative restructuring in ethnic minority regions. They also show how field surveys and inspection tours—while officially described as part of routine legislative preparation—serve as mechanisms for tightening ideological control, reshaping local governance, and reinforcing the broader objectives behind the draft ethnic unity law.

“
these developments illustrate the ongoing patterns of political intervention, cultural regulation, and administrative restructuring in ethnic minority regions.

FIELD-LEVEL POLITICAL SIGNALS (2024–2025) (Chongqing daily)

Li Hongzhong (NPCSC Vice Chairman)

- Jilin tour (May 20–22): Chaired legal research meetings on ethnic affairs.
- Signaled pre-legislative consultation and elite-level coordination. (Yanbian)

Peng Qinghua (NPC Vice Chairman) (Chongqing daily)

- Guangxi inspection (March 18–22): Focused on ethnic law-based governance and border development.
- Reinforced the idea of building a “Demonstration Zone for the Chinese National Community.”

Rinzin Namgyal

The close timing between her visit to the Ngaba (Aba) region and these subsequent developments is noteworthy. Within weeks of her trip, exile media such as RFA reported that young monks from Kirti Monastery—one of the most important monasteries in Ngaba—were being expelled and prevented by Chinese authorities from remaining in the monastery. Shortly afterwards, reports from the Tibet Action Institute indicated that four to five young monastic students had attempted suicide along a riverbank.

From my observation, this sequence of events appears to begin immediately after the visit of provincial governor Wang Xiaohui, who is often described as an emerging political figure within the Chinese Communist Party. Her visit to Ngaba in late July 2024 was officially described on the Aba Prefecture website as a “research trip,” yet no details were provided about the nature or purpose of this research. Only days later, Aba authorities publicly announced a 1-billion-yuan investment to establish new primary and secondary schools equipped with digital infrastructure across the prefecture. Because my research focuses closely on the Ngaba region, these events stand out as part of a pattern.

The timing of the governor’s visit, the sudden expulsion of monks, the deeply disturbing reports of attempted suicides among young monastics, and the rapid announcement of new state-run educational initiatives together suggest a shift in policy implementation on the ground.

A similar dynamic can be observed in the visit of Shi Xiaolin, Governor of Sichuan Province, who travelled to the Barkham (Ma’erkang) area, where the prominent Se’erta (Sertra) nunnery is located. His visit was followed by a major provincial engagement on “ethnic governance reform,” again signalling intensified intervention in religious and cultural institutions.

When I look at developments in this area, I see two principal ideas driving China’s current ethnic-policy trajectory—both of which reinforce each other. Whether described as “unity” or experienced as “erasure,” the draft Ethnic Unity Law embodies both impulses simultaneously. In the name of fostering unity, the authorities are advancing measures that fundamentally erode distinct identities; and in the process of erasure, the stated intention is to produce “unity” across minority regions. These two objectives operate as two sides of the same coin.

”

A rapid sequence of crackdowns and major education investments followed the governor’s opaque Ngaba visit, signalling a coordinated policy shift.

Rinzin Namgyal

To understand how such a law emerges, it is important to briefly outline the law-making process in China. Lawmaking generally begins with agenda-setting, during which ministries, Party small leading groups, think tanks, and individual policy entrepreneurs generate hundreds of legislative proposals each year. Many of these proposals remain dormant within ministries for long periods until the broader political climate becomes favourable. Only then are they moved upward for discussion among senior Party leaders, including the Central Committee and the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC). Once a proposal enters the formal pipeline, it goes through an inter-agency review, a stage where ministries negotiate and bargain over specific provisions. This is often where the language of the draft takes shape and where significant adjustments are made. This process is crucial because it determines the content that eventually reaches the NPC Standing Committee for formal consideration.

Shi Xiaolin (Governor of Sichuan)

- Ngawa (Aba) visit (late July): Research. Report on school establishment amid reports of monastic expulsions kirti and youth alienation- riverside suicide. (RFA, ABA XINWEN)
- Suggests provincial-level implementation studies possibly linked to upcoming legal directives.

Wang Huning (CPPCC Chairman) and Wang Xiaohui SPR Garzê Visit (Sichuan news website)

- Indicate synchronized central-provincial engagement in ethnic governance reforms.

Either this law represents “unity” or “erasure.” In my view, it is both. The two ideas function as two sides of the same coin: the pursuit of “unity” is used to justify erasing distinct identities, and this erasure is framed as necessary to produce the unity the Party seeks in minority regions.

To understand this more clearly, it is important to outline the law-making process in China. The first stage involves agenda-setting. Every year, hundreds of legislative proposals are generated and then held within ministries, Party departments, leading small groups, think tanks, and even by individual policy entrepreneurs. Many proposals remain dormant within these bureaucracies for years until the political climate becomes favourable for senior Party leaders – including the Politburo and the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) – to bring the accumulated research and draft articles into formal discussion.

Rinzin Namgyal

ONGOING POLICIES

TWELVE MUST 十二个必须, Five Identities 五个认同

THE CORE THEME OF 12 MUST CAN BE SUMMERIZED WITH FIVE BROAD LINES NAMELY-

- Rejuvenation
- Unity
- Identity (Article 15)
- Equality
- Security (Article 20)

The five identities are (Chapter II – Building a Shared Spiritual Home (Articles 11–21))

- The Chinese Communist Party
- The Great Motherland: The Chinese nation
- Chinese Culture
- The Socialist Path: The socialist path with Chinese characteristics
- The Chinese Nation: The Chinese nation

”

The Twelve Musts and Five Identities policies are central tools for ideological indoctrination in Tibetan regions.

The second stage is the inter-agency review, during which ministries and departments negotiate extensively. This is where most of the bargaining takes place, as different institutions attempt to shape the text in line with their interests. The phrase “either unity or erasure” is misleading, because in reality the two are inseparable. In my view, both are taking place simultaneously. The draft law treats unity and erasure as two sides of the same coin: to “unite,” the authorities seek to erase existing identities, and through this erasure they aim to produce the form of unity they desire in minority regions.

To understand this, it is necessary to first look at how lawmaking functions in China. Legislative processes usually begin with agenda-setting. Each year, hundreds of legislative proposals emerge from ministries, leading small groups, party committees, think tanks, and individual policy entrepreneurs. These proposals may sit in departmental pipelines for years, waiting for a political climate that is favourable for them to be brought into internal discussions among central leaders and eventually placed before the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPC).

The second phase is the inter-agency review, where ministries negotiate and bargain over specific provisions of the draft. This is where much of the real contestation happens. Ministries refine the language, seek compromises, and defend their institutional interests.

Rinzin Namgyal

To illustrate how this system normally works, consider the example of a national-level bill concerning the Chinese railway system. Even before such a draft reaches the NPC, it must secure agreement across multiple committees – including those responsible for land management, geography and topography, and heavy industries such as steel. No single agency can push a law on its own; consensus is essential. At times, the top leadership intervenes to break bureaucratic deadlocks and move a legislative proposal forward. This dynamic is relevant to the current draft ethnic unity law, and I will explain this further in later sections.

The third stage is the NPC Standing Committee review, which is largely governed by the Standing Committee and shaped by party approval. In practical terms, opposition at this stage is nearly impossible because no committee can challenge a bill that has already been cleared at the political level by the Politburo. The NPC cannot advance a law that has not received political approval from the top leadership.

The fourth stage is implementation, led primarily by the State Council and its Legislative Affairs Bureau, with significant involvement from relevant ministries and the Supreme People's Court. However, passage of a law does not guarantee implementation at the ground level.

Implementation requires budgetary support, administrative capacity, and bureaucratic willingness. Many laws in China remain under-implemented – sometimes symbolically applied, sometimes selectively enforced.

While the NPC's oversight role in implementation has grown, its ability to influence the State Council remains limited. If ministries lack capacity or resources, or if political priorities shift, laws passed in Beijing may never materialise in practice. Not all laws in China are fully or consistently implemented, even after formal adoption.

The draft Ethnic Unity and Progress Law was introduced by the NPC Ethnic Affairs Committee, one of roughly seven to eight specialised committees under the NPC system. According to official statements, a nationwide inspection by legislative leaders was conducted in 2024 to prepare this draft.

”

China's
lawmaking
begins with
agenda-
setting, where
proposals
await
favorable
political
timing before
top-level
review.

Rinzin Namgyal

However, it is difficult to believe that a law comprising seven chapters and 62 articles was formulated within a single year. The substance of this draft clearly draws upon research papers, internal policy discussions, and long-standing ideological positions that have circulated within ministries and party organs for many years.

Initially listed as a Category Two project under the 14th NPC Standing Committee’s legislative plan, the draft was later elevated to high-priority status. This shift reflects a political directive issued after the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CCP Central Committee, which emphasised building a stronger sense of “Chinese national community.” When a legislative proposal becomes blocked within the bureaucracy, top-level intervention can move it to the fast track – enabling rapid deliberation and rapid advancement through the NPC Standing Committee.

The significance of this elevation was further demonstrated when the Politburo discussed the draft on 29 August 2024, only three months after the Third Plenum. Unusually, the contents of this discussion were made public – something that has not been common practice since the State Enterprises Law of 1988. This level of political visibility indicates a high degree of ideological importance attached to the law.

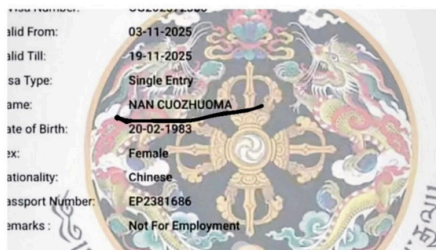


The Draft Ethnic Unity and Progress Law’s rapid elevation and public Politburo discussion signal its high ideological and political priority.

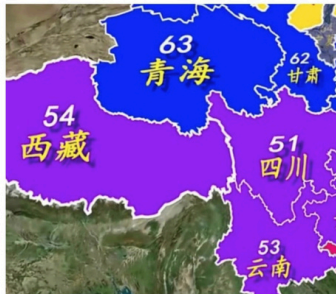
Rinzin Namgyal

Micro level analysis

- China's use of pinyin romanisation and region-coded ID numbers represents a subtle but systematic form of micro-level identity engineering.



- CULTURAL-MEANING
- LOSS OF ORIGINAL PRONUNCIATION
- SYMBOLIC MEANING GETS OBSCURED



- Regional segmentation in ID numbers corresponds to the administrative division of the Tibetan Plateau into TAR + Qinghai + Sichuan + Gansu + Yunnan (51, 53, 54, 62, 63).
- This shifts identity from pan-Tibetan to provincial Tibetan, aligning personal identity with state-defined subdivisions.

These state-defined administrative subdivisions carry significant long-term implications. Over time, individuals are increasingly required to identify themselves through numerical regional codes such as 51, 54, or 63, rather than as Tibetans. This gradual shift risks eroding the broader Tibetan identity, replacing it with narrower, province-based labels. In my view, such changes contribute to the slow fading of the historic concept of Tibet as a unified cultural and territorial entity. This is a micro-level observation, but it illustrates a deeper pattern.

”

Administrative codes gradually replace Tibetan identity with provincial labels, eroding Tibet's unified cultural and territorial identity.

Rinzin Namgyal

The final example relates to how the draft law frames “development.” Recently, I examined the case of Ringi, an entrepreneur from the Aba region, whose photograph I have obscured here. Authorities frequently cite development as a justification for policy interventions, often invoking the long-running Western Development Strategy (Xibu Kaifa) initiated in the late 1990s under Jiang Zemin. Despite decades of such rhetoric, the state itself still categorises Aba as an “underdeveloped” county. This contradiction is evident in the Sichuan Province Training Programme for Women in 39 Underdeveloped Counties, under which participants—including Ringi—are sent for training. While the government publicly emphasises Tibet’s progress in international forums, its own programme labels Aba and similar areas as underdeveloped. This inconsistency raises important questions about how development is defined, measured, and politically deployed in these regions. Despite Beijing’s long-standing claims about the success of its development policies, the official narrative reveals a more complicated reality.

The Sichuan Province “Training Programme for Women in 39 Underdeveloped Counties” is a case in point.

One of the programme’s participants, a young entrepreneur from the Ngaba (Aba) region—an area I have been studying closely—has openly stated on her own channel that she is the only person from her home county in the programme, and that she wishes others from her community were present. What is striking here is not her personal remark, but what the programme’s title itself reveals: the Chinese state continues to classify Aba County as “underdeveloped,” even after more than three decades of Beijing’s “Western Development Strategy,” first launched in the late 1990s under Jiang Zemin.

This raises a critical question. If the government still designates Aba as underdeveloped in its internal policy documents and provincial programmes, why does it consistently claim—particularly in international forums such as the UN in Geneva—that these regions have already reached advanced levels of development? The contradiction between official domestic classifications and China’s external rhetoric deserves closer scrutiny. I would like to close by flagging this inconsistency, which I believe warrants further examination.

”

China frames
Tibet’s
“development”
politically,
masking
persistent
underdevelop-
ment and
contradictions
in official
narratives.



10

Dr. Frank Lehberger

Old Nationalist Narratives in China's New Draft Ethnic Law

1. Introduction

In this short analysis, I argue that the Draft Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress of the People's Republic of China (DLPEUP) is far more than a policy framework for managing ethnic affairs. It functions, in effect, as an open-ended mandate for cultural erasure—authorising ideological indoctrination, far-reaching identity restructuring, and forms of crude social engineering that together amount to a legalised pathway for cultural genocide.

This law targets not only members of the PRC's fifty-six officially recognised ethnic groups—referred to in CCP terminology as “minority nationalities”—but also Han Chinese who continue to live beyond the reach of the CCP's direct control, including the citizens of Taiwan (ROC). [1]

To demonstrate this point, I begin by examining more closely the underlying ideology that the CCP is drawing upon: the longstanding Chinese variant of nationalism, which I refer to here as Sino-Nationalism.[2] This ideological foundation has little to do with Marxism-Leninism or Maoism. Instead, it reflects much older currents of Han-centric national identity that the CCP has adapted, amplified, and now mobilised in service of its contemporary political objectives.

Throughout the English text of the DLPEUP, the reader repeatedly encounters the rather abstract term “Chinese Nation” (中华民族 Zhonghua Minzu),

”

This Law is targeting all members of the PRC's fifty-six recognized ethnic groups—known in CCP jargon as “Minority People”—as well as all Han-Chinese who are still happily living outside the grip of the CCP regime.

Frank Lehberger

often paired with additional ideological phrases such as “Shared Spiritual Home of the Chinese Nation” (中华民族共有精神家园 Zhonghua Minzu Gongyou Jingshen Jiayuan). In this short analysis, I aim to clarify and briefly explain this opaque and often misunderstood concept, which has its origins in late-19th-century Chinese political thought.

2. What is the meaning of “Chinese Nation” and what are the origins

During that period, when imperial governance had become deeply corrupt and increasingly dysfunctional, a number of progressive Han-Chinese scholars and political reformers began searching for a new national ideology. Their aim was to articulate a modern form of “Chineseness” that could restore dignity and political relevance to an identity they believed had long been marginalised and suppressed within the crumbling imperial system.

Those scholar-reformers, who sought to modernise the absolutist empire into a constitutional monarchy, were influenced by the major strands of nationalist thought that had taken shape in Europe’s emerging nation-states following the French Revolution of 1789.

In the nation-building process of the first Chinese Republic, right after the collapse of the ethnic Manchu Qing-dynasty in January 1912, Chinese political theoreticians acknowledged the existence of the same five official ethnic groups of the old empire, and conveniently reorganised them into a novel concept, called ‘Chinese Nation’ (中華民族 Zhonghua Minzu). [3] The literal translation of the Japanese loan word Minzu (民族 in original Japanese pronounced みんぞく Minzoku) is: a tribe of people. A more direct translated version of ‘Chinese Nation’ would therefore be: China’s people-tribes. In modern Japan, social subculture groups, such as bikers or cosplayers, are to the present day referred to as “tribes” or ぞく (族) Zoku.

The idea behind the adoption of this novel terminology and sociological concept during the first decade of the 20th century, was to keep the weak, divided and chaotic Republic unified and roughly within the same geographical borders as the defunct empire, especially at a time, when four powerful colonial empires, namely: Tsarist Russia, British India, French Indochina and Imperial Japan, were lurking at the borders, having made inroads via modern infrastructure construction and management projects, such as railways and ports. The German Wilhelmine colonial empire was only a minor newcomer that had leased the east Chinese coastal territory of Jiaozhou Bay with the port city of Qingdao (Ch. 青島) in 1898. It was taken over by Japan in 1914.

”

A more direct translated version of ‘Chinese Nation’ would therefore be: China’s people-tribes.

Frank Lehberger

The problem with this Republican dream of owning all ‘real estate’ of the empire, was however that both Han-Chinese soldiers, commoners and Manchu military aristocracy had for centuries already collectively alienated all other three groups in rather murderous ways, for instance in the form of genocidal massacres: the one of Mongol-Dzungars around 1750, the one of Yünnan Muslims -or Panthay- in 1850, and of Tibetan Khampas in 1905; these ancient debts in blood became a liability of the young Republic in 1912, as most of those despised, decimated by massacres ethnic groups controlled the geographical periphery, plus the largely inaccessible, inhospitable and depopulated borderlands to the West, North-East and North of the young Republic.

Moreover, the political narratives of the young Chinese nationalists failed to convince: Mongolians and Tibetans swiftly declared their independence from the Republic in 1911 and 1913 respectively. Tibet declared Independence for several reasons. One was that the 13th Dalai Lama was freed from the religious and feudal bonds that had shackled the Tibetan clergy to the imperial household of the ethnic Manchu aristocracy.

Backed by unanimous support at home, the 13th Dalai Lama successfully asserted the existence of Tibet as a modern nation, independent from the chaotic Chinese Republic in February 1913. [4]

Another reason –briefly mentioned above already– was because a Han-Chinese imperial general and provincial governor by the name of Zhao Erfeng had invaded Tibet in 1905 with his troops, and occupied the capital Lhasa, forcing the 13th Dalai Lama to flee to India in 1910. [5]

Zhao and his mostly ethnic Han-Chinese soldiers enacted forced assimilation and Sinicization policies, by forcing Tibetans to adopt alien Chinese customs, alien Chinese family names and life styles totally unsuited for the high altitude environment, massacring thousands of civilians and monks all over Tibet who resisted. This horror lasted until the collapse of the Empire in October 1911, forcing the imperial occupation troops to leave Tibet.

With this in mind we can now debunk the narratives of both Chinese communists and nationalists, namely that “perfidious British, Japanese or Russian imperialists” were behind the independence movements of Mongolia and Tibet. A gross distortion of historical facts!

”

the 13th Dalai Lama successfully asserted the existence of Tibet as a modern nation, independent from the chaotic Chinese Republic in February 1913.

Frank Lehberger

In 1907 the Chinese nationalist politician and scholar Yang Du attempted to explain the origin of the term 'Chinese Nation' (中华民族Zhonghua Minzu) in the following way: "Although there never existed a [clearly defined] word for nation/ethnic group (民族Minzu) in ancient China, special terms did exist to distinguish nations/ethnic groups. People today must have assumed that the Han-Chinese were the oldest ethnic group in China. In fact, Han (汉) is only the name of the dynasty founded by the feudal Liu (刘) family, rather than the name of their ethnic group. Since ancient times, there always existed one nation/ethnic group with a comparatively higher level of culture and a comparatively larger population in China. These people called their state 'China' (中国, Zhongguo, literally: "Central-Land") and they called their nation/ethnic group 'Chinese' (中华Zhonghua, literally: "central and civilized"). In this regard, the distinctions between states are grounded in their geographical locations. China was the Central-Land, while others lived outside the Central-Land. The distinctions between the Chinese and other nations/ethnic groups are grounded in their [levels of development as a] culture. 'Chinese Nation' means that Chinese culture/civilization is superior to that of other nations/ethnic groups." [6]

Superior culture and advanced civilization are the defining characteristics of the concept of 'Chinese Nation' not racial or eugenic characteristics, as adopted by the totalitarian ideologies of European and Japanese fascism. At first glance those characteristics appear to be rather fair, benign and even somehow progressive. Therefore, the initial concept of Chinese Nation has sometimes been erroneously described as being a Chinese version of the American 'melting-pot'. [7]

Yet in reality over the last hundred years, this concept has proven to be a natural magnet for typically Chinese forms of ethnocentrism (also known as Sinocentrism), for various politically opportunistic reasons, including its more extreme and virulent forms, known as Han-chauvinism. [8]

In fact, the ultimate purpose of 'Chinese Nation' is to form a multi-ethnic nation-state with a single national identity. It is however not one in which every ethnic group enjoys equal standing. Indeed, this is because China's national identity is both dominated and defined by the most numerous as well as the culturally most highly developed ethnic group therein: the Han-Chinese (汉族Han-zu, translated literally: the tribe of Han). This turns it into a kind of collective-tribalism where the Han-Chinese 'tribe' (族 Zu) always plays the single most dominant role.

”

Han (汉) is only the name of the dynasty founded by the feudal Liu (刘) family, rather than the name of their ethnic group.

Frank Lehberger

3. Sino-Nationalism and Han-Suprematism

Yang Du's version of Sino-nationalism, which concurs with the so-called "Great Union of the Five Races" (五族大同) seems benign, because it stresses multi-ethnic inclusiveness, unfortunately however it does so only on paper! [9]

The strategic aim behind these seemingly inclusive narratives was no egalitarian idealism, but hard cold Realpolitik: to achieve a kind of homogenisation to the inside, and a clear de-liniation to the outside of China.

The "Five Races" were regarded as the core of the new Republic, yet with Han-Chinese being arbitrarily assigned the status of the eternal "root culture", or in more colloquial terms, the eternal 'top dog' among the Five. The pseudo-rational reasons for this, were the superior demographic numbers and the supposedly superior 'culture' of Han-Chinese. The four other Races were automatically reclassified as "secondary" in importance, or being "minoritarian", rhyming in Han-Chinese minds with "backward".

From a critical point of view, Yang Du behaved like a dodgy salesman, tricking the four so-called minorities, by dangling in front of them the chance to join this 'posh elite-club' called

Chinese Nation. Feigning progressive inclusiveness, especially when compared to the Han-Suprematist brand of Nationalism.

The 19th century scholar Zhang Taiyan openly rejected multi-ethnic forms of Sino-Nationalism [10]. He propagated the existence of a Chinese 'ancestral lineage' —going back over five thousand years to some divine emperors, who are mere mythical inventions. He also instrumentalised Confucianism as argument that two thousand years of Chinese cultural continuity, reached back to the Han dynasty of the year 200BC.

The existence of this imperial Han-dynasty was taken as evidence of the supposed supremacy and greatness of ethnic Han-Chinese. Zhang Taiyan was compulsively suspicious of non-Han, notably the former empire's oppressively dominant Manchu aristocracy, or Tatars—a racial slur targeting the ethnic Manchu in those days— whom he wanted eliminated [11].

Sun Yat-sen, the so-called "Father of the Republic of China (ROC)", who is officially still revered as such by the CCP, stated in 1924, quote [12]:

”

the existence of a Chinese 'ancestral lineage' — going back over five thousand years to some divine emperors, who are mere mythical inventions.

Frank Lehberger

I said that ethnicity equals the [dominant] ethnic group of our nation; so why is this appropriate in China but not in other countries? Because, China has always been a nation formed by one ethnic group since the Qin and Han dynasties. In other countries, one ethnic group formed several nations, or several ethnic groups exist within a single nation. Therefore, the vast majority of the 400 million Chinese people can be said to be entirely Han-Chinese. They share the same bloodline, the same language and writing system, the same religion, and the same customs; they are essentially one nation.”— [13]

4. The hidden dystopian agenda of “Chinese Nation Community Consciousness”

Of course historians have now debunked such 1924 pronouncements as ideological nonsense, but those are still recycled in the 21st century for the narratives that Xi Jinping and his ideologues —whom I like to call “policy whisperers”— try to spread for some time.

Ironically it also reveals a paradox, incidentally the same one that was dogging Sun Yat-sen in 1925, and which is annoying Xi Jinping in 2025: China is supposedly a nation of “one people”, but in 1925 were were those Five Races, while nowadays there are fifty-five ethnic groups, which were recognised by the PRC government in the 1950s during the Mao-era.

To gloss over this paradox, Xi Jinping and his policy whisperers have in 2017 come up with something called: “Chinese Nation Community Consciousness” [14]. The destructively malevolent idea behind it, is aiming to sacrifice all diverging forms of various religions, ethnic histories cultures and customs on the altar of this elusive “Community Consciousness”, basically an illusory endeavor, as most of those religions or histories are impossible to press into a single artificial mold. For example old Mongolian or Tibetan history is not Chinese in any way. Religions like Islam, Confucianism, Taoism, Shamanism, Mongolian Tengrism and Tibetan Buddhism vary widely.

Ironically, these futile attempts of creating what could be called “synthetic unity religion”, inadvertently reveal that Xi Jinping —the supposedly mightiest ruler of China since Mao— is painfully aware that today’s concept of “Chinese Nation” not only sorely lacks a “community consciousness”, but also a convincingly genuine spiritual spark, which would be able on its own to inspire non-Chinese.

”

Xi Jinping ... is painfully aware that today’s concept of “Chinese Nation” not only sorely lacks a “community consciousness”, but also a convincingly genuine spiritual spark, which would be able on its own to inspire non-Chinese.

Frank Lehberger

Instead, Xi or anybody else in the CCP, only offers a hollow, stale pseudo-religious cult, based on synthetic nationalistic myths, catering to Han-Chinese preferences.

This is why the touted “Shared Spiritual Home” (中华民族共有精神家园) appearing in Chapter Two of the DLPEUP, will by design, be neither shared, nor spiritual, nor become a “loving home” for anybody, but remain forever a horror house, occupied by a Sino-nationalistic death-cult, presided by some kind of “high priests” ordained by Xi.

As outrageous as the idea of the CCP merging with some nationalistic cult seems at first, this is in fact not something particularly original or new, because Mao forced something similar on all Party members during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). In Tibet fanatical Maoist Red Guards – both young radicalised local Tibetans and fanatical Han-Chinese settlers/occupiers– destroyed ancient Buddhist temples and monasteries. The ones which had not been razed to the ground, were desecrated as vulgar conference facilities for CCP organisations. Concurrently, the Tibetan population was forced to worship effigies and iconic pictures of the so-called “Great helmsman” or eulogise him in folkloric songs, as if those were depictions of a (fake) Buddhist ‘deity’. [15]

Xi Jinping, who came of age during the Cultural Revolution, and who is known to freely borrow and adapt Maoist coercion tools for more than a decade, may feel tempted to allow nationalistic cults to spread, which would then be subservient to himself. Something akin to the totalitarian dynastic form of communism practiced in North Korea (i.e. the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, DPRK), and its bizarre leadership cult, starting with party chairman Kim Il-sung in 1948. Kim, the founder of both the regime and the dynasty, is revered as the “eternal President of the DPRK” and the semi-divine ancestor of the so-called “Sacred Bloodline of Mt. Paektu”. His descendants are firmly ruling the impoverished and dysfunctional DPRK to the present day without needing to fear any intra-party rivals.

Same as no citizen of the DPRK in his right mind dares to point out that such cults are incompatible with the atheist nature of Marxism-Leninism and Socialism, it is improbable that in a future dystopian China, anybody would dare to do so either. Considering these precedents, Xi Jinping could already be toying with similar futile egomania, seeing himself as the supreme cult master, drawing legitimacy from being the ‘spiritual heir’ of Mao Zedong. Ordinary Chinese as well as a large number of CCP members, incredulously watch for years how Xi is systematically turning China into a larger version of the dystopian DPRK.

”

Ordinary Chinese as well as a large number of CCP members, incredulously watch for years how Xi is systematically turning China into a larger version of the dystopian DPRK.

Frank Lehberger

That is why Chinese nowadays sarcastically refer to the PRC as “West-Korea” or “Western DPRK” 西朝鲜” (sic).

5. Juxtaposition of new Laws and old Sino-Colonial Sinicization methods

Despite such seemingly tolerant tropes as “shared home”, the CCP’s narrative and ideological construct only manages to flimsily cover up its underlying intolerance. That is why the CCP will have to double down on forced assimilation, leading to ultimate cultural genocide. That is, if nothing or no-one interferes. [16] Ironically this could be unwittingly done by Xi Jinping himself. As of now, almost all of his megalomaniac projects and plans since 2013 have flopped or quietly been phased out, mainly to spare him further ridicule and disgrace.

Moreover the fact that the CCP is forcing this new Community Consciousness on everybody nowadays, is ironically a declaration of ideological defeat: all of Deng Xiaoping’s liberal economic development policies after 1984 did not—as expected— accelerate the voluntary self-assimilation of ethnic minorities into the PRC mainstream.

Those policies also failed to convince Taiwanese to voluntarily join the PRC under ‘One Country Two Systems’, which has flopped in the Hong Kong SAR in 2021 thanks to Xi Jinping’s policy choices.

The CCP’s painful realisation that economic development is not an efficient tool for the quasi automatic self-Sinicization of non-Han ethnics, is the deeper reason behind the current frantic search for political remedies, especially after the mass-protests in Tibet 2008 and the extremely bloody revolt in Ürümqi, East Turkestan 2009.

As a result several Politburo-appointed scholars such as Ma Rong and Zhu Weiqun who do both qualify as Xi Jinping’s main ‘Sinicization-whisperers’, have for 12 years encouraged party and state authorities to draft much more restrictive and destructive ethnic policies. [17][18]

For example, Ma Rong has advocated scrapping the PRC’s 1984 Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law of the People’s Republic of China (REAL), plus cancelling the ethnic minorities’ very modest privileges and affirmative action measures, mainly in family planning, employment and education, in order to obliterate the last remnants of ethnic distinctions and consciousness.

”

The CCP’s painful realisation that economic development is not an efficient tool for the quasi automatic self-Sinicization of non-Han ethnics, is the deeper reason behind the current frantic search for political remedies

Frank Lehberger



In my opinion the DLPEUP is in itself no real turning point, but a rehash of unabashedly nationalistic assimilation practices that are a continuation of a long tradition of inhuman policies, which are more than 200 years old. Policies that even Mao repudiated temporarily for some time before taking over China in 1949.

The accelerated adoption of the DLPEUP at the coming plenary session of the National People's Congress —China's rubber-stamp Lower House of parliament— scheduled for sometime in March 2026, is a symptom of Xi Jinping's impatience. In his mind, all vital issues of national unity and sovereignty remain unresolved. His grip on the ethnic periphery, especially in East Turkestan (aka Xinjiang, official abbreviation: XUAR) and Tibet (official abbreviation: TAR) is still haphazard even after 75 years of both genocidal as well as those slightly less inhuman —yet still destructively Sino-colonial— "development and investment policies" of the 1990s.

When seen from the legal aspect, the function of the DLPEUP appears to be designed as some sort of an umbrella-law for already existing, but much more detailed and specific ethnic laws and regulations, both on national and local levels.

For example, the 1984 Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law of the People's Republic of China (REAL), the 2021 Land Borders Law of the People's Republic of China (LBL), or the 2020 Regulations on the Creation of a Model Area of National Unity and Progress (CMANUP) enacted in several Autonomous Regions of China, such as the TAR and XUAR.

Those last two legal frameworks are local regulations that were enacted alongside the Chinese government's 14th Five-Year-Plan, starting 2020. With the anticipated start of the 15th Five-Year-Plan in 2026, the new DLPEUP represents a second phase of systematic policy-tightening.

Since assuming full powers in March 2013, Xi Jinping is himself compulsively obsessed with all kinds of loyalty issues, also among the 55 non-Han ethnic minorities, whose very existence seems to endanger his geo-strategically grandiose plans, such as the Belt-and-Road-Initiative. This is where the 19th century Nationalist Sun Yat-sen, as well as Communists like Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and Hu Jintao all failed, but where he intends to succeed at all cost.

Xi Jinping has advocated to "Unite the Chinese Nation as One Community". He says so in the fifth volume of his opus entitled: "Governance of China", in which he also maintains that, quote, "the formation and development of the Chinese nation as one single

Jinping is himself compulsively obsessed with all kinds of loyalty issues, also among the 55 non-Han ethnic minorities, whose very existence seems to endanger his geo-strategically grandiose plans, such as the Belt-and-Road-Initiative.

Frank Lehberger

community follows the will of the people, and the irresistible tide of history.” [19] End quote. This basically paraphrases what Sun Yat sen said in 1924, mentioned earlier.

However –no matter what tides he refers to– by artificially asserting a dominant ethnic culture, with the aim to forcedly Sinicizing all other ethnic groups against their will, Xi Jinping does in fact violate international human rights standards, in effect since 1948, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

With all this in mind, I briefly compare the DLPEUP with various other PRC laws and regulations that have been enacted in the last five years, specifically designed to artificially engineer unity and tightening territorial integrity by stressing the PRC’s national sovereignty.

In contrast to the very detailed LBL, the DLPEUP mentions national defense plus domestic security matters just twice, in Articles 46 and 39, and then only in very broad terms: stipulating that local authorities in all border areas are “responsible for enacting programmes for domestic stability, and improved local infrastructure”.

Article 46 states that the military is responsible for safeguarding national security in border areas, by weaponising military-civilian fusion, especially in the education field with the aim of brainwashing

Article 20 of the DLPEUP holds each individual head of household responsible, for providing at home so-called “family education and moral guidance” to their offspring: indoctrinating them to, quote, “love the CCP, the Chinese motherland, the Chinese people, and the Chinese nation”.

This condenses in one sentence what is basically detailed in articles 19, 30 and 32 of the TAR-CMANUP, requiring that “Families shall pay attention to family education”. Meaning that compulsory political indoctrination is extended into the private sphere, by making each –usually male– head of individual household, basically an arm of the totalitarian regime: holding him legally responsible for sinicizing his reluctant family members. In case of non-compliance or rejection, they must punish and denounce their offspring themselves, or they will be personally held accountable by criminal law.

Unfortunately this is social engineering at its worst: pit family members against each other in a divisive and suspicious interpersonal climate. Mao subjected entire China to

“family education and moral guidance” to their offspring: indoctrinating them to, “love the CCP, the Chinese motherland, the Chinese people, and the Chinese nation.

Frank Lehberger

something similar during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). In 2025, the CCP's malevolent goal is by design, to make Tibetans, Uighurs or other ethnic groups responsible for the destruction of their own culture, as well as of their own social and family-cohesion, evaporating all remnants of interpersonal trust.

In addition, this is basically a modern adaptation of collective punishment, which were during imperial times previous to 1912 meted out by roving imperial bureaucrat-officials in selected ethnic border areas of Southwest China, as well as on the island of Taiwan in the 18th and 19th century. Those were ethnic communities where the Qing dynasty's imperial governance structures had been largely inexistent until the late 19th century, and where those communities had largely self-governed, paying for generations only lip service of being loyal subjects of the imperial Ming or Manchu rulers in far away Peking, whilst living according to their own ethnic cultural norms and moral values. [21]

Yet a novel governance model introduced by the Qing-dynasty in the 18th century, began to hold heads of ethnic clans responsible for the misdeeds or crimes of their entire families.

Those clan-heads had to report to the roving envoys who showed up in their places with a retinue of armed guards on regularly intervalled inspection tours. When on site, those imperial envoys would be holding court, collect due taxes and mete out collective punishment. The renowned Taiwanese scholar, member of the Acedemia Sinica, Dr. Tu Cheng-sheng explains the ancient imperial governance and Sinicization strategy that enabled such an elaborate system, quote: "The [territorial and administrative] expansion of ancient China proceeded [after a recurring pattern in the following way]: after military conquest and the appointment of bureaucrat-officials to govern the ethnic people, followed forced cultural transformation with the aim of changing the [ethnic] inhabitants into "Chinese". [22] Only after the military conquest [of non-Han ethnics] could imperial bureaucrat-officials be appointed, and only with those could the assimilation [of ethnic communities] be realised. [23] With any single one of those three elements missing, "incorporation-annexation" and full "Sinicization" were impossible [to achieve among ethnic locals]." [24][25] [26] End quote.

This concludes my presentation, trying to show that the measures which the CCP employs in 2025 are adaptations of what the Manchu imperial dynasty and the Nationalist KMT regime of the ROC all tried and tested unsuccessfully in previous centuries.

”

incorporation
-annexation
and full
Sinicization

Frank Lehberger

End notes:

1. The literal translation of the Chinese term 少数民族 Shaoshu Minzu.
2. Sino-Nationalism or in Chinese: 中华民族主义 Zhonghua Minzu Zhuyi. Literal translation would be: "Chinese Nation-Nationalism". The old term "Chinese Nation" is written in traditional characters in the following way 中華民族 Zhonghua Minzu. Nationalism in its traditional form and the term in its general meaning is known in Chinese as 民族主义 Minzu Zhuyi.
3. Also called "union of five races" 五族大同 Wuzu Datong, 五族共和 Wuzu Gonghe. 汉 Han-Chinese, 满 Manchus, 蒙 Mongols, 回 Hui-Muslims, 藏 Tibetans. The first Chinese thinkers to elaborate on that concept were the philosopher and political reformer Liang Qichao (梁启超 1872-1929), the nationalist theoretician Zhang Taiyan 章太炎, (1869-1936) and the reformist politician Yang Du 杨度 (1875-1931).
4. This kind of special symbiotic relationship, involving powerful patronage by Manchu Imperial elites in relation to the lineages of the Dalai and the Panchen Lamas of Tibet, is known as the "priest-patron relationship", or in Tibetan: mchöd-yön (Ch. 壇越關係 Tanyue Guanxi).
5. Zhao, Erfeng 赵尔丰 (1845-1911). He had been appointed acting Viceroy of Sichuan province by the Empress Dowager of the Qing dynasty. Sichuan is the densely populated Chinese province neighboring eastern Tibet, from where he invaded central Tibet and Lhasa with his troops in 1905. Tibetans to the present day remember him as "Zhao the Butcher" for his genocidal acts. He was by imperial appointment the plenipotentiary "Amban" of the Qing dynasty in Tibet and military general. In 1911 he was appointed Director-General of the Sichuan-Hubei Railway, and as such involved in the bloody repression of a popular revolt related to the so-called Railway-bond scam in 1911. Chinese insurgents beheaded him during the military mutiny that mutinous army units from Wuhan, the capital of Hubei province, toppled the Chinese Empire in October 1911.
6. Yang, Du 杨度. "Theory of Gold-Ironism", (金铁主义说 Jintie zhuyi shuo), translated by this author from: Collected Works of Yang Du, Changsha, PRC: Hunan People's Publishing House. (1986)

Frank Lehberger

7. Among others by Sun, Yat-sen. This spelling is according to the Cantonese pronunciation of the Mandarin Sun, Yixian 孙逸仙, aka Sun, Zhongshan 孙中山 (1866-1925), the father of the Chinese Republic of 1912, founder of China's Nationalist Kuomintang-Party (KMT) and author of the political ideology of the Three Principles of the People 三民主义 or Sanmin Zhuyi.

8. In Chinese: 大汉沙文主义, Dahan Shawen Zhuyi. 1953 Mao coined his own denomination, renaming it "Great-Hanism" 大汉族主义 Dahanzu Zhuyi.

9. *ibid* note Nr. 3 五族大同

10. Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1869–1936)

11. The Chinese word 鞑虏 Dalu or "Tatars" is an old Chinese ethnic slur of Mongols and Manchus, nowadays seldomly used.

12. *ibid* note Nr. 7.

13. Chinese original of Sun Yat-sen's first lecture, entitled Nationalism, delivered January 27, 1924:

1924年1月27日，孙中山《民族主义》第一讲：“我说民族就是国族，何以在中国是适当，在外国便不适当呢？……因为中国自秦汉而后，都是一个民族造成一个国家。外国有一民族造成几个国家的，有一个国家之内有几个民族的。”“所以就大多数说，四万万中国人，可以说完全是汉人。同一血统，同一言语文字，同一宗教，同一习惯，完全是一个民族。”—

14. Chinese Nation Community Consciousness or 中华民族共同体意识 Zhōnghuá Mínzú Gòngtóngtǐ Yìshì, is a slogan that initially surfaced during the 19th Central Committee's Plenary Congress in Fall 2017. It has been defined as the official ideological "main party line" of China's ethnic policies. In 2023, its importance increased and it is now touted by the CCP as "the main line of all work in ethnic minority areas", meaning that all aspects of political, economic, cultural, social, ecological and "Party construction" must, "closely focus" on it and never "deviate" from it. Governments and CCP organisations of Autonomous Regions such as the TAR or the XUAR must pledge to incessantly "tighten" (套牢 Taolao) it, revealing ironically how weak this concept is in real life.

Frank Lehberger

The quasi hysterical language, used in the main TAR propaganda mouthpiece -the Tibet Daily- trying to hammer this vapid concept into the heads of Tibetans, revealingly underlines this, quote : “We must firmly implant [into the heads of everybody] the notion of a community with a shared future, a shared honor and disgrace, a shared life and death, and a shared destiny, and build an emotionally tightly knit Chinese Nation community consciousness where all ethnic groups [living in the TAR] share the same merged blood, share the same [religious] beliefs, share the same interchangeable cultures, and the same interdependent economy.” End quote Tibet Daily article in Chinese, dated Feb.16, 2025, entitled : The first amendment in five years of the TAR-CMANUP西藏日报:时隔五年首次修订《西藏自治区民族团结进步模范区创建条例》2025年02月16日;“牢固树立休戚与共、荣辱与共、生死与共、命运与共的共同体理念,建设各民族血脉相融、信念相同、文化相通、经济相依、情感相亲的中华民族共同体。”—

15. As per witness accounts provided to this author by Tibetan interviewees, and as described in Tsering Woesser’s book on the Cultural Revolution in: Lhasa Forbidden Memory: Tibet during the Cultural Revolution.

16. Assimilation in the sense of Sinicization, this is known for centuries in Chinese under several different but interchangeable technical terms, mainly: 同化Tonghua, literally: assimilation ; 中国化Zhongguohua (more on this in end note Nr. 25), or 汉化Hanhua, literally: “Han-isation”.

17. Ma, Rong 马戎, born 1950, is a renowned sociologist with a PhD at Peking University and a specialist in ethnic relations. He is a member of the Han-Chinese Muslim community, known under the ethnonym “Hui minority” 回.

18. Zhu, Weiqun 朱维群, born 1947, is a retired United Front apparatchik, but who was still influential in formulating ethnic politics until 2018. He is a member of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Zhu served under Hu Jintao in 2006 as executive deputy of the CCP United Front Work Department, focusing mainly on occupied Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. Xi Jinping appointed him as Chairman of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee of the Chinese rubber stamp Upper House from 2013 to 2018.

19. Xi Jinping: The Governance of China, Volume V, Paperback, Chapter: Whole Process People’s Democracy. Speech of September 27, 2024 entitled: Unite the Chinese Nation as One Community.

Frank Lehberger

20. Yífēngyìsú 移風易俗, often cited in relation with Chinese Nation Community Consciousness.

21. This governance model became known during the Qing dynasty as: 廢土歸流 Feitu Guiliu translated approximatively: “abolish [self-rule by] ethnic dignitaries; divert to [centrally appointed colonial] bureaucrats”. In this context, Liu 流 can be translated as ‘roving envoys/bureaucrats. These were imperial bureaucrat-officials, who were traveling to designated ethnic areas on a regular basis to meet selected ethnic community leaders or dignitaries and to judge/punish any failings that they were said to have committed, according to imperial laws and Confucian moral codes.

22. 文化改造, Wenhua Gaizao, literally: cultural transformation, or improved reconfiguration.

23. 教化 Jiaohua, literally “educationalisation” in the sense of transformative indoctrination with the declared goal towards an assimilated unitary “civilization”, dominated by Han-Chinese cultural and moral values.

24. 內地化 Neidihua, literally inlandization. An example would be Hong Kong SAR after the failed mass demonstrations of 2019 and 2020, with the CCP, formally abolishing 1c2s and the SAR’s status after 1997.

25. 中國化 Zhongguohua, literally Centerland-isation, or China-isation. Also refer to end note Nr. 16.

26. Tu, Cheng-sheng. Taiwan Academia Sinica; Zhongguo shi zenme Xingchengde; in: Gujinlunheng di 39 Qi 2022.1, p.31 杜正勝, 中央研究院院士: 中國是怎麼形成的 古今論衡 第39期 p. 31

「中國」的擴張, 在軍事征服與設官治民之後, 繼之以文化改造, 使該地居民變成為「中國人」。只有征服了才能設官, 只有設官了才可能實施「教化」, 三者缺一, 都不可能「內地化」, 不可能充分的「中國化」。

Frank Lehberger

Abbreviations list (in Alphabetical order):

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CMANUP	Regulations on the Creation of a Model Area of National Unity and Progress.
DLPEUP	Draft Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress of the People's Republic of China.
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea.
KMT	Kuo-Min-Tang (also spelled Guomindang) i.e. Nationalist Party of China of 1919.
LBL	Land Borders Law of the People's Republic of China.
PRC	People's Republic of China.
REAL	Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law of the People's Republic of China.
ROC	Republic of China (before 1949, and exclusively in control of Taiwan after 1949).
SAR	Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong, formed 1997.
TAR	Tibet Autonomous Region; now officially the: "Xizang Autonomous Region".
XUAR	Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.





11

Prof. Xia Ming

When I speak on this subject, I find it essential to organise my remarks around three points. First, I will situate the issue within my own intellectual horizon and explain why I became engaged with this topic. Second, I will outline my interpretation of the draft law. Third, in order for that interpretation to make sense, I will review the broader political and historical background in which this draft has emerged. These three elements frame the discussion I intend to present.

Although my academic training is in international politics, my professional work over the years has led me to develop two sustained areas of interest. One is the study of financial crises; the other is the evolution of ethnic policies and ethnic relations in China.



Together, these perspectives shape how I approach and analyse the draft law now under consideration.

This is why, over the past twenty years, I have remained closely connected with the Tibetan community and with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Within the horizon of my work, two major concerns have gradually taken shape—almost like twin nightmares. The first is the prospect of a severe financial crisis; the second is the possibility of escalating ethnic conflict.

Both, in my view, have the potential to grow into profound global crises, if they have not already begun to do so. Each carries the risk of immense human suffering—bloodshed on a scale that could claim millions, perhaps even tens of millions, of lives. These looming dangers are the reason I feel such urgency, and why I have devoted myself to studying and engaging with these two critical issues.

”

I have developed two areas of interest in my intellectual horizon: the financial crisis and ethnic issues in China.

Prof. Xia Ming

Since we have distinguished speakers from many different ethnic communities here today, I would also like to make one point very clear. I am Chinese. But in the spirit of Socrates, I do not see myself as belonging to any one country. As several panellists have already highlighted, the final clause of the draft law explicitly states that anyone who “incites or causes damage to national unity or ethnic progress” is subject to legal punishment. By that definition, simply participating in this panel—simply expressing our views—would place us at risk should we be within the jurisdiction of the Chinese state.

But I am not particularly worried about this provision. Since 2008, I have been prohibited from returning to China—ironically, or perhaps precisely because, my former teacher Wang Huning now sits at the top of the Politburo and oversees all United Front work in his capacity as Chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

I also want to share with my fellow panellists that, because of my long-standing engagement with Tibetan issues, I am currently completing the proofreading and indexing of a Tibetan book titled ‘Flames of Tibetan Youth’ for its Chinese edition.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has consistently encouraged me to convey his story and his vision to Chinese brothers and sisters, and it is for this reason that I am translating this work into Chinese. The book, written by Dechen Galtso—a retired Voice of America employee—offers a powerful account of Tibet and the suffering endured by the Tibetan people. I think of it as a kind of “Jeremiah” from Tibet: a moral indictment addressed to the Chinese public. Coming from Sichuan and having long-standing ties with Tibetan communities, I feel a personal responsibility to support this work and contribute, in whatever way I can, to bringing Tibetan voices to Chinese readers.

Second, I want to add—especially for those here from Uyghur East Turkestan, or what the Chinese state calls Xinjiang—that when we speak about this draft law, some may ask why we focus on legal language when Uyghurs are already enduring immense suffering. I want to make it clear that I have long recognised and spoken publicly about what is happening. I can say, without exaggeration, that I was among the first Han Chinese scholars to openly describe the situation in Xinjiang as ethnic genocide on an international news platform. Anyone may verify this: search my name alongside “genocide in Xinjiang,” and you will see who raised this point publicly at an early stage.

”

the frontal attack is from the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese government, through its transnational law enforcement. The backstab is coming from major democracies worldwide,

Prof. Xia Ming

Regarding Mongolia, my friend here, Enghebatu, if we walked the streets of New York, people would probably think I am more Mongolian than he, or at least that we are equally Mongolian. Because my father is from Manchuria, in this massive entanglement of bloodlines, I do not know—probably from my grandmother’s generation—how much Mongolian blood I have inherited. This is why I want to say I am a global citizen. I have no country, and I have no loyalty to any ethnic group or any single country.

We are now at a moment where the challenges facing all of us come from several directions at once. The most direct pressure, of course, comes from the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese government through their expanding system of transnational law-enforcement and intimidation. But the situation is made even more difficult by the fact that we are also being undermined—often quietly, sometimes openly—by major democratic countries around the world. These include the United States, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Austria, Hungary, Poland, Turkey, and even India.

Both, in my assessment, have the potential to escalate into major global crises—if they have not already begun to do so.

They are not abstract risks; they will cost millions, perhaps tens of millions, of lives. This is why these two issues provoke such anxiety for me, and why I have dedicated myself to studying and understanding them.

Unfortunately, ethnocentrism and ethnic nationalism are not confined to any single country—they are global phenomena in which China represents only one part of a wider trend. This leaves us deeply concerned, because the democratic vantage points from which we have sought protection, the foundations we have relied upon, and the Archimedean points from which we have hoped to exert leverage for change inside China are themselves becoming increasingly unstable. The ground beneath us is, in many respects, weakening. This is why we find ourselves confronting not only “Xi-Dadaism” in China but also the rise of Trumpism in the United States—two very different political currents that, nonetheless, share troubling similarities. Recognising these parallels is essential. They shape the international environment in which we operate and complicate the very conditions necessary for advancing human rights, defending minority communities, and pushing for meaningful change within China.

The third form of pressure comes from what I would call “side attacks.” No matter which panel I speak on—whether the topic concerns Uyghur, Tibetan, Mongol, Manchu, Taiwan, or Hong Kong issues—there are always people who feel I am not radical enough.

”

the frontal attack is from the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese government, through its transnational law enforcement. The backstab is coming from major democracies worldwide,

Prof. Xia Ming

This is a challenge I face even from those I believe I am standing alongside. While we are confronting Han-Chinese ethnic chauvinism, we cannot simply fall back on our own versions of “blood-and-soil” ethnocentrism. For my part, I want to state clearly that my position is rooted in a combination of individualism and universalism, grounded in liberal republican principles. This is the perspective from which I approach these discussions. With that context, I will turn to the draft law, outline the central issues, and reflect on what I have observed.

As Frank noted, the Draft Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress is presented as a replacement for the 1984 Ethnic Law. However, that 1984 legislation was enacted during a far more reformist and liberal period under Hu Yaobang, when the leadership was comparatively open-minded and willing to experiment with more accommodating ethnic policies. It followed the 1982 Constitution, which—at the time—embodied a more progressive direction for China’s political development.

In contrast, Xi Jinping has fundamentally altered the political foundation laid by the 1982 Constitution by abolishing presidential and vice-presidential term limits.

He is now in his third term and clearly intends to seek a fourth, and possibly a fifth, should his health permit. The push for “national unity” must be understood within this broader political project: Xi is attempting to consolidate his authority and justify prolonged rule under the banner of national rejuvenation.

What we are witnessing is part of a larger constitutional and political shift—essentially a constitutional coup—that has unfolded since 2015. Under Xi and Wang Huning’s direction, the CCP has advanced a comprehensive “top-level design” to centralise power, eliminate institutional constraints, and re-engineer ethnic relations to fit this new authoritarian vision.

In this context, it is clear that the Chinese government has become increasingly explicit about the direction it intends to pursue. The draft law openly invokes the term Dayitong (大一统)—the “Grand Unity.” This is a term with deep historical roots but one that carries negative connotations in academic circles, among ethnic minority communities, and within the broader Chinese dissident community. Its use here signals, without ambiguity, that assimilation is the central objective.

The law does not attempt to mask this intention; rather, it presents assimilation as the desired outcome of national policy, making the state’s agenda far more forthright than in previous decades.

”

my vantage point is entirely a combination of individualism and universalism, grounded in liberal republicanism

Prof. Xia Ming

This is the reality we must recognise. The Chinese government today no longer feels compelled to maintain any façade of moderation. There is no pretence, no subtlety, and no political euphemism. Its direction is openly declared and unapologetically pursued: Grand Unity—a project rooted in uniformity and enforced conformity.

If we consider how, under Trump, parts of the United States attempted to revive the old “melting pot” through a resurgence of white supremacy—undermining diversity and dismantling DEI—there is a parallel in China. Under what I call “Xi-Dadaism,” Xi Jinping is reviving China’s own metaphorical wok, stirred rapidly and violently, to produce what I call a “red stew.” In the American melting pot, individuals still retain personal agency and cultural space. In Xi’s wok, by contrast, the state controls the fire, the ingredients, and the final outcome.

This is the model China’s leaders are now openly pursuing. As Frank, Rinzin, and others have observed, the concept of a “community of the Chinese nation,” especially in its fully integrated and mutually embedded form, is not about coexistence.

It is about dominance. It is about the ability of the Han-majority state to subsume, overwrite, and ultimately erase minority identities through systematic and compulsory assimilation.

You can also see that the Chinese government speaks of creating a so-called “spiritual homeland” for all people living in China. This is profoundly ironic.

Spiritually, Chinese society today faces a deep crisis—an inner void and a sense of emptiness. I can say from my own experience that the spiritual guidance I have received from His Holiness the Dalai Lama has taught me far more than anything I learned in all my years of formal education in China, despite having benefitted from what is considered the best schooling the country offers.

This is what I hope we all keep in mind: the Chinese government is attempting to use its own spiritual void to construct an imagined “spiritual homeland” for other ethnic groups who, in reality, possess far deeper and richer spiritual traditions. Communities such as Tibetans, whose Buddhist heritage continues to flourish and guide their daily lives, do not need an artificially engineered identity or state-designed spiritual framework. The irony is stark — a state that struggles with its own spiritual emptiness is trying to impose an empty, homogenised notion of “spiritual belonging” on peoples whose cultures and religions remain vibrant and deeply rooted.

”

what I have learned from His Holiness the Dalai Lama in spiritual teaching is more than all I have learned in my whole education in China, where I can boast of having the best education.

Prof. Xia Ming

Another important point—some of you mentioned that Chinese laws often remain on paper and are not enforced at the ground level.

However, we must pay attention to the fact that this particular law is tied to the Five-Year Plan and therefore comes with dedicated budget allocations. This means that new offices will be created, personnel will be appointed, and resources will be assigned specifically for its implementation. We should expect a large-scale propaganda drive as the first step—a campaign of ideological pressure and “spiritual” coercion—because this is precisely the domain in which Wang Huning excels.

Wang is not a practitioner with real-world administrative experience; he is an armchair theorist, and his influence traditionally manifests through propaganda and ideological engineering. As a result, we are likely to see a combination of heavy propaganda, forced educational programmes, coercive ideological training, and, in the worst cases, systems resembling the brainwashing and camp-based mechanisms already used in other regions. These patterns provide a clear indication of how the law will be operationalised.

Now I want to address the question of whether the situation is hopeless. The challenges are immense, but I do not believe we are without grounds for optimism. I see three reasons for cautious confidence.

First, as several speakers have already noted, the Chinese economy is entering a period of prolonged stagnation. For more than four decades, the Party relied on rapid economic growth—what I call “economism”—to sustain its legitimacy. With that model now weakening, the leadership has turned to ethnic nationalism as a substitute source of political authority. Yet ethnic nationalism, as practiced in the PRC’s hierarchical authoritarian system, inevitably generates new inequalities. Within this structure, the Communist Party and the ruling oligarchs position themselves at the top as the “vanguard.” Below them stand ordinary citizens, then the working class—a term that, in today’s China, largely refers to the urban population. Rural communities are placed beneath them, and finally, ethnic minority groups remain at the bottom of this stratified order.

These layers of inequality will only deepen under the new framework. Nothing in this draft law will ease ethnic tensions; on the contrary, it is likely to intensify them. Beijing is increasingly anxious about national security across minority regions, especially as the Dalai Lama continues to press the Middle Way Approach and repeatedly calls on China to uphold its own constitution and the 1984 Ethnic Nationality Law.

”
the Dalai Lama is pushing the envelope, talking about the Middle Way and respecting the constitution. All this has pushed the Chinese government into a corner

Prof. Xia Ming

This advocacy has cornered the Chinese government in the arena of discourse and legitimacy: they cannot offer a convincing response to lawful, constitution-based resistance. Faced with this challenge, they have chosen instead to cast aside constitutional commitments and the earlier ethnic law entirely, becoming openly coercive. In this sense, the work of overseas movements and the Dalai Lama's principled insistence on constitutionalism have had real impact. I want to underline that point, because it is important and encouraging to recognise.

Second, I remain cautiously optimistic because the world is now moving through overlapping crises—what many describe as a global polycrisis. While deeply unsettling, this moment of disruption also forces societies to confront uncomfortable truths and learn difficult lessons. In the United States, for example, many within the MAGA movement are beginning to feel the consequences of the very politics they championed. At times, I cannot help but feel a degree of *schadenfreude* and think, "I warned you this would happen."

The draft law, notably, reiterates that the Communist Party is the vanguard of the working class, reinforcing this hierarchy.

It is precisely this differentiated political structure—Party elites first, urban residents next, rural citizens below them, and ethnic groups at the lowest tier—that ensures that ethnic nationalism will continue to produce contradictions and tensions within the system. These internal contradictions are, in my view, one of the long-term forces that will weaken Beijing's ability to enforce the homogenising ambitions embodied in this draft law.

After the waves of extreme polarization we are witnessing—where some are cast as villains and others as saviours—I believe we will eventually reach a period of moderation. In the long run, humanity tends to move toward a better and more balanced direction.

The global anxiety and turbulence we see today reflect a collective search for a way forward. This is why, despite everything, I remain optimistic. New technologies are creating, for the first time in history, a large segment of society that can enjoy leisure without falling into poverty. This emerging world will generate new forms of material progress as well as new values, and I am prepared to welcome what may come.

”

Basically, we are talking about the fact that over the past 764 years, 83% of the time, people living in the territory of the People's Republic of China lived under Mongolian and Manchurian rule.

Prof. Xia Ming

Number three: I believe we must pay close attention to the Chinese people themselves— their longing for liberty, their desire to live as free individuals, and their search for spiritual grounding. Many are increasingly drawn to the kinds of spiritual practices that are deeply rooted in Islamic communities, in Tibetan Buddhism, and in other traditions that continue to thrive despite repression. This is important to underline. When I use the term “Chinese,” I do not mean it as an ethnic label.

In fact, “Chinese” is not even a name that people inside China historically used for themselves; it is a label derived from how outsiders—whether Indians referring to Cina, or Russians calling the country Kitay—have described the land. What I mean by “Chinese” here is simple: all the people living today within the borders of the People’s Republic of China, particularly those born there. These people, regardless of ethnic background, are “Chinese” in the civic sense, and many among them share the same aspirations for freedom and spiritual growth that we see in other oppressed communities.

I therefore believe we should speak of Han Chinese, Uyghur Chinese, Hui Chinese, and Tibetan Chinese—because “Chinese” itself is not an ethnic label.

The term “China” is not derived from any ethnic group. In Chinese, Zhongguo literally means “the central state” or “central realm,” and its meaning is fundamentally geographic and civilizational, not ethnic.

My colleague, Professor Fei-Ling Wang at the Georgia Institute of Technology, captures this well in his trilogy on China, where he uses the term “Centralia” to describe this expanding political-civilizational project. It is also important to recognise a historical fact often overlooked in contemporary discussions: from the founding of the Yuan dynasty in 1271 until the end of the Qing dynasty in 1911, the territory that constitutes today’s People’s Republic of China was ruled for 640 years by non-Han powers—first by the Mongols and later by the Manchus, who themselves were closely linked to broader Mongol lineage networks. In other words, over the last roughly 764 years, people living within what is now the PRC spent more than 80 percent of that time under Mongolian and Manchurian rule.

This is why I caution against using phrases such as “Chinese-occupied territory” when referring to Mongolia or Manchuria. Historically, it was the Mongols who conquered China, and it was the Manchus who conquered China—not the reverse. In a sense, what we now call “China” is a long historical amalgam shaped in a kitchen where the primary chefs were Genghis Khan and Nurhaci, while Sun Yat-sen and Mao Zedong were later contributors to the broth.

”

The Han Chinese should take the initiative to apologise and redress injustice. We need to have dialogue, not fall into fanaticism.

Prof. Xia Ming

My last point is this: even my own surname, “Xia,” refers back to the ancient notion of “Grand Xia,” which the current leadership now echoes through its talk of Huaxia culture. I have no objection to examining such ideas, but what we need at this moment is an open and honest discourse that makes possible a broader reconciliation among all the ethnic groups in China. This requires the Han majority to take the initiative in acknowledging past injustices and offering genuine redress. We need dialogue—serious, principled dialogue—rather than falling into the trap of replacing one form of fanaticism with another. If, within our own community and in our conversations, we are unable to cultivate a plural, democratic, liberal sensibility—if we fail to embrace a form of civic nationalism that is inclusive rather than exclusionary—then we risk sliding into “blood-and-soil” identities that breed narrowness and extremism. And if that happens, the danger is not merely that China or the Chinese Communist Party will suffer; it is that we may lose our humanity in the process.

My two long-standing fears, shaped by close observation of developments in China, are now becoming real.

The first is a deepening financial crisis—housing market collapse, mounting debt, and the rapid impoverishment of large segments of the Chinese middle class. Many will lose their livelihoods, and some will lose their lives. The second is the looming risk of ethnic conflict: whether violence is directed by Han Chinese against minority groups, or erupts in the opposite direction, the outcome may well be a human tragedy on a massive scale.

This is what concerns me most. At this moment, our foremost task is to defend our shared humanity. Any future reconciliation must begin with open dialogue, particularly among those of us working from outside China. Only through such dialogue can we build a broader vision and lay the groundwork for a future that upholds dignity, rights, and coexistence for all.

”

The Han Chinese should take the initiative to apologise and redress injustice. We need to have dialogue, not fall into fanaticism.



12

Pierro Tozzi

Thank you, Professor Kondapalli, and also the Foundation for Nonviolent Alternatives for inviting me to this illustrious panel. Usually, I don't get to be on panels because I'm putting panels together. We have a couple of our fellow panelists who have been on CECC panels: Rushan Abbas, who is one of my heroes personally, and Enghebatu Togocho—both of them have testified numerous times before the Congressional Executive Commission on China. Frank, it's a pleasure to be on a panel with you. I feel I know you from your erudite and witty LinkedIn postings, and we do have a nice rapport, so that is great. Ming Xia and Rinzin, we haven't met, but I hope we do get a chance to know each other better.

I thought I would briefly give some big-picture framing here and then follow that with some topline thoughts on the draft law. I will also give some indication of what we're going to be reporting on in our CECC annual report on ethnic issues. We hope to have the report released close to December 10th, which is Human Rights Day. Finally, I want to highlight some of the political prisoners that we have in our political prisoner database, just to tell their stories. Probably one of the most important things we do is to remember those who are persecuted on account of their race, ethnicity, religion, or political beliefs.

One point I want to highlight is the question implicit in our discussion: Does unity require cultural erasure? Unfortunately, from Beijing's perspective, the answer appears to be yes. What we see reflects a deliberate project shaped by a form of Han ethno-supremacism.

”

Does unity necessitate cultural erasure? I think, sadly, from the perspective of Beijing, that answer is yes. It is, I think, a combination of what I call "Han ethno-supremacism.

Piero Tozzi

Frank, you used the term “Sinoism,” and Professor Ming Xia referred to “ethnic chauvinism.” I agree that these ideas sit at the heart of the problem. What we are seeing is a combination of Han ethno-supremacism and a powerful drive toward centralisation and standardisation. This is not only rooted in the ideology of the Chinese Communist Party but also reflects a much older political tradition—an impulse toward legalist, uniform rule that reaches back to the Qin Dynasty and its quest to “unify” China.

This same logic underpins today’s push to Sinicise religion and standardise language. And it is important to recognise that the imposition of standard Mandarin affects not only Tibetan, Uyghur, and Mongolian communities, but also those who speak what Beijing calls “dialects”: Cantonese, Shanghainese, Hokkien, and many others.

It is a logic of “unity” that depends on suppressing difference. When this logic is applied to specific ethnic groups—when the state seeks to eliminate cultural, linguistic, or religious diversity—the result is a systematic tendency toward cultural destruction, and in its more extreme form, toward genocide.

I do want to talk a little bit about that term because I think when we think of genocide, we often think of gas chambers and the Holocaust and the eradication of DNA. But if you look at the Genocide Convention, there are a number of other provisions that go to a more subtle form of genocide.

If you look at Article II, there's "deliberately inflicting on a group conditions of life to bring about the physical destruction in whole or in part," "the imposing of measures intended to prevent births in the group"—and Rushan in particular spoke about forced abortion, forced sterilization that the Uyghurs suffer—and then another prong of what constitutes genocide is "forcibly transferring children of the group to another group." We see that in the colonial boarding schools that impact Tibetans and Uyghurs. We also see it in this idea of "becoming family" that we see in the Uyghur region, where Han Chinese—and Rushan mentioned—are assigned to homes and sometimes the beds, and also forced intermarriage as well. Frank, I think, drew out that historical context.

”

It's this logic of "unity" that requires the suppression of the other. When it's applied to particular ethnic groups, it's a tendency towards genocide.

Piero Tozzi

It's not something that's unique to today or to the Chinese Communist Party, though I think technology and modernity have led to greater efficiency—whether it's Hikvision cameras in concentration camps in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, or American companies (and Rushan emphasised that point of corporate complicity): Thermo Fisher Scientific, whose DNA markers are used to create databases of Tibetans, Uyghurs, and others, even to the point, it is alleged, for organ harvesting—creating a database of who would be suitable for harvesting, the most horrific of human rights abuses. On the historical context, there's a chapter in the Cambridge World History of Genocide by Victoria Tin-bor Hui: "Genocide, Extermination, Mass Killings in Chinese History," and it does have deep roots.

Frank highlighted some of the more recent things, but Professor Hui talks about during the Han Dynasty, Emperor Wu's "war of extermination" against the Xiongnu. While I don't want to overstate that aspect of Chinese history, it is a thread, which does bring us to this draft ethnic law.

Earlier this fall, Xi Jinping was in the Uyghur region where he marked and celebrated the Party's control over that.

He stressed the importance of ethnic unity and the Sinicisation of religion. We've seen predecessors in law. In 2020, the Tibet Autonomous Region adopted regulations on establishing a model area for ethnic unity and progress. We saw that then in Qinghai, Yunnan—similar things that also, again, the Sinicisation of religion, the criminalisation of any expressions that they say is "harmful to ethnic unity or progress."

We also see things like in Tibet the celebration of Serf Emancipation Day in March 2021, and similar regulations in the Uyghur region and the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. If we look at the draft ethnic law, I think one thing that really sticks out is that Article 15 requirement of Mandarin language education on children, and against the backdrop of colonial boarding schools and the separation of children from their parents—it becomes quite nefarious.

”

one thing that really sticks out is that Article 15 requirement of Mandarin language education on children...

Piero Tozzi

We do see efforts to impose ethnic unity in Muslim ethnic minority communities. Articles 12, 40, 44 of the draft law all restrict expressions of religion, religious freedom, and again promote that Sinicization. Article 61, I think, targets individuals outside of China. Indeed, our gathering here, when you think about it, could be a violation of Article 61 on its face. It says, "For organisations or individuals conducting or supporting activities that undermine ethnic unity as they define it or incite ethnic division in China, you shall bear legal responsibility under Chinese law."

I think one other thing to see with this sort of long arm: do entities and organisations in the West start to adopt nomenclature favoured by the Party? Do they use the word "Tibet," or do they use the word "Xizang"? We saw a couple of museums in Paris that started to use that terminology—the Musée Guimet and the Musée du Quai Branly. They did, after pressure from Tibetan groups, change that back to "Tibet," but that is something to watch.

Again, it's the education—the saying that's been variously attributed to Lenin and to the Jesuits: "If you give me the seven-year-old, I'll give you the man." It is that early elementary education, really when the law specifies preschool education in Mandarin.

And also Article 15, Article 16: nationally compiled textbooks and curricula that reflect the goal of forging a strong sense of Chinese national community. What's interesting is this law would also undermine the legal force or undercut the previous Regional Ethnic Autonomy Laws as well. So you are going beyond even what the existing law would require.

Article 20, especially pernicious, because it undermines that bond between parent and child:

Parents and guardians must teach minors to love the Chinese Communist Party, the motherland, the people, and the Chinese nation, and must not instill concepts harmful to ethnic unity." To say that this violates international human rights standards—for example, Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 26, subsection 3, that says that parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education for their children—is really to state the obvious.

Frank listed a number of treaties that have been violated: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. One of the themes of our annual report that's going to be coming out is this notion of "promises made and promises broken"—how the Chinese government routinely enters into these international agreements only to break them.

”

supremacy and the primacy of the Chinese Communist Party and Chinese Communist Party ideology that appears throughout the law, particularly in Article 2.

Piero Tozzi

One thing I want to state with regards to the law: it's the supremacy and the primacy of the Chinese Communist Party and Chinese Communist Party ideology that appears throughout the law, particularly in Article 2.

And also, any reference to the Chinese constitution—here I do want to take a little bit of a distinction. The Chinese constitution is not flawless. It is premised on the supremacy of the Chinese Communist Party. That's why any rights that are in there are completely illusory. Indeed, I think even when we talk about "the constitution" or refer to laws, in a way we're legitimizing it. It is not a constitution in this—I mean, people hear that and they say, "Oh, they have a constitution, we have a constitution, it's the same thing." When we use terms— Western media does this all the time—calling Xi Jinping "President." "Zongtong" in Taiwan, in the ROC, is a president. Xi Jinping's title is "Chairman," or give his Party title, "General Secretary." That idea also: "fazhi," rule of law. It's "rule by law," and it's really ruled by the Chinese Communist Party. So I think that confusion—the idea of "zhengming," to call things by their proper name, is very important. You get the premise wrong, you get the conclusion wrong. So I think it is really important to be aware of that.

Just to give some indication: our annual report will highlight a number of acts that have been committed over the past year against ethnic minorities. We see Muslim religious communities targeted, Sinicization of Islamic communities, the cutting off of minaret towers and the like. We also see state control over grazing and interference with herders' economic traditions. This impacts the Mongolian people there too.

You have these grazing ban teams that keep watch over the grasslands and prevent people—it's fines, confiscation of livestock, which is people's means to economically survive, beatings, and also detention. We've seen that the mass atrocities and other crimes against the people in Xinjiang have not abated, even though the obvious concentration camps are less prevalent.

We've seen an expansion of forced labor of Uyghurs and other Turkic people as well. We also see restrictions—and Rushan referenced it—on the observance of Ramadan. And then, of course, the continued interference in the selection process of the next reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. Just as with the Panchen Lama, who was disappeared in an attempt to place a compliant interloper and declare that as the Panchen Lama. We've also seen mass expulsions.

”

We've seen that the mass atrocities and other crimes against the people in Xinjiang

Piero Tozzi

The Larung Gar Buddhist Academy has had people expelled—monks have been expelled from that. We see the destruction of monasteries as well. I do want to—and I think it is important—Stalin, I think, said, "The death of one man's a tragedy; the death of millions, a statistic." So it is important think, to name names and to remember people. Thank you, Rushan, for mentioning your sister, Gulshan. All this repression has a human face.

Ilham Tohti—I think if you want to talk about true unity and diversity and someone who was dedicated to interethnic harmony, Han and others, that would have been Ilham Tohti. He was a professor at Minzu University in Beijing. He started Uyghur Online, and for these efforts he has been sentenced to life in prison. I know his daughter here, and it's tragic. This has a real impact on families, and this is a tremendous injustice. I would also note that his prison guard, Uyghur prison guard Gheyret Abdureshid, has also been imprisoned because he circulated information about the horrible condition that Ilham Tohti is being kept in, that he's in poor health. Ironically, I think he was saying that as a warning to other Uyghur prisoners: "You better

toe the line." But because that information got out, he too has been punished. Others: Ma Ju, a Hui Muslim from Yunnan—again, arrested for "illegal preaching," and when people rallied in Ma's defense, they too were suppressed. That's something that we see throughout China. I also want to highlight a young woman named Tang Yadi. She's ethnic Chinese, ethnic Han, but she advocated for Tibetans. Because of that, just in July, she was arrested and is detained because of her advocacy there. There are a number of Tibetans: Lobsang Gyatso, who's done several long-term stints in prison for speaking up for independence and Tibetan rights.

Tashi Wangchuk, another Tibetan language advocate in prison. Go Sherab Gyatso, another Tibetan community leader who died, an extrajudicial killing due to torture in prison. It's important that we remember these names and don't forget them.

this impacts individuals, impacts families. That's just a representation, really, of people who suffer for that desire, that human desire to preserve memory so that their cultures are not erased. I do think it is important to note that the largest victims of the Chinese Communist Party are the Chinese people themselves, the Han people, just simply by virtue of numbers. As long as the Chinese Communist Party remains in power, there will be injustice, there will be repression, there will be division.

I want to thank the Foundation for inviting me, and I also want to acknowledge my staff—who will remain unnamed so they are not targeted—for their help in preparing these remarks, for their work on our annual report, and for maintaining our political-prisoner database so that no one is forgotten. It is a privilege to join you all today. The real credit belongs to those of you doing the hard work on the ground, and I am grateful to be included in this discussion.

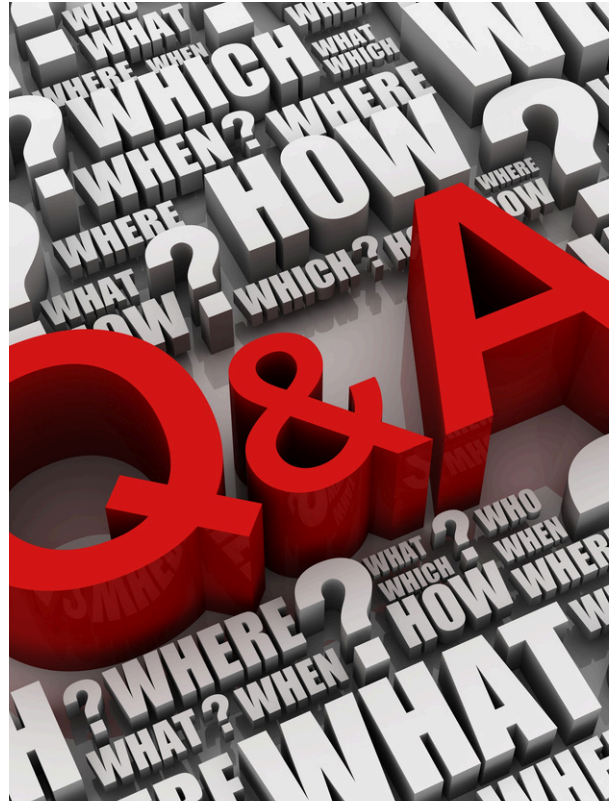
”

Tang Yadi.
She's ethnic Chinese, ethnic Han, but she advocated for Tibetans.
Because of that, just in July, she was arrested and is detained because of her advocacy there.

Discussion Highlights

Rinzin Namgyal

In light of the long history of China using laws as instruments of state power rather than as genuine protections of citizens' rights, how should we understand the implications of the draft Ethnic Unity Law? Specifically, given that Beijing has often used legislation as a political weapon—to justify resource extraction, economic exploitation in minority regions, and the broader project of assimilation—what prospects, if any, exist for influencing or amending such a law through political engagement?



Prof. Xia Ming

Across Chinese history, debates on ethnicity and governance have taken many forms: from the Qing-era classification of “civilized” and “barbarian” peoples; to the early Republican slogan of “five races under one union,” which initially promised equality but ultimately tilted toward assimilation; to Liang Qichao’s proposals for a modern, multi-ethnic state; and later, the Soviet-inspired notions of self-determination reflected in the 1931 constitution of the Chinese Soviet Republic. Even the 1949 Common Programme articulated equality and mutual aid among nationalities. Yet in practice, successive governments—from Chiang Kai-shek’s Republican regime to the PRC under Mao, Deng, Jiang Zemin, and now Xi Jinping—have consistently subordinated these ideals to centralized control, whether through campaigns such as “Sinicization,” Cultural Revolution policies, or the more recent ideological and language-driven assimilation efforts in Tibet, East Turkestan, and Southern Mongolia.

Today, as China moves toward an increasingly centralized and revisionist ethnic policy framework, how can minority groups—or those advocating on their behalf—realistically engage policymakers in Beijing? Given that laws function selectively in China—used to criminalize demands rather than protect rights—and that implementation routinely contradicts the formal language of the constitution, what effective strategies, if any, exist for influencing China’s legislative process? And, considering the escalating assimilationist measures such as the 2020 language policy in Southern Mongolia, what avenues remain for advocating meaningful changes to a draft law that appears designed not for protection, but for deeper control?

Discussion Highlights

Rinzin Namgyal

In light of the long history of China using laws as instruments of state power rather than as genuine protections of citizens' rights, how should we understand the implications of the draft Ethnic Unity Law? Specifically, given that Beijing has often used legislation as a political weapon—to justify resource extraction, economic exploitation in minority regions, and the broader project of assimilation—what prospects, if any, exist for influencing or amending such a law through political engagement?



Prof. Xia Ming

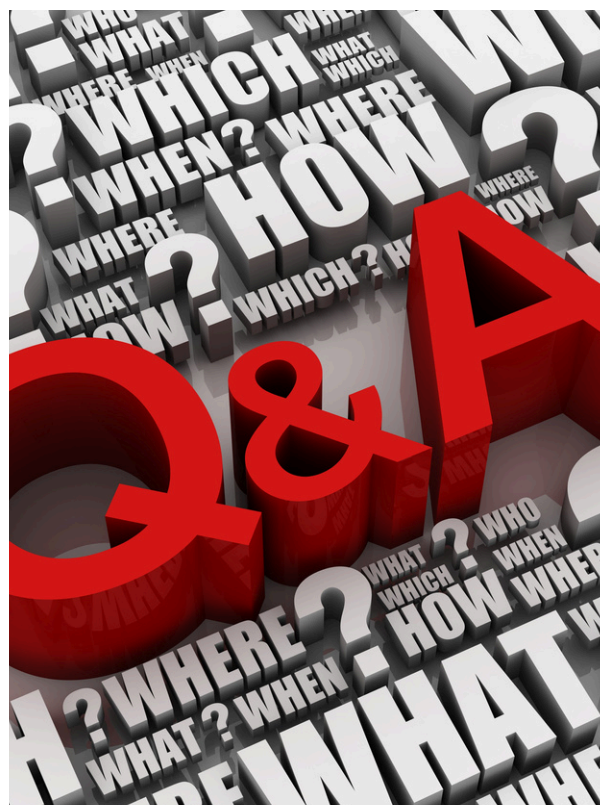
Across Chinese history, debates on ethnicity and governance have taken many forms: from the Qing-era classification of “civilized” and “barbarian” peoples; to the early Republican slogan of “five races under one union,” which initially promised equality but ultimately tilted toward assimilation; to Liang Qichao’s proposals for a modern, multi-ethnic state; and later, the Soviet-inspired notions of self-determination reflected in the 1931 constitution of the Chinese Soviet Republic. Even the 1949 Common Programme articulated equality and mutual aid among nationalities. Yet in practice, successive governments—from Chiang Kai-shek’s Republican regime to the PRC under Mao, Deng, Jiang Zemin, and now Xi Jinping—have consistently subordinated these ideals to centralized control, whether through campaigns such as “Sinicization,” Cultural Revolution policies, or the more recent ideological and language-driven assimilation efforts in Tibet, East Turkestan, and Southern Mongolia.

Today, as China moves toward an increasingly centralized and revisionist ethnic policy framework, how can minority groups—or those advocating on their behalf—realistically engage policymakers in Beijing? Given that laws function selectively in China—used to criminalize demands rather than protect rights—and that implementation routinely contradicts the formal language of the constitution, what effective strategies, if any, exist for influencing China’s legislative process? And, considering the escalating assimilationist measures such as the 2020 language policy in Southern Mongolia, what avenues remain for advocating meaningful changes to a draft law that appears designed not for protection, but for deeper control?

Discussion Highlights

Rinzin Namgyal

In light of the long history of China using laws as instruments of state power rather than as genuine protections of citizens' rights, how should we understand the implications of the draft Ethnic Unity Law? Specifically, given that Beijing has often used legislation as a political weapon—to justify resource extraction, economic exploitation in minority regions, and the broader project of assimilation—what prospects, if any, exist for influencing or amending such a law through political engagement?



Across Chinese history, debates on ethnicity and governance have taken many forms: from the Qing-era classification of “civilized” and “barbarian” peoples; to the early Republican slogan of “five races under one union,” which initially promised equality but ultimately tilted toward assimilation; to Liang Qichao’s proposals for a modern, multi-ethnic state; and later, the Soviet-inspired notions of self-determination reflected in the 1931 constitution of the Chinese Soviet Republic. Even the 1949 Common Programme articulated equality and mutual aid among nationalities. Yet in practice, successive governments—from Chiang Kai-shek’s Republican regime to the PRC under Mao, Deng, Jiang Zemin, and now Xi Jinping—have consistently subordinated these ideals to centralized control, whether through campaigns such as “Sinicization,” Cultural Revolution policies, or the more recent ideological and language-driven assimilation efforts in Tibet, East Turkestan, and Southern Mongolia.

Today, as China moves toward an increasingly centralized and revisionist ethnic policy framework, how can minority groups—or those advocating on their behalf—realistically engage policymakers in Beijing? Given that laws function selectively in China—used to criminalize demands rather than protect rights—and that implementation routinely contradicts the formal language of the constitution, what effective strategies, if any, exist for influencing China’s legislative process? And, considering the escalating assimilationist measures such as the 2020 language policy in Southern Mongolia, what avenues remain for advocating meaningful changes to a draft law that appears designed not for protection, but for deeper control?

Draft Ethnic Unity Law

(This translation was produced with the assistance of artificial intelligence; inadvertent errors or omissions may occur. The Foundation for Non-Violent Alternatives (FNVA) bears no responsibility for its content. It was independently compiled by Rinzin Namgyal, Research Associate, FNVA from Chinese sources).

Part 1: Preamble and Chapter I (General Provisions) of the Draft Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress (中华人民共和国民族团结进步促进法 草案).

China is one of the world's oldest civilisations, and the Chinese nation has a continuous cultural history of more than five millennia. Over a long process of interaction, exchange, and integration, the peoples of all ethnic groups jointly opened up the vast territory of themotherland, forged a unified multi-ethnic state, and created a splendid civilisation and a shared national spirit.

Since 1840, when China gradually became a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, all ethnic groups have upheld the belief in the indivisibility of the homeland, the unity of the nation, and the continuity of civilisation. Through collective struggle to resist invasion and seek national salvation, they transformed from a community existing "in itself" into one "foritself."

Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the Chinese people achieved national independence and liberation, founded the People's Republic of China, secured equal political rights for all ethnicities, and embarked on a distinctive Chinese path for resolving ethnic issues—achieving unity, shared development, and the historic transformation of the Chinese nation.

In the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the CPC integrates Marxist theories on nationality with China's practical realities and fine traditional culture, placing the forging of a strong sense of the Chinese national community at the core of its ethnic work. The unity of the Chinese nation is regarded as the lifeline of all peoples.

To realise national rejuvenation and modernisation, all organs of state power, armed forces, political parties, social organisations, enterprises, and citizens must regard the strengthening of the Chinese national community as a shared duty. They shall promote equality, solidarity, mutual assistance, and harmony among all ethnic groups, and advance Chinese-style modernisation through the great unity of the Chinese nation.

Chapter I: General Provisions

Article 1.

This Law is formulated in accordance with the Constitution to promote ethnic unity and progress, consolidate the sense of a shared Chinese national community, and advance the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Article 2.

The cause of ethnic unity and progress adheres to the comprehensive leadership of the Communist Party of China, guided by Marxism–Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the “Three Represents,” the Scientific Outlook on Development, and Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. It seeks to build a common ideological and political foundation for all ethnic groups.

Article 3.

The state shall guide all ethnic groups to establish firmly the concept of a shared destiny—sharing weal and woe, honour and disgrace, life and death—and to enhance the cohesion of the Chinese nation.

Article 4.

Building the Chinese national community shall integrate economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological development. All ethnicities shall share in prosperity and governance, safeguard ecological harmony, and form a highly cohesive community of shared future.

Chapter I: General Provisions

Article 5.

All citizens are equal before the law, and all ethnic groups are equal within the People's Republic of China. Discrimination or oppression against any ethnic group is strictly prohibited.

Article 6.

A strong sense of Chinese national community is the foundation of ethnic unity. The state shall enhance commonalities, respect differences, and oppose acts that damage unity or incite ethnic division.

Article 7.

The state promotes joint struggle and common prosperity among all ethnic groups and coordinates material, political, spiritual, social, and ecological advancement to achieve comprehensive progress.

Article 8.

China upholds and improves the system of regional ethnic autonomy while safeguarding national unity.

Article 9.

Ethnic affairs shall be governed by law. The state guarantees the lawful rights and interests of all ethnic groups and strengthens citizens' awareness of nationhood, citizenship, and the rule of law, promoting modern governance of ethnic affairs within a legal framework.

Article 10.

All citizens have the obligation to safeguard national unity and ethnic solidarity and to protect national sovereignty, security, and development interests. The cause of ethnic unity and progress shall not be subject to external interference. The People's Republic of China resolutely opposes any infiltration, sabotage, slander, or suppression conducted under the pretexts of ethnicity, religion, or human rights.

Chapter II – Building a Shared Spiritual Home (Articles 11–21)

Article 11.

The State, guided by the core socialist values, deepens education in patriotism, collectivism, and socialism. Citizens of all ethnic groups shall uphold the spirit of patriotism and reform, and strengthen identification with the motherland, the Chinese nation, Chinese culture, the Communist Party of China (CPC), and socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Article 12.

Education shall cover the history of the CPC, the People's Republic of China, reform and opening-up, socialism, and the development of the Chinese nation, thereby fostering correct views of the state, history, nationality, culture, and religion.

Article 13.

The State develops advanced socialist culture, promotes revolutionary culture, and inherits the fine traditions of Chinese civilisation. It supports creative transformation and innovative development of all ethnic cultures and protects tangible and intangible cultural heritage that reflects the evolution of the Chinese national community.

Article 14.

The State highlights shared symbols and imagery of Chinese culture and nationality, and encourages their representation in public facilities, architecture, scenic sites, toponyms, and public events. Citizens shall respect national symbols and the historical process of nation building and must not defame or desecrate them.

Article 15.

The State universally promotes the standard national spoken and written language. Preschool children shall learn Putonghua; pupils completing compulsory education shall have basic mastery of it. Government agencies use the national language for official purposes, while minority languages may be used concurrently as required by law. The State also protects and standardises minority languages and supports preservation of ancient texts.

Article 16.

All schools shall use nationally compiled textbooks. Education authorities must ensure that curricula reflect the goal of forging a strong sense of Chinese national community.

Article 17.

The State supports the construction of academic systems, discourses, and theoretical frameworks on the Chinese national community. Universities and research institutes are encouraged to study its formation and development, train scholars, and promote international academic exchange.

Article 18.

Education on the sense of national community shall be integrated into public, cadre, and social education systems through classroom teaching, social practice, and online learning. Governments should utilise cultural, revolutionary, and socialist-achievement resources to establish practical education bases.

Article 19.

News and media institutions shall publicise and report on ethnic unity and progress. The State strengthens international communication and people-to-people exchanges to interpret Chinese national community theory and promote mutual understanding of Chinese civilisation.

Article 20.

Governments shall incorporate national-unity awareness into family education and moral guidance. Parents and guardians must teach minors to love the CPC, the motherland, the people, and the Chinese nation, and must not instil concepts harmful to ethnic unity.

Article 21.

The State supports the Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions in education on Chinese history and national conditions and encourages cross-strait exchanges to deepen Taiwanese compatriots' identification with the Chinese nation. It also strengthens links with overseas Chinese to promote cultural exchange and cooperation.

Chapter III – Promoting Interaction, Exchange, and Integration (Articles 22–31)

Article 22.

Local governments above the county level shall plan social and economic development to build integrated communities where people of all ethnicities live, study, work, and celebrate together.

Article 23.

Urban planning, construction, and governance shall incorporate requirements of ethnic unity, adopting inclusive policies on housing, employment, and public services to facilitate integration.

Article 24.

Governments shall improve information-sharing platforms for inter-regional population mobility to enhance public-service convenience.

Article 25.

Authorities must protect the rights of citizens working or starting businesses across regions and provide training in law, national language, and vocational skills.

Article 26.

The State encourages mutual admission and teacher exchange programmes between universities in ethnic and non-ethnic regions, fostering joint education.

Article 27.

Governments shall support youth exchanges, study tours, and field visits utilising historical and cultural resources that illustrate the formation of the Chinese nation.

Article 28.

Volunteer services shall promote interaction, cooperation, and mutual assistance among all ethnic groups.

Article 29.

Cultural exchange and mutual appreciation among ethnicities are encouraged, including creation of artistic works expressing integration. Museums, libraries, and cultural centres should exhibit the history of the Chinese nation and national prosperity.

Article 30.

Tourism shall serve ethnic interaction by developing routes and products that highlight Chinese culture, with standardised interpretation reflecting the theory of the Chinese national community.

Article 31.

The State supports the use of modern technologies—Internet, big data, artificial intelligence—to foster online environments conducive to unity, and prohibits dissemination of content inciting ethnic hatred or discrimination. Network operators must remove such content and report it to authorities.

Chapter IV – Promoting Common Prosperity and Development (Articles 32–40)

Article 32.

Guided by the new development philosophy, the State supports full integration of ethnic regions into national strategies, enhances self-development capacity, and advances common prosperity and modernisation.

Article 33.

Policy-making in economic and social development shall reinforce national unity, oppose separatism, improve livelihoods, and consolidate public support.

Article 34.

The State promotes coordinated regional development, supports ethnic regions in safeguarding frontier, resource, food, and ecological security, and encourages their role in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Article 35.

Authorities shall support infrastructure in transport, energy, water, information, and logistics to improve inter-regional connectivity.

Article 36

The State develops modern industrial systems and encourages ethnic regions to cultivate distinctive industries—agriculture, cultural arts, traditional crafts, and medicine—using scientific and technological innovation to revitalise rural areas.

Article 37.

Public-service resources shall be fairly distributed to ensure balanced access to education, healthcare, and welfare in ethnic regions.

Article 38.

Governments shall integrate ecological, industrial, and urban planning, protect the environment, and promote sustainable use of natural resources.

Article 39.

Authorities in border areas shall advance programmes for prosperity and stability, support infrastructure and border trade, improve living conditions, and encourage cross-border economic cooperation.

Article 40.

The State promotes social morality, legal education, and scientific literacy, opposes outdated customs, and protects freedom of marriage from interference based on ethnicity, custom, or religion.

Chapter V – Safeguards and Supervision (Articles 41–54)

Article 41.

China maintains a system of Party leadership, government administration, united-front coordination, ethnic-affairs implementation, and social participation for ethnic work, with improved coordination mechanisms.

Article 42.

Government departments shall carry out ethnic-unity education within their jurisdiction and stop any acts undermining unity. Civil servants must take the lead in promoting cohesion.

Article 43

Mass organisations—including trade unions, youth and women’s federations, writers’ and scientists’ associations—shall use their networks to promote the sense of national community.

Article 44.

Enterprises and social organisations shall integrate national-unity requirements into training and ethics codes. Religious organisations and venues must follow the direction of the Sinicisation of religion, promote patriotism, and contribute to harmony.

Article 45.

Local governments shall guide and support residents’ and villagers’ committees to embed national-unity requirements in community rules and conventions.

Article 46.

The armed forces shall conduct education on the Chinese national community within defence activities, strengthen military-civilian unity, and safeguard national security.

Article 47.

The State shall embed unity awareness in cadre recruitment, training, and evaluation, emphasising the promotion of ethnic-minority officials and inter-regional exchange of personnel.

Article 48.

Governments above the county level shall incorporate national-unity goals into socio economic plans and budgets, with fiscal departments supervising fund use.

Article 49.

Ethnic affairs are included in co-governance and shared-governance mechanisms, supported by technology and strong local governance capacity.

Article 50.

Authorities must establish major-issue reporting and risk-assessment mechanisms for ethnic affairs to prevent and resolve potential crises affecting national security or stability.

Article 51

Governments shall strengthen mediation mechanisms and prevent escalation of disputes; no one may provoke conflicts using ethnic identity, custom, or religion.

Article 52.

Citizens may report or file complaints against acts undermining unity or against officials failing to fulfil duties. Procuratorates may issue recommendations or bring public-interest lawsuits.

Article 53.

Demonstration and commendation programmes for ethnic unity shall emphasise forging a strong national community; outstanding groups and individuals may receive awards.

Article 54.

The fourth week of September each year is designated as Ethnic Unity and Progress Publicity Week, devoted to education and promotional activities.

Chapter VI – Legal Liability (Articles 55–60)

Article 55.

Government bodies or staff failing to perform duties under this Law, or not stopping illegal acts specified in subsequent articles, shall be ordered to rectify; responsible leaders and personnel may be disciplined or prosecuted.

Article 63-70.

(Reserved for implementation, interpretation, and transitional clauses to be finalised upon enactment; these articles stipulate that the State Council and the National Ethnic Affairs Commission will draft detailed regulations and oversee enforcement.)

Chapter VI – Legal Liability (Articles 55–60)

Article 61.

Foreign organisations or individuals conducting or supporting activities that undermine ethnic unity or incite ethnic division within China shall bear legal responsibility under Chinese law.

Article 62.

This Law shall come into effect on a date to be specified upon its promulgation.

ABOUT FNVA

Founded in 2009, FNVA is a not-for-profit, non-partisan organisation dedicated to examining the geopolitical and strategic significance of developments in Tibet, China, and the Himalayan frontiers from an Indian policy perspective.

Anchored in the principles of non-violence, human dignity, and the rule of law—and uniquely positioned as India’s sole think tank specialising in Tibet—FNVA provides a leading platform for informed dialogue, interdisciplinary research, and public engagement on regional dynamics that profoundly shape India’s security, environment, and cultural landscape.

FNVA’s core mission is to advance India’s geopolitical, environmental, and civilisational interests by promoting rigorous research on the PRC, Tibet, and Himalayan affairs, while actively countering misinformation and distorted narratives in South Asia. Through strategic studies, capacity building, and international collaboration, we work to equip policymakers, scholars, and civil society with nuanced insights into the complex interplay of politics, ecology, culture, and security across the Himalayan region. Our work enhances policy-relevant understanding and fosters constructive dialogue and humanitarian initiatives that strengthen regional stability and resilience.

For more information visit: www.fnvaworld.org